The Passion Week of Jesus' Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Appearances
and
The Art of Storytelling
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INTRODUCTION

Luke 22:7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, when it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. 22:8 And [Jesus] sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us so that we may eat it." 22:9 And they said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?" 22:10 And he said to them, "Behold, when you enter the city, a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house in which he goes. 22:11 And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is the lodging place where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' 22:12 And he will show you a large furnished room upstairs. Prepare it there." [translation mine]

There have been four vitally important events in human history with a fifth on its way. The four were the birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish Messiah. The fifth will be Jesus' return to establish the millennial kingdom, which will constitute the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel and the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God as both resurrected and lifted-from-the-earth believers will acquire eternal and morally perfect bodies. The second and final stage of the eternal Kingdom of God will be the new heaven and the new earth of Revelation 21 after God has destroyed the present universe.

Tradition holds that Jesus was crucified on Friday, called Good Friday, and resurrected on Sunday, which is called Easter Sunday. Tradition also holds that Jesus' "Passion Week" began when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey colt on Palm Sunday and includes all the important events such as the Last Supper, Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, his arrest and trials before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod, his crucifixion, death, and burial, and his resurrection on Easter Sunday with appearances to his disciples, both men and women.

Consequently, we Christians naturally associate Jesus' death with the Last Supper, where he correlated the bread and wine with his body and blood respectively, because the next day his body was to be crucified and his blood shed. We also naturally associate the Last Supper with the Passover, because the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell us explicitly that it was a Passover meal for Jesus and his disciples. But do we have a firm grasp on the timing of these events in relation to everything else that happened a few days before and a few days afterwards, especially Jesus' resurrection? Do we also have a clear picture in our minds of all these events as they relate to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as commanded by God for the Jews in the Old Testament? In this paper, I intend to identify the timing of the Passion Week events and present a clear picture of all that Jesus did and what was done to him during the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We will look at the relevant parallel passages of Matthew 26:1-28:20, Mark 14:1-16:8, Luke 22:1-24:53, and John 13:21-30,36-38 and 18:1-20:29. However, rather than starting with Palm Sunday, it will be easier and much shorter to begin with Jesus' prediction of his death two days before the crucifixion.[1]

As we proceed through these Gospel passages, it will be important for us to keep in mind that the authors are engaged in the art of storytelling. This is to say that, while Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are providing inerrant and authoritative truth as biblical writers, they also are telling the story of the Passion Week in their own way and for their own specific purposes, which may be as dramatic as emphasizing a particular person or as mundane as saving space on the original papyrus. Therefore, just as we grant to all other human beings, who are recounting the details of events, the right and privilege to tell the story in their own way, it only makes sense that we do the same for the four narrators of Jesus' last week of ministry. In other words, just because the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were superintended by God Himself so that they communicate nothing but the truth, these men were human beings who chose to tell their stories the way they wanted to. As a result, they were artists of storytelling, who designed their narratives and accounts to the degree and in the same spirit as any good storyteller in human history. This in no way diminishes the sacred nature of their documents, especially when we consider that the four gospel authors were not mostly interested in producing art but in accurately conveying that which is true. Therefore, allowing them to be bona fide storytellers ensures that we do not impose upon them requirements, conditions, and stipulations that are both unnecessary and unrealistic,

including that the authors must tell their stories with the exact same structure, format, and wording in order for us to claim that they are not contradicting one another.

Therefore, the Gospels all inform us that Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples, was arrested and tried by the Jewish leadership, and crucified and buried. In addition, after his crucifixion and burial were witnessed by many women who were his disciples, Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to these women and his apostles. However, each author provides different details of the whole story, with different words and in different formats, all of which can make it appear as though they are telling different and even contradictory accounts. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that the four writers are involved in the art of storytelling, we will be able to put together a coherent and accurate picture of the events which they describe and demonstrate that there are no contradictions in their accounts.

It is certainly true that putting together all the information from the four Gospels regarding the women, who are witnesses of Jesus' crucifixion, who observe his burial, who visit his tomb, and to whom Jesus first appears after his resurrection, is not altogether easy. Some of the information even appears to be contradictory. However, I believe that thinking through the information carefully results in a coherent picture of all that these women experienced.

Let me also suggest four principles of the art of storytelling that apply to these authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and to the events they are relating. The first is that when someone tells a story by referring to only one person, there may actually be more than this one person involved in the event, so that the storyteller is choosing for his own reasons to leave these extra people out of his account. For example, if I say, "Sam flew a Boeing 767 from Los Angeles to Boston," I do not have to mean that Sam was the only passenger on the plane. I am simply telling the story of the flight from LA to Boston from the perspective of only one person. In other words, I am not wrong by mentioning only Sam as being on the plane. I am simply not being complete, which is certainly permissible for anyone telling a story according to his purpose and intent. To require that a storyteller provide all possible details of a story is unreasonable, illogical, and absurd—not to say impractical (if by "all possible details" we were to mean, for example, the position of every molecule of every substance involved in the events of the story). Therefore, if the speaker or author mentions only one person, then more than likely it is for the purpose of featuring this person, which is to say for the purpose of granting this person prominence in the story and shining the spotlight on him for the speaker's own specific reasons.

Similarly, the Gospel author John says that Mary Magdalene visits Jesus' tomb early Sunday morning, while Matthew and Mark indicate that Mary, the mother of Joseph, is with her. Is John wrong for mentioning only the first Mary? No. He is simply featuring her for his own purposes, which I believe to be the fact that thirteen verses later Jesus will appear first to her. Thus, keeping the above principle in mind, when a Gospel writer mentions one or two people in an event, there may have been more than one or two people involved. This will help us in interpreting the events of the women who are there at Jesus' death and burial, the empty tomb, and his appearance after his resurrection, so that we construct an accurate and coherent picture of what actually happened.

A second principle of the art of storytelling is that someone may leave out certain details and is therefore not altogether clear on communicating the exact interval of time between two events in the story. For example, if I say, "Sam flew a Boeing 767 from Los Angeles to Boston, and then he flew a Boeing 737 from Boston to Los Angeles," someone listening to me does not know exactly how much time elapsed and what other events possibly took place between the two flights. The time may have been one hour as Sam walked from his arrival gate in Boston to his departure gate back to Los Angeles, or it may have been two years. In addition, the listener does not know what other things Sam did in between the flights. He may or may not have grabbed a hamburger at one of the local airport restaurants.

Similarly, Matthew says that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb early Sunday morning, leave it quickly with great fear and joy to report its being empty to the apostles, and then Jesus appears to them. One could form the conclusion that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary see Jesus before they have a chance to report the empty tomb to the apostles. In apparent contrast, John seems to suggest that Mary Magdalene, alone, sees Jesus (and is the first person to do so) *after* all the women report the empty tomb to the apostles. Is John contradicting Matthew? No. Matthew simply leaves out the part where the women do speak to the apostles about the empty tomb, and he jumps immediately to Jesus' appearing to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, because eventually both women do see the risen Messiah.

A third principle of the art of storytelling is this. One speaker or author may feature an individual throughout the entire length of his narrative. Another speaker or author may feature the same individual

only at the end of the story. For example, one narrator may say, “Sam and Suzie flew a Boeing 767 from Los Angeles to Boston, and then they flew a Boeing 737 from Boston to Los Angeles.” Another narrator might say, “A number of people from Anaheim took a Boeing 767 from Los Angeles to Boston, and then they flew a Boeing 737 from Boston to Los Angeles. Sam and Suzie were on the Boeing 737 from Boston to Los Angeles when the people from Anaheim returned.” Now the first account explicitly focuses on Sam and Suzie from beginning to end. The latter account does not focus on Sam and Suzie until the end. But these accounts are certainly not contradictory. The two narrators simply have different purposes that lead them to feature the same individuals at different points in the narrative.

Similarly, Matthew and Mark say that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visit the empty tomb early Sunday morning and then report this fact to the apostles, while Luke says that many women visit the empty tomb early Sunday morning, report this fact to the apostles, and included in the group of women who report to the apostles are Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. Are these authors contradicting each other? No, they are simply featuring these women whom they name at different moments in their stories for different reasons.

However, there is another issue here that suggests a fourth principle of the art of storytelling. The way I have just told the story about Sam and Suzie and the other people leaves room for the possibility that they are not actually members of the group from Anaheim. They are certainly present on the Boston to Los Angeles plane, but when I mentioned Sam, Suzie, and the other people with them, did I mean that they are separate from them or part of their group? It is not entirely clear. Likewise, the way Luke tells his story, there is the possibility that he is initially talking about a separate, second group of women who visit the tomb, but when they make their report to the apostles, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, who have arrived earlier, are simply being included in the entire group of women who tell the apostles about the empty tomb. As in my story, it depends upon what Luke means by mentioning the women by name along with “the rest of the women with them.” In other words, it depends upon what Luke means by the word “with.”

Thus, a fourth principle of the art of storytelling is that a speaker may not be entirely clear when he tells the story or a portion of the story. I do not mean to say that the storyteller intends to be unclear and therefore is determined to mislead if possible the listener or reader. Instead, I am referring to the inherent difficulty in human communication which sometimes results in a speaker’s not saying things as clearly as they could be said in spite of his desire to be clear. For example, I could have said above, “Many people from Anaheim flew a Boeing 767 from Los Angeles to Boston, and then they flew a Boeing 737 from Boston to Los Angeles. And Sam and Suzie were on the plane, too, and flew with the people from Anaheim.” If I tell the story this way, I am much clearer that Sam and Suzie are separate from the Anaheim group.

Similarly Luke could have been clearer as to whether Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, constituted a first group that arrived earlier to tell the apostles about the empty tomb, or they were part of an entire group of women who all went to the tomb together and then left to report to the apostles. Does this mean that Luke has introduced an error into his story? No, it just means that he has not been entirely clear. Nevertheless, when we reach this place in the Gospel accounts and in an endnote, I will suggest that Luke does actually mean that there are two separate groups who combine their efforts in explaining to the apostles that the tomb is empty.

By talking about the art of storytelling here as something we should grant to the authors of the Gospels, I am also alerting the reader of my paper to the fact that my explanations in the body of it will not include a detailed analysis of the available information. But where I think it is helpful, I will include such analysis in an endnote. This should make it easier to read through the explanations in the body of the document and for the reader to acquire a good sense of the flow of the events in the story of Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and appearances after his resurrection.

Before we look at the Gospel accounts of the Passion Week, it will be helpful to consider what the Old Testament says about the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Of interest also are a few verses in the New Testament that refer to the time interval between Jesus’ death and resurrection. Therefore, in the next section, I list and explain briefly six Old Testament passages, and then, in the section after it, I discuss five New Testament passages. The Old Testament passages are Exodus 11:1-13:16, Leviticus 23:4-8, Numbers 9:1-5, Numbers 28:16-25, and Deuteronomy 16:1-8, which explicitly state God’s commandment to the Israelites around 1500 B.C. to commemorate His rescuing them from slavery in Egypt by celebrating the annual feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. I also include Numbers 33:1-4, which describes the beginning of the Israelites’ journey out of Egypt during the first Passover and

Feast of Unleavened Bread. I will also draw a conclusion about how to understand the temporal structure of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread in relation to the start of the Israelites' journey out of Egypt.[2]

After my list and explanation of the six Old Testament passages, the next section will contain a list and discussion of five New Testament passages that refer to the span of time between Jesus' death and resurrection. These are Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 8:31; Luke 24:46; John 2:19-22; and 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. The key will be to notice how the time interval of three days is used in each passage so as to interpret it properly. For example, does three days mean that Jesus died on Friday as the first day, so that Saturday is the second day and Sunday is the third day, which would also mean that Jesus rose "on the third day," Sunday? Or does it mean something else?

The conclusion I am going to draw is that the Jews of Jesus' day believed that the Passover and Unleavened Bread refer to two separate feasts connected together both by the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and by unleavened bread, which is the "bread of affliction" (עֳנִי = misery, oppression; κάκωσις in the LXX = mistreatment, oppression) (cf. Deuteronomy 16:3). Also, these two separate feasts occur not concurrently with one another, but the Feast of Unleavened Bread is subsequent to the Passover, so that both feasts together comprise a total of eight sequential days—one day for the Passover and seven days for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.[3]

Using the above temporal framework, we will learn that both the first day and the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are Sabbaths, meaning that the Jews were prohibited from doing any work on them. Nevertheless, if the normal, weekly Sabbath, as prescribed in the Ten Commandments, falls sometime during the second through the sixth day of this feast, then it too must be observed. Thus, there is a possibility that the Jews must keep three Sabbath days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We will find that this was exactly the case during the week of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, i.e., that the weekly Sabbath occurred two days after the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—stretching the time out from one day to two days that the women, who bought spices with which to anoint Jesus' body in the tomb, had to wait in order to perform their task of respect. And this will be important for our determining the interval of time between Jesus' death and resurrection.

There is also the fact that the Jews designate the beginning of a "day" not at midnight, but at sunset in the evening, which means that the "day" ends at sunset the next evening in accordance with the author's statements in the creation account of Genesis 1, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day [or "a second day," etc.]." This also fits with the fact that the Jews of Jesus' day understood that the Passover in Exodus 12 began with the sacrifice of the lamb in the evening of the Passover. Thus they interpreted the Hebrew phrase in Exodus 12:6 and Numbers 9:3 בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם (*beyn ha'arbayim*), which literally means "between the two evenings," as sundown at the beginning of the Passover "day."[4] This obviously also implied for them that the Passover ended at sunset the next day, so that Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples in the evening of the Passover and was crucified after sunup the next day, which was still the Passover, i.e., at 9 a.m. and approximately 9 hours before the Passover ended at sunset.

Having derived the temporal structure of the feasts and Passion Week from the Old Testament passages and the events as they are described in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and along with the vital piece of information from Matthew 12:40 where Jesus predicts that he will remain dead "for three days and three nights," we will arrive at the conclusion that Jesus died on Wednesday (the Passover) and rose from the dead before sundown on Saturday (the weekly Sabbath). Therefore, when the women, Peter, and John went to observe the tomb Sunday morning, it was empty. This is a lot of information to digest and assimilate, but it should become clearer throughout the rest of the paper.

And all this work that we are putting into understanding the Old Testament and New Testament passages in conjunction with the Gospel accounts of the Passion week will provide us with a fresh and satisfying appreciation for two of the most important events in human history, the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. These two events preceded a third most important event, his ascension from the earth. And all three of these events have preceded a fourth most important event, Jesus' return, which will constitute the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel when he establishes the millennial kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem. And Jesus' return will also result in his interceding on behalf of all those who have authentically believed in the one true God, the God of the Bible, throughout human history such that they receive God's mercy, forgiveness, and morally perfect life in the eternal Kingdom of God.

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES CONCERNING THE PASSOVER AND FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

In this section, I provide a modified translation from the NAS95 Bible of six Old Testament passages—Exodus 11:1-13:16, Leviticus 23:4-8, Numbers 9:1-5, Numbers 28:16-25, Numbers 33:1-4, and Deuteronomy 16:1-8. These explain God's requirements for the Jews regarding the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread and in some cases describe their actually celebrating them. We will see that we need to apply the same principles of the art of storytelling to these passages as I have suggested for those concerning the Passion Week.

For example, Exodus 12 mentions a Sabbath rest for the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread while Deuteronomy 16 mentions only that for the seventh day. Is Deuteronomy wrong? No. It is just not complete. In addition, these passages are relatively unclear on exactly when the Israelites began their journey out of Egypt. Therefore, we will be as careful and thoughtful as we can in bringing all the information from these passages to bear on our conclusions.

Before we look at these passages, we should remind ourselves of their historical background. In approximately 2000 B.C., God spoke to Abraham and promised him not only descendants who would eventually become the greatest people on earth, but also a land which has become known as the land of Israel. Abraham's son Isaac became the father of Jacob who in turn became the father of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt, where the following generations grew in number and became a strong people within the land. But eventually Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, feared how powerful the Israelites had become so that he "appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor…, and [t]he Egyptians made their lives bitter" (cf. Exodus 1:8-14). God had told Abraham that this was going to happen when He said in Genesis 15:13,14, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions." In accord with God's prediction, the Israelites appealed to Him because of their harsh lives, and He answered them by sending Moses to lead them out of Egypt, even though they originally rejected him and his offer to help them (cf. Exodus 2:11-4:31).

Nevertheless, God granted favor to Moses, who went to Pharaoh and requested that he permit the Israelites to go three days journey into the desert to worship their God. Pharaoh balked at the idea, which God had warned Moses would happen, so that the only way that Pharaoh would allow the Israelites to leave was under compulsion, literally "by a strong hand" as He said in Exodus 3:19. In addition, God gave Moses three miracles to perform in order to verify for his fellow Jews that God had sent him as their leader. Alongside his brother Aaron, Moses informed the Israelites' elders of God's plan to bring them out of Egypt, and the people believed him after he performed the three miracles. Then Moses and Aaron began the process of convincing Pharaoh to allow the Jews to leave and worship God in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 4 & 5).

Thus, God sent nine plagues on the land to persuade him as recorded in Exodus 7:14-10:29. After some of the plagues, Pharaoh would relent but then change his mind and forbid the people from leaving. This was part of God's plan to demonstrate His sovereignty and power over all people and history. God had told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of multiplying His miracles in the land of Egypt. He also communicated to Pharaoh through Moses that He had the power to annihilate the entire Egyptian nation. However, He had chosen not to do so in order to reveal His power through the multiple calamities and make Himself known "throughout all the earth" (cf. Exodus 9:15,16). After the nine plagues, there is the first of our six passages regarding the Passover and Unleavened Bread—Exodus 11:1-13:16. It describes the tenth and last plague, when during one night God kills the firstborn male of every Egyptian household and every firstborn of their cattle. We may find it difficult to imagine how traumatic such a catastrophic event would be, but the more we allow ourselves to do so, the better we will understand how significant the Passover and Unleavened Bread are for the Jews.

Their God has promised them unsurpassed greatness in human history and to live on the land of Israel, formerly Canaan, in complete security. And for a period of time after Jacob and his sons' families moved to Egypt to escape a famine in Canaan, they have been great, growing in numbers and prosperity. But then the Egyptians become concerned about their strength and enslave them, so that they have been suffering horribly under their oppression. As a result, they must be wondering if God has forgotten His promises and abandoned them, especially when they had done nothing wrong by fleeing the famine in Canaan at the suggestion of one of their most important ancestors, Joseph (cf. Genesis 42-Exodus 1). Meanwhile, the Egyptians are taking advantage of their presence and labor and feeling quite confident in

oppressing the Israelites. All the while the Israelites are appealing to their God, the one true God of all creation, to free them from their slavery.

The arrogance of the Egyptians manifests itself most obviously through Pharaoh's stubbornness not to allow the Israelites to worship their God in the desert, even though his people and he suffer plague after plague. The evidence is clear that the God of the Jews could crush them completely. Yet Pharaoh demonstrates the height of evil by rejecting both the evidence and God's request through Moses. Finally, after nine horrible afflictions, God decides to deliver one last blow to convince Pharaoh to let His people go. This is about 1500 B.C. and five hundred years after Abraham when they have been living in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. The last plague will require the Israelites to kill and eat a lamb the night that God visits every home in Egypt which does not have blood from a slaughtered and eaten lamb spread on the door frame of the house. This invasion of each home will produce the death of every firstborn male of humans and animals throughout the land. The Jews perform this blood act, while the Egyptians do not. The result is a shocking, gut-wrenching loss in every Egyptian household, including Pharaoh's. Finally, Pharaoh gives in to Moses' request for the Israelites to leave, while his fellow Egyptians, in the midst of their inconsolable grief, join in urging them to depart as quickly as possible before they all die.

In order that the Jews never forget the massive and powerful destruction that God causes in Egypt along with the wonderful and significant rescue from slavery that He accomplishes through Moses' leadership, God requires that they celebrate and commemorate these mighty acts once a year. And they do this by eating the Passover lamb and unleavened bread, the bread of "affliction," which points to the oppressive conditions the Jews endured at the hands of the Egyptians and because they left in haste to escape them (cf. Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3). In other words, unleavened bread can be prepared in less time than leavened bread. Plus, it preserves itself longer. Thus, God directed them to withhold leaven from the bread so that they could make and eat it quickly, take any leftovers with them, and flee their oppressors into the wilderness towards the Red Sea as soon as they got permission from Pharaoh.

The six passages we will examine describe God's instructions and requirements for both the first Passover meal in Egypt and the rest of them that the Jews eat annually after it. And it is approximately the 1500th one that Jesus eats with his apostles the night before he dies on the cross for all sinful human beings who are willing to embrace him as the Jewish Messiah, King, and Priest and to rescue them from their slavery to sin and God's eternal condemnation.

We begin with Exodus 11:1-13:16 that describes the first Passover meal, the dreadful and calamitous death among the Egyptians, the Israelite's leaving Egypt, and God's instituting the Passover and Unleavened Bread as annual celebrations for the Jews. And then I follow this passage with Leviticus 23:4-8, Numbers 9:1-5, Numbers 28:16-25, Numbers 33:1-4, and Deuteronomy 16:1-8.

Exodus 11:1-13:16 – God Establishes the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread and Brings the Israelites Out of Egypt

Exodus 11:1 Now Yahweh had said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.[5] 2 Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold." 3 Yahweh gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

Exodus 11:4 So Moses said [to Pharaoh], "Thus says Yahweh, '**About midnight** I am going out into the midst of Egypt, 5 and **all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die**, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well.'[6] 6 Moreover, there shall be **a great cry in all the land of Egypt**, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. 7 But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how **Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel**.[7] 8 All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh **in hot anger**.[8]

Exodus 11:9 Thus Yahweh had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”[9] 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh. **Yet Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart**, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 12:1 Now Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 “This month shall be the beginning of months for you. It is to be the **first month of the year** to you [Abib (Exodus 13:4; Deuteronomy 16:1), Nisan (Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7)].[10] 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the **tenth** of this month they are each one **to take a lamb** (שֶׂה =lamb or kid; πρόβατον (LXX)) for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.[11] 4 Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them. According to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be **an unblemished male a year old**. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the **fourteenth day** of the same month (עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה עַד אַרְבָּעָה). Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is **to kill it at twilight** (בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם = between the two evenings; πρὸς ἑσπέραν = towards/during the evening (LXX)).’[12]

Exodus 12:7 ‘Moreover, they shall take some of the **blood** and put it **on the two doorposts and on the lintel** of the houses in which they eat it. 8 **They shall eat the flesh that same night** (בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה) (τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ (LXX)), **roasted with fire**, and **they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs**.[13] 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails.[14] 10 And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.[15] 11 Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is Yahweh’s **Passover** (פֶּסַח) (πασχα).[16] 12 For I will go through the land of Egypt **on this night** (בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה) (ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ (LXX)), and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am Yahweh.[17] 13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live. And **when I see the blood I will pass over you** (וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵכֶם) (καὶ σκεπάσω ὑμᾶς), and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 Now this day will be **a memorial** to you, and you shall **celebrate it as a feast** (חַג) to Yahweh. Throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a **permanent ordinance** (חֻקַּת עוֹלָם) (νόμιμον αἰώνιον (LXX)).’[18]

Exodus 12:15 ‘**Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread**, but on the first day (בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן) (ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς πρώτης (LXX)) you shall remove leaven from your houses.[19] For whoever eats anything **leavened from the first day until the seventh day** (מִיּוֹם הָרִאשֹׁן עַד־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִעִי) (ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς πρώτης ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς ἑβδόμης (LXX)), that person shall be cut off from Israel.[20] 16 On the **first day** you shall have **a holy assembly**, and **another holy assembly on the seventh day**. **No work at all shall be done on them**, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you.[21] 17 Thus you shall also observe the **Unleavened Bread**, for **on this very day** I brought your multitude out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a **permanent ordinance** (חֻקַּת עוֹלָם) (νόμιμον αἰώνιον (LXX)).[22] 18 (In the **first month** [Abib, Nisan], on the **fourteenth day** of the month at evening (בָּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּעֶרֶב) (τῇ τεσσαρεσκαιδεκάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ μηνὸς τοῦ πρώτου ἀφ᾽ ἑσπέρας (LXX)), you shall eat **unleavened bread**, **until the twenty-first day** of the month **at evening** (עַד יוֹם הָאֶחָד וְעֶשְׂרִים לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּעֶרֶב) (ἕως ἡμέρας μιᾶς καὶ εἰκάδος τοῦ μηνὸς ἕως ἑσπέρας (LXX)).[23]) 19 **Seven days** there shall be no leaven found in your houses. For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land.[24] 20 You shall not eat anything leavened. In all your dwellings you shall eat **unleavened bread**.’”

Exodus 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the **Passover lamb**.[25] 22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the **blood** which is in the basin, and apply some of the **blood** that is in the basin **to the lintel and the two doorposts**. And none of you shall go outside the door of his house **until morning** (עַד־בֹּקֶר) (ἕως πρωί (LXX)).[26] 23 For Yahweh will pass through to smite the Egyptians. And when He sees the **blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts**, Yahweh will **pass over** the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.[27] 24 And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever (עַד־עוֹלָם) (ἕως αἰῶνος (LXX)). 25 When you **enter the land** which Yahweh will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite.[28] 26 And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ 27 you shall say, ‘It is a

Passover sacrifice (זֶבַח־פֶּסַח) (θυσία τὸ πασχα τοῦτο (LXX)) to Yahweh who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians. But He spared our homes.'"[29]

And the people bowed low and worshiped. 28 Then the sons of Israel went and did so. Just as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

Exodus 12:29 Now it came about **at midnight** (בַּחֲצִי הַלַּיְלָה) (μεσούσης τῆς νυκτὸς (LXX)) that **Yahweh struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt**, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.[30] 30 Pharaoh arose **in the night**, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was **a great cry in Egypt**, for there was **no home where there was not someone dead**. 31 Then he sent a message to Moses and Aaron **at night** and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel. And go, worship Yahweh, as you have said.[31] 32 Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, **and bless me also**."[32] 33 The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead."[33] 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.[34]

Exodus 12:35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing.[35] 36 And Yahweh had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:37 **Now the sons of Israel journeyed** from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.[36] 38 A **mixed multitude also** (וְגַם־עֵרֶב רַב; καὶ ἐπίμικτος πολὺς (LXX)) went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.[37] 39 They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of **unleavened bread**. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and **could not delay**, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.[38]

Exodus 12:40 Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, **all the multitude of Yahweh** (כָּל־צִבְאוֹת יְהוָה; πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις (LXX)) went out from the land of Egypt.[39] 42 It is **a night** to be observed for Yahweh for having brought them out from the land of Egypt. **This night** is for Yahweh, to be observed by all the sons of Israel **throughout their generations**.[40]

Exodus 12:43 And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the **ordinance of the Passover**: no foreigner is to eat of it.[41] 44 But every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.[42] 45 A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. 46 It is to be eaten in a single house. You are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. 47 **All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this**. 48 But **if a stranger sojourns with you**, and celebrates the **Passover** to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it. And he shall be like a native of the land. **But no uncircumcised person may eat of it**.[43] 49 The **same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger** (וְלַגֵּר) (καὶ τῷ προσελθόντι (LXX)) who sojourns among you."[44]

Exodus 12:50 Then all the sons of Israel did so. They did just as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And **on that same day** (בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (LXX)) Yahweh brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

Exodus 13:1 Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "**Sanctify to Me every firstborn**, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast. It belongs to Me."

Exodus 13:3 Moses said to the people, "**Remember this day** in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery, because by a powerful hand Yahweh brought you out from this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten. 4 **On this day in the month of Abib**, you are about to go forth. 5 It shall be when Yahweh brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, **which He swore to your fathers to give you**, a land flowing with milk and honey, that **you shall observe this rite in this month**.[45] 6 **For seven days** you shall eat **unleavened bread**, and **on the seventh day there shall be a feast** to Yahweh. 7 **Unleavened bread** shall be eaten **throughout the seven days**. And nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among

you in all your borders. 8 You shall tell your son **on that day**, saying, 'It is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the Torah of Yahweh may be in your mouth, because with a powerful hand Yahweh brought you out of Egypt.[46] 10 Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time **from year to year**."

Exodus 13:11 "Now when Yahweh brings you to the land of the Canaanite, **as He swore to you and to your fathers**, and gives it to you, 12 you shall devote to Yahweh **the first offspring of every womb**, and the first offspring of every beast that you own. The males belong to Yahweh. 13 But every first offspring of a donkey **you shall redeem with a lamb**, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And **every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem**.[47] 14 And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that Yahweh killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to Yahweh the males, the first offspring of every womb, but **every firstborn of my sons I redeem**.' 16 So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt." [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Leviticus 23:4-8 – Repetition of Commandments Regarding the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:4 "'These are the appointed times of Yahweh (מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה) (αἱ ἑορταὶ τῷ κυρίῳ (LXX)), holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.[48] **5** In the **first month** [Abib (Deuteronomy 16:1), Nisan (Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7)], on the **fourteenth day** of the month **at twilight** [sundown] (בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם = between the two evenings) (ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἑσπερινῶν = on the middle toward the evenings (LXX)) is Yahweh's **Passover**.[49] **6** Then on the **fifteenth day** of the same month there is the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) (ἑορτὴ τῶν ἀζύμων (LXX)) to Yahweh. **For seven days** you shall eat **unleavened bread**.[50] **7** On the **first day** you shall have a **holy convocation**. **You shall not do any laborious work** [High Sabbath].[51] **8** But **for seven days** you shall present an offering by fire to Yahweh. On the **seventh day** is a **holy convocation**. **You shall not do any laborious work** [High Sabbath].'"[52] [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Numbers 9:1-5 – Repetition of Commandments Regarding the Passover and the Israelites Observe Them the Year After They Leave Egypt

Numbers 9:1 Thus Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month **of the second year** after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2 "Now, let the sons of Israel observe the **Passover** at its appointed time.[53] 3 On the **fourteenth day of this month**, **at twilight** (בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם = between the two evenings; πρὸς ἑσπέραν = towards/during the evening (LXX)), you shall observe it at its appointed time. You shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances."[54] 4 So Moses told the sons of Israel to observe the **Passover**. 5 They observed the **Passover** in the first month, on the **fourteenth day** of the month, **at twilight** ((בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם = between the two evenings) in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did.[55] [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Numbers 28:16-25 – Repetition of Commandments Regarding the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread

Numbers 28:16 'Then on the **fourteenth day of the first month** shall be Yahweh's **Passover**.[56] 17 On the **fifteenth day of this month** shall be **a feast**. **Unleavened bread** shall be eaten **for seven days**. 18 On the **first day** shall be a **holy convocation**. You shall do **no laborious work** [High Sabbath].[57] 19 You shall present an offering by fire, a burnt offering to Yahweh—two bulls and one ram and seven male lambs one year old, having them without defect.[58] 20 For their grain offering, you shall offer fine flour mixed with oil—three-tenths of an ephah [bushel, 64 pints] for a bull and two-tenths for the ram. 21 A tenth of an ephah you shall offer for each of the seven lambs 22 and one

male goat for a sin offering to make atonement for you. 23 You shall present these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering.[59] 24 After this manner you shall present daily, **for seven days**, the food of the offering by fire, of a soothing aroma to Yahweh. It shall be presented with its drink offering in addition to the continual burnt offering. 25 On the **seventh day** you shall have a **holy convocation**, You shall do **no laborious work** [High Sabbath].'[60] [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Numbers 33:1-4 – Description of the First Passover and Leaving Egypt in the List of Journeys Through the Desert

Numbers 33:1 These are the journeys of the sons of Israel, by which they came out from the land of Egypt by their armies, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.[61] 2 Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of Yahweh, and these are their journeys according to their starting places. 3 They journeyed **from Rameses** in the first month, **on the fifteenth day of the first month**. **On the next day after the Passover** the sons of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians,[62] 4 **while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom Yahweh had struck down among them**. Yahweh had indeed executed judgments on their gods. [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Deuteronomy 16:1-8 – Repetition of Commandments Regarding the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread in the List of the Three Annual Feasts

Deuteronomy 16:1 "Observe the month of Abib [Nisan (Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7)] and celebrate the **Passover** to Yahweh your God, for in the month of Abib **Yahweh your God brought you out of Egypt by night**.[63] 2 You shall sacrifice the **Passover** to Yahweh your God from the flock and the herd in the place where Yahweh chooses to establish His name. 3 You shall not eat leavened bread with it. **Seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread**, the **bread of affliction** (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), **so that you may remember all the days of your life** the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.[64] 4 For **seven days** no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. And none of the flesh **which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day** (בָּעֶרֶב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן) (τὸ ἑσπέρας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πρώτῃ (LXX)) shall remain overnight until morning.[65] 5 You are not allowed to sacrifice the **Passover** in any of your towns which Yahweh your God is giving you. 6 But at the place where Yahweh your God chooses to establish His name, **you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset** (בָּעֶרֶב כְּבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ) (ἑσπέρας πρὸς δυσμὰς ἡλίου (LXX)), **at the time that you came out of Egypt**.[66] 7 You shall cook and eat it in the place which Yahweh your God chooses. In the morning you are to return to your tents.[67] 8 **Six days you shall eat unleavened bread**, and on the **seventh day** there shall be a **solemn assembly** to Yahweh your God. **You shall do no work on it** [High Sabbath]."[68] [modified NAS95; emphasis mine]

Explanation of the Above Old Testament Passages Regarding the Annual Passover and Unleavened Bread

If we consider only Exodus 11:1-13:6, Numbers 9:1-5, and Deuteronomy 16:1-8, it sounds as though the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are one feast with two names and lasting a total of seven days.[69] It also sounds as though the Passover as the first day of this feast is a High Sabbath of no work, while the seventh day is also a High Sabbath of no work. In addition, we get the impression that the Israelites began their journey out of Egypt on the same day God had caused the death of the firstborn male of all Egyptian families and animals during the night starting at midnight.

However, if we also take into account the other three passages, we see first that Leviticus 23:4-8 states that the 14th of the first month, which is Abib, is the Passover, while the 15th begins the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread with both the first day, the 15th, and the seventh day, the 21st, being High Sabbaths of no work. Numbers 28:16-25 is possibly a little ambiguous, but it, too, describes the Passover and Unleavened Bread in the same way as Leviticus 23:4-8. Then, Numbers 33:1-4 indicates that the Israelites began their trek out of Egypt on the 15th day of Abib, which was the day after the Passover of the 14th. There are two possibilities here. The first is that they left their homes and started walking about sunset which was technically the beginning of the 15th of Abib. The second is that they waited until the

next morning which was still the 15th and began their journey then. But because of Deuteronomy 16:1, which says that God brought the Israelites out of Egypt "at night," the former is correct. This also seems the better choice both because the Egyptians were so anxious for them to leave after the devastating loss of their firstborn sons and animals, and because the Israelites were equally desperate to leave in order finally to escape the slavery they had been suffering. Therefore, if we allow for some degree of a lack of clarity in the Exodus and Deuteronomy passages along with Numbers 9:1-5 the same way we are going to allow for a lack of clarity in certain parts of the Gospel accounts of the Passion Week, we can confidently conclude that the proper way to understand all these passages within the context of the first Passover and journey out of Egypt by the Israelites is this –

> The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are two feasts, occurring one after the other for a total of eight days, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb at sunset on the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb that evening followed by the passing over of the angel of God during the night, resulting in the Israelites' leaving the evening of the 15th. Thus, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th, is a High Sabbath and a travel day for the Israelites, and six days later, the 21st is another High Sabbath that ends the two feasts.[70]

At the risk of getting a little ahead of ourselves, if we take into account a few verses from the Gospel accounts, we can see that this interpretation of the Passover passages in the Old Testament fits with the sequence of events during the Passion Week. And we will confirm this interpretation in the midst of our detailed analysis of all the Gospel passages in the third and fourth sections of this paper. We begin with John 19:31, which tells us that the Jews do not want Jesus' body to remain on the cross during the next day, because it is a "High Sabbath" ("for that Sabbath was a high day" [NAS95]; literally "because the day of that Sabbath was great" (ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου)). Similar to John 19:31, Luke 23:54 says that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bury Jesus as the Sabbath is about to begin. Thus, these two men take Jesus' body down from the cross and bury him before this specific Sabbath day. However, we will also find that while it is a High Sabbath, it is not the regular, weekly Sabbath found in the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-14).[71] Instead, it is the first day of Unleavened Bread where no work is allowed and the day after the Passover (cf. Leviticus 23:5-7; Numbers 28:16-18). Our analysis of the Passion Week will also show that the Passover was Tuesday evening to Wednesday evening and, therefore, the first High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread was Wednesday evening to Thursday evening.

Additionally, Mark 15:47 tells us that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary observe Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as they bury Jesus' body. Then, Mark 16:1 tells us that *after* the Sabbath, which must have been the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread mentioned in John 19:31, the two Marys buy spices in order to anoint Jesus' dead body with them. In conjunction with this, Luke 23:56 indicates that a group of women, who have seen Jesus buried and are going to anoint Jesus' dead body, prepare spices with which to do so. Then they rest on the Sabbath. But is this the High Sabbath of Wednesday evening until sunset on Thursday? I do not think so. First, these are women from Galilee, who would not have been carrying spices with them on the journey from northern Israel, because they would be too heavy to transport easily and because the women probably were not expecting Jesus to die and be buried. Second, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus entomb Jesus so close to sunset that it would not have been possible for these women to find a merchant who was selling spices so late in the day as the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread was beginning Wednesday evening. Therefore, they prepare their spices by buying them on the same day as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as told by Mark, so that they all rest on the same Sabbath, which is the weekly Sabbath. In other words, the weekly Sabbath follows two days after the first High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread with the day in between for the women to buy and prepare their spices in order to anoint Jesus' body with them. And this accords with the fact that Luke goes on to say in 24:1-9 that the women in his account visit the grave "on the first day of the week…and found the stone rolled away from the tomb," just as Matthew says in 28:1 that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to look at the grave "after the Sabbath" and on "the first day of the week." If Luke's women had rested only during the High Sabbath of Thursday, we would expect them to visit Jesus' tomb on Friday. But, instead, they do so on the first day of the week, which would be Sunday. So, again, all the women buy and prepare spices on Friday, the day after the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. Then, they rest on the weekly Sabbath of Saturday, and go to the tomb on Sunday.

Thus, if the two Marys have purchased their spices after the “High Sabbath” and Luke’s women have rested on a “Sabbath” so that all of them end up visiting Jesus’ tomb on the same day, the “first day of the week,” then as I have suggested, there are two Sabbaths, the High Sabbath after the Passover when Jesus was crucified and the weekly Sabbath two days later and just before the first day of the week when the women come to Jesus’ grave. As we will see, this also accords with Jesus’ own statement in Matthew 12:40 to the effect that he would remain dead and buried “for three days and three nights,” so that the best way to understand the above comments in Mark, Luke, and John is that the “Sabbath” of Mark 16:1 is the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, i.e., the 15th of the first month (Abib/Nisan) of the Jewish calendar, and the “Sabbath” of Luke 23:56 is the weekly Sabbath two days later. This also means that when John says in 19:42, “Therefore, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there on account of the day of preparation of the Jews,” he is referring to the Passover as “the day of preparation” on which Jesus died before the first High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. The second High Sabbath of this feast would come six days later according to Leviticus 23:7-8.

We now know then that before the Israelites leave Egypt, God institutes the two celebrations or feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. And the Jews are required to perform them every year throughout the rest of the current realm’s history so as to commemorate God’s rescuing them from slavery in Egypt around 1500 B.C. On the 10th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, the month of Abib/Nisan, each family picks a lamb (or kid) for themselves. At the beginning of the 14th day of the month, they kill this lamb at sundown, roast it over fire, and eat it that evening with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This is the Passover meal, and if there is any remaining lamb, they are to burn it that night so that none is left over to the next morning. Plus, this same day during the entire day they also prepare their homes for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins at sundown, by removing any leaven from them.

The 15th day of the first month begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, during which the Jews eat unleavened bread with their meals. This first day is also a special Sabbath day which has been called a High Sabbath, on which, like the regular weekly Sabbath, the Jews do no work. We should note that the first time the Jews celebrated this special High Sabbath in Egypt, it was also the start of their journey out of Egypt. In other words, traveling out of Egypt was not considered labor by God because it was their means of taking advantage of God’s powerful rescue from slavery. The last day of the feast, the seventh day, is also a High Sabbath of no work.

As mentioned in the Introduction, if a regular Sabbath day occurs in between the two High Sabbaths of the Feast of Unleavened Bread or on the Passover, it adds a third Sabbath rest of no work to the eight days that the two feasts comprise. Obviously, if the regular Sabbath occurs on the same day as either of the two High Sabbaths, there are only two Sabbaths during the eight days of these two feasts.

In the case of the Passion Week, Jesus’ last week when he is crucified and raised from the dead, the regular weekly Sabbath falls three days after the Passover and thus two days after the first High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The chart below shows this sequence of the eight days of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread the week that Jesus is crucified and rises from the dead. At the end of the next section I will add columns to this chart that list these latter events and others. The chart in this section is intended only to highlight the timing and events of these feasts as prescribed by God in Egypt and within the Mosaic Covenant.[72]

Month	Date				Mosaic Covenant Event
Abib/Nisan	10	Night			
		Day			Select Lamb
	11	Night			
		Day			
	12	Night			
		Day			
	13	Night			
		Day			
	14	Night			Kill lamb at sundown and eat it
		Day	**Passover**		Preparation Day – Remove all leaven from house
	15	Night	**High Sabbath**	**Feast of Unleavened Bread**	Sabbath begins at sundown
		Day			Holy Assembly (no work)
	16	Night	Day Two		
		Day			
	17	Night	**Weekly Sabbath**		Sabbath begins at sundown
		Day			Holy Day (no work)
	18	Night			
		Day	Day Four		
	19	Night	Day Five		
		Day			
	20	Night	Day Six		
		Day			Preparation Day
	21	Night	**High Sabbath**		Sabbath begins at sundown
		Day			Holy Assembly (no work)
	22	Night			
		Day			

THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THE TIME INTERVAL BETWEEN JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

In this section I provide my translations of five New Testament passages, and I briefly explain these passages and their significance to our goal of better understanding the time interval between Jesus' crucifixion and his resurrection.

Matthew 12:38-40[73]

12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees responded to him and said, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." 12:39 And he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous race/generation craves a sign, but no sign will be given them except the sign of Jonah the prophet. 12:40 For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days, **so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights**. [emphasis mine]

Mark 8:31

8:31 And he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, **and after three days rise from the dead**. [emphasis mine]

Luke 24:46-47

24:46 And he said to them, "Thus it has been written for the Messiah to suffer **and to rise from the dead on the third day**, 24:47 and for repentance for forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in his name to all the nations starting from Jerusalem." [emphasis mine]

John 2:18-22

2:18 The Jews responded and said to him, "What sign do you show us, that is the basis of your doing these things?" 2:19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, **and I will raise it up in three days**." 2:20 Therefore, the Jews said to him, "This temple was built in forty years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 2:21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 2:22 When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the writing and the statement which Jesus had spoken. [emphasis mine]

1 Corinthians 15:1-5

15:1 Now, I make known to you, brothers, the good news that I proclaimed to you, that you also received, on the basis of which you also stand, 15:2 through which you also are being saved, if you hold firmly to that message which I proclaimed to you, unless you believed in vain. 15:3 I delivered to you of first importance what I in turn had received, that the Messiah died for our sins according to the scriptures, 15:4 that he was buried, **and that he was raised from the dead on the third day** according to the scriptures, 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve. [emphasis mine]

Explanation of Above New Testament Passages Regarding the Timing of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

The last four passages state unequivocally that Jesus is going to die and then rise from the dead, and they say that the latter will occur "after three days," "on the third day," "in three days," and "on the third day" respectively. But the clearest and most detailed passage regarding the temporal distance between his death and resurrection is the first one, Matthew 12:38-40. Jesus says that, after dying, he will "be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." If, as it seems reasonable, we take his being "in the heart of the earth" as his having been buried after dying, then there will be a total of three full days and three full nights before he rises from the dead.

However, this presents a problem for the traditional view that Jesus died and was buried on the afternoon of Good Friday and then rose from the dead sometime before the early morning, i.e., before 6

a.m., of Easter Sunday. Friday night and Saturday night are only two nights, and Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon along with Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning are less than two days. Therefore, there simply is not enough time for Jesus to have spent "three days and three nights" in his grave. The solution to this problem relies heavily on what I already mentioned in the previous section, which includes putting together not only the Old Testament information regarding the Passover and Unleavened Bread, but also the information from the Gospels regarding Jesus' death and burial and the women who observed these events. To review, Luke 23:54 shows that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bury Jesus as the Sabbath is about to begin. Thus, they bury Jesus on the Passover just before sundown and the beginning of the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, i.e., the 15th of Abib/Nisan (cf. Leviticus 23:6-7). And this is in accordance with John 19:42, "Therefore, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there on account of the day of preparation [the Passover] of the Jews [for the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread]." In addition, Mark 16:1 and Luke 23:56 indicate that the women who want to anoint Jesus' body in the tomb buy spices between two sabbaths. The second is clearly the weekly Sabbath, so that the first must be the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread.

As a result, we come to realize that, because 1) Jesus and his disciples eat the Passover meal the night before his burial and 2) the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread is about to begin as he is being buried, the Passover cannot be the same as the first day of Unleavened Bread. This also means that the Passover is not a High Sabbath, so that the two feasts are actually two feasts. There is the Passover for one day and Unleavened Bread for seven days. Thus, we find that the solution to the problem presented by the traditional view with respect to Matthew 12:38-40 is that Jesus was crucified on the Passover, Wednesday, and rose from the dead no earlier than just before sundown on Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, so that the tomb was empty on Sunday morning when the women arrived to anoint his body with the spices which they had bought. Wednesday to Thursday, Thursday to Friday, and Friday to Saturday provide three days and three nights that Jesus was in his grave. The chart below shows the sequence of events based on this conclusion, which the rest of the paper will explain in more detail. This is the same chart as in the previous section but with two additional columns, "Day of Passion Week" and "Jesus Event."

Month	Date				Mosaic Covenant Event	Day of Passion Week	Jesus Event
Abib/Nisan	10	Night				Friday sundown to	
		Day			Select Lamb	Saturday sundown	
	11	Night				Saturday sundown to	
		Day				Sunday sundown	
	12	Night				Sunday sundown to	
		Day				Monday sundown	
	13	Night				Monday sundown to	
		Day				Tuesday sundown	
	14	Night	**Passover**		Kill lamb at sundown and eat it	Tuesday sundown to	Passover with Disciples
		Day			Preparation Day – Remove all leaven from house	Wednesday sundown	**Crucified** and Buried
	15	Night	**High Sabbath**	Feast of Unleavened Bread	Sabbath begins at sundown	Wednesday sundown to	
		Day			Holy Assembly (no work)	Thursday sundown	
	16	Night	Day Two			Thursday sundown to	
		Day				Friday sundown	
	17	Night	**Weekly Sabbath**		Sabbath begins at sundown	Friday sundown to	
		Day			Holy Day (no work)	Saturday sundown	**Resurrected***
	18	Night	Day Four			Saturday sundown to	
		Day				Sunday sundown	Appears to Women at the Tomb and Two Men on Road to Emmaus
	19	Night	Day Five			Sunday sundown to	Appears in a room to Apostles minus Thomas
		Day				Monday sundown	
	20	Night	Day Six			Monday sundown to	
		Day			Preparation Day	Tuesday sundown	
	21	Night	**High Sabbath**		Sabbath begins at sundown	Tuesday sundown to	
		Day			Holy Assembly (no work)	Wednesday sundown	
	22	Night				Wednesday sundown to	
		Day				Thursday sundown	

*before sundown

THE PASSION NARRATIVE WITH THE EMPTY TOMB AND APPEARANCES

In this part, we will walk through the accounts of the Passion Week as found in the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Along the way, I will briefly explain what is happening and why I assign these events to the day and hour which I do. I am using my translation of each of the Gospel accounts, and I am going to focus on the synoptic gospels (starting at Matthew 26:1, Mark 14:1, and Luke 22:1), add passages from John's gospel that are parallel, but, for brevity's sake, leave out John 13:1-20 (Jesus washes the disciples' feet), John 13:31-35 (Jesus commands the disciples to love one another), and John 14:1-17:26 (Jesus commissions the disciples to be his apostles who proclaim the gospel after he leaves the earth, and he prays that God the Father will guard their hearts and minds and those of the people who become his followers as a result of their evangelistic efforts). We will end at Matthew 28:15, Mark 16:13, Luke 24:43, and John 20:23.

There are six large sections, all listed below, that comprise at least one full day from sundown to sundown with the title of the section in black letters and the days shown in red letters like this[74] –

1. Jesus Predicts His Death and the Jews Plan to Kill Him
   SUNDAY sundown – MONDAY sundown
2. Jesus Visits Simon the Leper's Home, Judas Meets with the Jews, and the Disciples Prepare for the Passover
   MONDAY sundown – TUESDAY sundown
3. The Last Supper and Jesus' Arrest, Trials, Crucifixion and Burial
   TUESDAY sundown – WEDNESDAY sundown
4. The Guard at the Tomb
   WEDNESDAY sundown – THURSDAY sundown
5. The Women Buy Spices and Observe the Weekly Sabbath When the Resurrection Occurs
   THURSDAY sundown – FRIDAY sundown
   FRIDAY sundown – SATURDAY sundown
6. The Empty Tomb and Jesus' First Appearances
   SATURDAY sundown – SUNDAY sundown

Each large section has at least one subsection where I provide a title in bold, underlined black and the day and approximate time in red. Here is one example –

a. Jesus Predicts His Death on the Cross Two Days Before the Passover
As Sunday evening approaches or in the evening

1. Jesus Predicts His Death and the Jews Plan to Kill Him

SUNDAY sundown – MONDAY sundown (the 12th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

a. Jesus Predicts His Death on the Cross Two Days Before the Passover
As Sunday evening approaches or in the evening

Matthew 26:1-2	Mark 14:1a	Luke 22:1	John
26:1 Now (καὶ) when Jesus finished all these statements, he said to his disciples, 26:2 "You know that after two days the Passover occurs, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."[75]	14:1a Now (δὲ) the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away,	22:1 Now (δὲ) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching.	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

Jesus has been teaching in the temple area during the day on Sunday, the day after the weekly Sabbath. As the evening approaches or is occurring and he is returning to Bethany to spend the night, he explains to his disciples in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 the circumstances involving the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as that his *parousia*, which will be his grand entrance into his role as the king of Israel and "the end of the age" of the Gentiles' dominating the Jews (cf. Matthew 24:3), will take place after an extended period of time. This will be when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel (cf. Matthew 24:30-44; Revelation 19 & 20). Then, in Matthew 26:2 above, he informs his disciples that in two days the Passover begins, during which he will be betrayed, arrested, and sentenced to die by crucifixion. Mark mentions the Feast of Unleavened Bread since it follows the Passover. And Luke comments that the names of the two feasts are interchangeable.

Therefore, with only about 60 hours to go (since he will be crucified at 9 a.m. on Wednesday), Jesus tells his disciples that he will experience the excruciating death of crucifixion and that it will occur during Passover itself. This means that, in accordance with God's instructions for the Passover in Exodus 12 fifteen hundred years earlier when the Israelites were preparing to leave Egypt, the Jews, including Jesus' disciples, will sacrifice their lambs in the afternoon of Tuesday and eat the first Passover meal that evening. (We will find out Wednesday morning, when the Jewish leaders take Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate, that there is at least one more Passover meal during that particular day.) For Jesus' disciples, the Tuesday evening meal will be the "Last Supper," because the next morning, which will still be the Passover, Jesus by analogy will become the new sacrificial lamb of this feast as stated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 –

> 1 Corinthians 5:7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. **For indeed, our Passover lamb, the Messiah, was slaughtered** [emphasis mine].

In Matthew 26:2, Jesus uses the label Son of Man for himself. He is the Son of God who comes from mankind and rules over God's creation, which David describes in Psalm 8.[76] In other words, Jesus is God's proxy and representative on earth who is the final king of Israel from the line of David according to the Davidic Covenant which God made with him in 2 Samuel 7.[77] We will look more carefully at Psalm 8 and 2 Samuel 7 later in the narrative, but the Davidic Covenant and the psalms that refer to it are key for understanding Jesus and his role as the Messiah of Israel. On the one hand, God explicitly mentions the concept of the Son of God in Samuel 7, and many psalms that are typically labelled messianic psalms further explain the role, function, and experiences of the Messiah. Indeed, we can divide these messianic psalms into at least six categories, and the events of the Passion Week Narrative will explicitly refer to approximately sixteen of these psalms—

1) David writes a psalm about himself where his experiences become analogous to those of Jesus
   Psalms 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 131, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145
2) David writes a psalm about someone related to him where this person's experiences become analogous to those of Jesus
   Psalms 2, 8 (too)
3) David writes a psalm about Israel, and it is analogous to Jesus and future Israel
   Psalms 13, 14, 15, 24, 29, 36, 37, 53, 60, 65, 68, 122, 124, 131 (too), 133, 144 (too), 145 (too)
4) David writes a psalm that is a direct prediction of Jesus
   Psalms 16, 110
5) Another author writes a psalm about David that is analogous to Jesus
   Psalms 89, 132
6) Another author writes a psalm about someone related to David that is analogous to Jesus
   Psalms 45, 72, 127

b. The Jewish Leadership Plan Jesus' Death

Within the last week or so

Matthew 26:3-5	Mark 14:1b-2	Luke 22:2	John 11:47-53
26:3 Also (τότε), the chief priests and elders of the people were gathered together in the courtyard of the high priest named Caiaphas. 26:4 And they counseled together for the purpose of seizing Jesus by stealth and killing him. 26:5 But they were saying, "Not during the festival. Otherwise, a riot might occur among the people."	and (καὶ) the chief priests and scribes were seeking how to seize him by stealth and kill him. 14:2 But they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people."	22:2 And (καὶ) the chief priests and scribes were seeking how they could do away with him. Now they were afraid of the people.	11:47 Therefore (οὖν), the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together the Sanhedrin and were saying, "What are we going to do, because this man is performing many signs? 11:48 If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and they will take away both our place and our nation." 11:49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. 11:50 Nor do you consider that it is better for us that one man die for the people and that the whole nation not perish?" 11:51 But he did not say this from himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was about to die on behalf of the nation, 11:52 and not for the nation only, but so that he could gather together into one group the children of God who have been scattered abroad. 11:53 Therefore, from that day, they devised a plan to kill him.

Explanation of the Above Passages

It is perfectly understandable that our English Bible translate the first word of Matthew 26:3, τότε (*tote*), as "Then," as if the "chief priests and elders" met after Jesus made his comments to his disciples

that the Passover is just two days away, so that this is Sunday or Sunday evening. However, we will see that the meaning of the Greek word *tote* is more flexible, and I suggest that this scene could have taken place anytime within the last five days. This is why I translate the word "Also." Not only did Jesus tell his disciples on Sunday or that evening that the Passover would occur in two days, but also the Jewish leaders had met together a few days earlier and had decided that they needed to kill Jesus.

Thus, after being snubbed by Jesus when he chose his close disciples from the common people of Galilee, and watching him and hearing of him performing miracles in both Galilee and Jerusalem, including his raising his friend Lazarus from the dead, so that thousands of Jews are following him, and hearing him proclaim himself as the long-expected Messiah, the Jewish leadership have finally reached the point where they are convinced that they need to kill him and rid themselves this unwelcome competition, who is falsely claiming to be the Messiah. Consequently, sometime after Lazarus' resurrection in Bethany, they gather together "in the courtyard" of the home of the high priest, Caiaphas. Here, with great earnestness and unity of purpose, they begin to plot the arrest and death of Jesus, which he predicted to his disciples in the previous subsection. Mark indicates that their strategy is to catch Jesus completely unawares. But we know from several statements that Jesus makes during the course of his three-year relationship with his disciples, as told by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that Jesus knows exactly what is going to happen to him and that his crucifixion is required to fulfill his role as the Messiah. For example,

> Luke 9:18 And it happened that while he was praying alone, the disciples were with him, and he questioned them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"
> 9:19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again."
> 9:20 And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Messiah of God."
> 9:21 But he warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,
> 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."[78]

Even though John does not record Jesus' discussion with his disciples on the Mt. of Olives about the destruction of the temple and his return, I think that the story he tells of the gathering of the Sanhedrin and their conspiring to kill Jesus is the same as what Matthew, Mark, and Luke record. However, John provides his readers with more details about the leaders' thinking,

> John 11:47 Therefore, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together the Sanhedrin and were saying, "What are we going to do, because this man is performing many signs? 11:48 If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and they will take on both our place and our nation."

The Jews acknowledge that Jesus "is performing many" miracles, which should be an obvious sign to them that he is sanctioned by God to be a very special person, even the Messiah, which he has been claiming to be! However, because of their hard hearts, they skip over this important evidence and its significance, remaining completely committed to killing Jesus as soon as possible. In addition, unless someone can absolutely convince them that he is the Messiah, they are clearly more concerned about retaining their power and authority over the Jewish people, at least to the extent that the Romans are granting them. But if the whole nation sides with Jesus simply on the basis of the miracles that he has been performing, these leaders are worried that the Romans will consider their banding together like this as a threat to their exercising hegemony over all the Jewish people, including their religious leaders. And the Romans will respond by eliminating this group of middle managers and rule the people directly, thus firing the Sanhedrin from their jobs of teaching the people the Hebrew scriptures and God's commandments for the nation of Israel.

In the midst of their discussion, the high priest Caiaphas speaks up and says,

> John 11:49 "…You know nothing at all. 11:50 Nor do you consider that it is better for us that one man die for the people and that the whole nation not perish?"

Caiaphas first statement sounds as though he completely disagrees with what his fellow Jewish leaders are saying. However, I think that he is merely commenting on their confusion and their saying, "What are we going to do?" They seem to be waffling and not sure what is the best way to handle this situation with Jesus. Caiaphas speaks up and says, "I know exactly what we have to do! Kill Jesus!" And we will see during Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin that this is definitely where Caiaphas takes the proceedings in order to accomplish precisely this goal. He also adds that it just makes sense that "one man die for the people," so that "the whole nation not perish." In other words, think this through completely, and they will agree with him that getting rid of Jesus is the only solution to their retaining their position as religious leaders of the Jewish people and the Jewish people's retaining their semi-autonomy and distinctiveness according to the Old Testament in the sea of Gentile and pagan people who comprise most of the Roman Empire.

John then explains,

> John 11:51 But he did not say this from himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was about to die on behalf of the nation, 11:52 and not for the nation only, but so that he could gather together into one group the children of God who have been scattered abroad.

I suggest that John is saying that Caiaphas knew what he was saying *for his own sake and the sake of his fellow Jewish leaders, i.e., to guard them from any extreme measures that the Romans might take against them*, but he also did not realize that God was causing him, the primary, current ruler of the Jewish people (except, obviously for Jesus), to predict Jesus' death as a propitiatory offering to Him on behalf of the nation of Israel, *in order to provide the basis for His eventually gathering all the Jewish people back into the land when Jesus returns to restore the Davidic Kingdom and the Kingdom of Israel*. Maybe John is also referring to Gentiles who likewise "have been scattered abroad" outside the land of Israel and in the Roman Empire. This would be coherent with what John writes in chapter 12 about Gentiles who are visiting Jerusalem for the Passover and ask his disciples that they may see Jesus. Nevertheless, I think that it is more likely that John means only the Jews who have been "scattered" from the land of Israel over the last seven hundred years, because these are the ones who would be of more interest to Caiaphas besides. Therefore, the "one group" of the "children of God" will be the one nation of Israel, who are supposed to be THE group of authentic believers in God and His Messiah by virtue of God's having changed their hearts. And this we know from both the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation will take be the case when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel in fulfillment of God's first promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 to make his physical descendants the most powerful nation in human history.

In conclusion, the Jewish leaders know they must be careful, because Jesus' popularity among the Jews has grown. With many more people in Jerusalem from around Israel and the Roman Empire for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, they are afraid of provoking a riot if they kill him during these feasts. Thus, "they were seeking how to seize him by stealth and kill him," because they were saying, "Not during the festival lest there by a riot of the people." (cf. Mark 14:1b-2). Of course, the irony is that they are so anxious to be rid of him that, when Judas Iscariot makes himself available to betray Jesus the evening of the Passover, they do arrest and kill him at this time. Notice, by the way, that the priests and elders say "the festival," which is another instance where we see that it is typical for the Jews to refer to the Passover and Unleavened Bread as one feast and celebration.

Extra Information from John

Within the last two months and moving into April as the Passover approaches

John 11:54-57
11:54 Therefore (οὖν), Jesus no longer was walking out in the open among the Jews. Instead, he went away from there to the region near the desert, to the city called Ephraim. And he remained there with his disciples. 11:55 Now (δὲ) the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover in order to purify themselves. 11:56 Therefore, they were seeking Jesus and saying among one another as they stood in the temple, "What does it seem to you, that he is not coming to the

feast at all?” 11:57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given instructions that if anyone knew where he was, he was to report it, so that they could seize him.

Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead approximately two months earlier, and the Jewish leaders have decided to kill him because he is becoming too popular as a leader and teacher of the Jewish people. Yet, John indicates that the Passover in April is approaching, so that the Pharisees have instructed the people to let them know if Jesus appears in Jerusalem in order to arrest him and put him to death.

2. Jesus Visits Simon the Leper’s Home, Judas Meets with the Jews, and the Disciples Prepare for the Passover

MONDAY sundown – TUESDAY sundown (the 13th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

a. The Meal at Bethany and Mary’s Anointing Jesus With Spikenard

The previous **Wednesday** evening

Matthew 26:6-7	Mark 14:3	Luke	John 12:1-3
26:6 Now (δὲ) when Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, 26:7 a woman approached him having an alabaster vial of expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at the table.[79]	14:3 And (καὶ) when he was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the Leper and reclining at table, a woman came who had an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of pure spikenard. She broke the jar and poured it over his head.	Cf. Luke 7:36-50	12:1 Therefore (οὖν), Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 12:2 So they made dinner for him there, and Martha was serving. Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. 12:3 Mary took a pound of very expensive ointment of pure spikenard and anointed Jesus’ feet, and she wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the aroma of the ointment.

b. The Disciples Express Their Anger at the “Waste” of Expensive Perfume

The previous **Wednesday** evening

Matthew 26:8-9	Mark 14:4-5	Luke	John 12:4-6
26:8 But when the disciples saw this, they became indignant and said, “Why this waste? 26:9 For this could have been sold for a	14:4 But some were angry and saying to one another, “Why has this ointment been wasted? 14:5 For this ointment might have been sold	No parallel in Luke	12:4 Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples who was about to betray him, said, 12:5 “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred

high price and the money given to the poor.”	for over three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they were rebuking her.		denarii, and it given to the poor?” 12:6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and, having the money bag, he would steal what was put in it.

c. Jesus Commands the Disciples to Stop Their Anger and Then Refers to Her Good Deed

The previous **Wednesday** evening

Matthew 26:10-13	**Mark 14:6-9**	Luke	**John 12:7-8**
26:10 But Jesus was aware of what they were doing and said to them, “Why are you giving this woman a hard time? For she has done a good deed to me. 26:11 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. 26:12 For when she put this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 26:13 Truly I say to you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman did will be spoken of in memory of her.”	14:6 But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why are you causing her trouble? She has done a good deed for me. 14:7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them, but you do not always have me. 14:8 She has done what she could. She has poured oil on my body ahead of time for the burial. 14:9 Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”	No parallel in Luke	12:7 Therefore, Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may hold on to it for the day of my burial. 12:8 You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.”

Explanation of the Above Passages

As with the previous subsection, it would seem that this event “in the home of Simon the Leper” where a woman anoints Jesus’ head with ointment takes place after Jesus has commented that the Passover is in two days and after “the chief priests and elders” have met and decided to kill Jesus (as stated, for example, in Matthew 26:1-5). And this would make sense if John describes a previous meal “six days before the Passover” where Mary, Lazarus’ sister, anointed Jesus’ feet with ointment, even though the response of the disciples, and especially Judas, and Jesus’ subsequent rebuke and comments to them are the same. Certainly, one woman’s pouring ointment on Jesus’ *head* and another woman’s pouring ointment on his feet strongly suggests that the two events are not the same, while we have to assume that the disciples are so dull of thinking that the lesson they were supposed to learn from Jesus at the first meal is something they have to learn again four days later at the second meal!

But what if they really are the same event and the same meal? This would mean the following—

1) Like the previous subsubsection that began with *tote* (τότε) and described the gathering of the Jewish leaders, who decided to kill Jesus, this subsection points to an event that took place before the Olivet Discourse and before Jesus' states that the Passover is two days away.
2) Simon the Leper was probably Lazarus', Martha's, and Mary's father, so that they inherited the house when he died or took it over while he is still alive, even though there is no other reference to him in the gospel accounts.
3) Mary pours the ointment on both Jesus' head and his feet, but Matthew and Mark mention only the former (for their own reasons), while John describes the latter (for his own reason).

While these three points are possibly problematic enough to cause us to conclude that Matthew and Mark are talking about one event while John is writing about another, I do not think that the differences in the descriptions require this conclusion—as I will suggest as we proceed in understanding these accounts.

Both Matthew and Mark begin their descriptions by simply saying, "When Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper,…" While the mention the village Bethany, which is approximately two miles (3 km) east of Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives and is where Jesus stayed during the nights of the last week before his crucifixion, neither author is specific as to the exact timing of this event.[80] It sounds as though it is after Jesus has said in the previous verses that the Passover is two days away, meaning that it is Sunday evening. But does this meal have to take place after Jesus says this? No, if we allow both authors to be storytellers where, for their own purposes, they do not list and describe each event in exact chronological order. If this is the case, and I think that it is, John does present this event in chronological order and indicates in 12:1 that it took place "six days before the Passover," which would be the previous Wednesday evening. Assuming that I am correct, John goes on to say that Jesus "came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom [he] had raised from the dead." And Martha and Mary, his sisters, made dinner for his disciples and him, so that Lazarus also was "reclining at table with him."

In the midst of Martha's "serving" the group, "Mary took a pound of very expensive ointment of pure spikenard and anointed Jesus' feet, and she wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the aroma of the ointment." In contrast, Matthew and Mark write that an unnamed "woman" approached Jesus with a vial of "ointment" of pure spikenard and "poured it" on his "head." Does the fact that John tells us that "Mary" poured the "ointment" on Jesus "feet," while Matthew and Mark say that some woman poured the same kind of "ointment" on his "head" mean that they are either contradicting John or describing a completely different event? I suggest, No. Again, Matthew and Mark focus on Mary's pouring the "ointment" on his "head," while John focus on his "feet," so that she really did pour it on both.

Then, Matthew points out that "the disciples…became indignant" at the waste and comment that the ointment "could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor." Mark basically says the same thing, that "some were angry" and talking about how the ointment could have been sold for "three hundred denarii and given to the poor." One denarius was an average laborer's wage for one day's work. Therefore, 300 denarii are the equivalent of an about eleven months of wages. No wonder the disciples consider the women's actions wasteful. Indeed, they were even "rebuking" the woman. John is more specific, that it was "Judas Iscariot who was about to betray" Jesus who made the point that the ointment could have been sold for this price and money "given to the poor." But John also comments on Judas' motive for decrying the waste and the missed opportunity to help the poor, that "he said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and, having the money bag, he would steal what was put in it." Therefore, John's purpose in presenting this story and placing in its proper chronological place in the narrative is because he wants to understand all that was going on with Judas Iscariot, as we will see a little later.

While so far John has provided more details of this event, Matthew and Mark do such from this point on. John simply indicates that Jesus tells Judas to "leave her alone so that she can hold on" to the ointment and anoint him with it when he is buried. He also tells all the disciples that the poor will always exist, but he will be leaving them. Matthew and Mark say the same thing, along with the fact that the woman, i.e., Mary, has "done a good deed" for him. What does he mean? That she has anointed his "body" with ointment ahead of when it will be appropriate to do the same when he is buried, which other women later in the narrative will prepare to do with spices after he is actually buried. In other words, she has pre-anointed his dead body—because this has to be first and foremost on Jesus' mind, that within a week, he will die on the cross for the sins of Israel and the rest of mankind.

As a result, Jesus provides his own perspective on what she has done and giving eleven months of wages to the poor. While the poor will always exist, his physical presence on earth is only temporary. He is not denying that he will return to establish the Kingdom of God in Israel as described in the Old Testament prophets and Revelation 19 & 20. Nor is he denying that he and God the Father will be with his apostles after his ascension through the work of the Holy Spirit, just as he says in John 14:15-17 –

> John 14:15 "If you love me, you will guard my instructions. 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will send another Persuader to you so that he may be with you into the age, 14:17 the Spirit of Truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not see him and does not know him. You know him, that he abides with you and will be in you."

Instead, Jesus is saying, given the two *immediate* choices—caring for the poor or directly demonstrating one's faith in and respect for Jesus while he is alive during his first appearance—the latter is more important than the former. Why? I think because no one and nothing in the entire creation deserves our attention, honor, and respect more than Jesus. He is not being critical of helping the poor. He is simply putting it in perspective in connection with his role as the Messiah who must die in order for him to qualify to be the High Priest of sinners (cf. Hebrews). Caring for the poor (or any other act of kindness and love) makes rational and moral sense only in the context of a person's relationship to God and to Jesus. Even if this anonymous woman has not yet grasped the fact that he is going to die on the cross and be buried, Jesus is still complimenting her for her deep respect for him. But probably he has had an in-depth conversation with her, i.e., Mary, about his upcoming crucifixion, and she truly understands this part of his role as the long-expected king of Israel. If so, then she understands it better than his male disciples.

In addition, there is the fact that the costly ointment belonged to Mary and not to the disciples. Consequently, Jesus is pointing out a very important principle—that when people claim to have faith in God and Jesus, how they use their personal property to demonstrate their love for and obedience to God is their right and business, and no one else's. Christians may disagree with one another on how each other is using his material possessions to love God, but each sinner is accountable to only God in these matters and not to man. God is our final judge, and we must grant to each other the right to live our lives before God as we see fit and even to encourage each other to do so. And what about people who deny having faith in God? We must first exhort them to repent and believe in God and Jesus for eternal mercy, and then encourage them to be kind and loving towards others with God as their judge. Indeed, the choice to repent and believe God is obviously strictly an individual and independent one. It follows that how each person loves God with their time, material possessions, relationships, etc. is strictly individual and independent also—assuming that his or her choices are in line with God's moral commandments.

According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus concludes his rebuke of his disciples (and obviously of Judas Iscariot specifically) by stating what this woman has done will become known throughout the "whole world" where the "good news" of the gospel of him as the Messiah is proclaimed. This is to say that she will become as famous as he will be, because her kind and benevolent act towards him will be included in what his followers will say about him as the one who rescues sinners from God's condemnation through his death, burial, and resurrection. The memory of Jesus by his followers throughout the rest of history in all parts of the world will include the "memory of her."

But Jesus has also stated in the Olivet Discourse that he does not know all the details of human history (cf. Matthew 24:36). Plus, the whole world for the first century Jews was essentially the Roman Empire and perhaps a little beyond it. Therefore, he is probably thinking of the spread of the gospel message as more people become his followers in future generations by means of other people talking about it and evangelizing them. He is counting on this incident that is taking place six nights before his crucifixion to stick in his apostles' minds so that they relate it along with the other important events of this week. And then those who become believers through the apostles relate it likewise, so that the story of this woman's show of respect for Jesus keeps spreading. But it is certainly the case that her story has reached the far corners of the earth because Matthew and Mark have included it in their accounts, and the Bible has come to exist all over the world during Christian history.

The similarities between the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and John are so striking that I suggest that they are relating the story of the same event, but for their own purposes. Matthew and Mark do not mind being somewhat vague about the place, the personnel, and timing, while John provides certain very

helpful details as he heads towards his rendition of the Last Supper. Therefore, again, I do not think that the authors in any way contradict one another.

d. Judas Meets with the Jewish Leadership to Betray Jesus

Within the last five days, maybe Thursday after the meal at Lazarus' house

Matthew 26:14-16	Mark 14:10-11	Luke 22:3-6	John
26:14 Then (τότε), one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests 26:15 and said, "What are you willing to give me, and I will hand him over to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him. 26:16 From then on he sought a good opportunity to hand him over.	14:10 And (καὶ) Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests to betray him to them. 14:11 And they were glad when they heard, and they promised to give him money. And he was seeking how to betray him conveniently.	22:3 And (δὲ) Satan entered into Judas, who was called Iscariot, who was from the number of the twelve. 22:4 And he went away and spoke with the chief priests and officers how he could betray him to them. 22:5 And they were delighted and agreed to give him silver. 22:6 And he consented and was seeking a good opportunity to betray him to them apart from the crowd.	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

If I am right that the above meal was the previous Wednesday evening, then this event when Judas goes to the Jewish leaders and makes a deal with them to betray Jesus into their hands probably happens the next day, on Thursday, or one of the days soon afterwards. I am thinking this because I would not be surprised if Jesus' rebuke of his disciples, and especially of Judas Iscariot, for their criticizing Mary for "wasting" the expensive ointment on him, really stung Judas. He thought he was being so responsible for watching every penny that Jesus and his close disciples were spending for their daily needs (while occasionally pilfering from the money bag) that certainly Jesus would agree with him that Mary should have sold it and given at least some of the proceeds to the poor. After all, has not Jesus been healing and helping the poor himself, and this should be a greater priority for Mary than pouring the expensive ointment on his head and feet?

Consequently, it makes sense that, here in Matthew 26:14, the word *tote* (τότε) means "then," so that Judas' next major move after the dinner was to go to the Jewish leaders either to get back at Jesus for criticizing him, and to conspire with them to arrest Jesus as a way to urge him to act more decisively as the long-expected Messiah—by raising a Jewish army in order to expel the Romans from their land and to restore the Kingdom of Israel—if he really is who he has claimed to be, the Messiah. The only previous mention of Judas by these three gospel authors was in Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:19, and Luke 6:16 at the end of their listing all twelve disciples whom Jesus "named as apostles" (Luke 6:13).

For example, when Jesus is commissioning his twelve disciples to go out and proclaim the good news and of his arrival in Israel and to heal those who are sick, Matthew begins his account of this event in 10:1-4 –

> Matthew 10:1 Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
> 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

10:3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;
10:4 Simon the Zealot, **and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him**. [emphasis mine]

Thus, it seems that, in case the reader has forgotten who this man is, the three authors remind us in this subsection of Judas' meeting with the Jewish leaders, that he is one of Jesus' inner circle of key students, meaning that he has the potential to become an apostle and one of Jesus' authoritative spokesmen after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Indeed, he could even write inerrant scripture as Matthew, John, and Peter will go on to do.

Not only are "the chief priests" present at this meeting, Luke adds that "the officers" are also. These are the temple guard, the Sanhedrin's personal police force, who are responsible for protecting them and the temple from those who blatantly violate the laws of the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, they will be the appropriate ones later to arrest Jesus on the charge of pretending to be the Messiah, i.e., blasphemy, and to bring him to the Sanhedrin to stand trial. From how the story will unfold, we can surmise that Judas conspires with all these men, so that he will come to them when he thinks it is the right time to make the arrest. They will therefore be on alert to expect him at any moment from this time forward. If this meeting is taking place on Thursday, then it will be only five days later, on Tuesday evening, when he will leave the Passover meal with Jesus and his fellow disciples and return to the Jewish leaders to guide them to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will be praying and vulnerable to arrest.

Luke also says that "Satan [literally Adversary] entered into Judas." John, too, will mention twice that Satan is involved in Judas' betraying Jesus, once at the beginning of the Passover meal and the other during the meal as follows –

John 13:1 Now, before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own in the world. He loved them to the end. 13:2 And dinner time having arrived, **and the devil having already put into the heart of Judas of Simon Iscariot to betray him**, 13:3 knowing that the Father had given all things to him, into his hands, and that he came from God and was going away to God, 13:4 he got up from dinner and laid aside his garments and, taking a towel, he wrapped it around himself. 13:5 Next, he poured water into a basin, and he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he had wrapped himself [emphasis mine].

John 13:26 Jesus answered, "The one for whom I dip the piece of bread and give it to him." Therefore, after dipping the piece of bread, he took it and gave it to Judas of Simon Iscariot. 13:27 **And after the piece of bread, Satan then entered into him.** So Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 13:28 But no one of those reclining at the table understood why he said this to him. 13:29 For some supposed, because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. 13:30 Therefore, after receiving the piece of bread, he went out immediately, and it was night [emphasis mine].

We can assume that the first reference, to "the devil having already put into the heart of Judas of Simon Iscariot to betray" Jesus is the same as Luke's account of Satan's entering into Judas after Jesus rebuked him for criticizing Mary for pouring the expensive ointment on his head and feet, so that he went to the Jewish leaders to offer to betray Jesus to them—for a price! Then the second reference, to the fact that "Satan then entered" Judas during the Passover meal, so that he left immediately to seek out the chief priests and their officers to lead them to the Garden of Gethsemane.

But what exactly does it mean for Satan to enter into a human being or to put it into someone's heart to do something evil? As we work on answering this question, we can look at two other events in the Bible where something similar happened to a human being. The first is when Satan "moves," "incites," and "persuades" King David to take a census of the people of Israel –

1 Chronicles 21:1 Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved (וַיָּסֶת) (ἐπέσεισεν) David to number Israel.
21:2 So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number."

21:3 Joab said, “May Yahweh add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?”
21:4 Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.
21:5 Joab gave the number of the census of all the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword.
21:6 But he did not number Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king’s command was abhorrent to Joab.
21:7 God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.
21:8 David said to God, “I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.”

The Hebrew text of the first verse uses a form of the verb *sooth* (סוּת) that means to incite or persuade. The Greek translation, the Septuagint, uses the verb *episeio* (ἐπισείω) that also means to incite or urge. The author of 2 Samuel tells the same story in chapter 24 and begins it this way –

2 Samuel 24:1 Now the anger of Yahweh burned even more against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”
24:2 The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, “Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people.”
24:3 But Joab said to the king, “Now may Yahweh your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?”
24:4 Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to register the people of Israel…
24:10 Now David’s heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to Yahweh, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, Yahweh, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly.”

Apparently, God has recently been angry with the people of Israel and disciplined them for their disobedience. 2 Samuel indicates that this is happening “again,” but this time it is because of David’s actions specifically. He decides to “number Israel and Judah,” which the context shows that he wants to know how many men he has available among the tribes of Israel to gather into an army. However, his general, Joab, understands that this is actually a sin against God. Why? By how Joab respnds, “Now may Yahweh Your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see,” it is because David is not trusting God for his promise that He would make the population of Israel like “the sand of the sea.” Thus, Joab seeks to persuade David to change his mind and trust God for His promise, but David remains stubborn and still demands that he carry out his order. And Joab does, so that, again, God “was displeased with this thing, so that He struck Israel.”

And why was David so stubborn? Two reasons are given. In 2 Samuel 24:1, the anger of Yahweh “incited David against” Israel to take a census of their population. In 1 Chronicles 21:1, “Satan stood up against Israel and moved (וַיָּסֶת) (ἐπέσεισεν) David to number Israel.” Because God is the author of all reality, 2 Samuel can say that He motivates and causes David to sin against Him for His sovereign purposes. And because God uses the characters and persons within the history of the cosmos, including Satan, a created being who is other than a human being, 1 Chronicles 21 reveals that he “stood up against Israel and moved (וַיָּסֶת) (ἐπέσεισεν) David to number Israel.” While there is no further explanation as to how Satan “moved” David to do what he did, we should look at the second event in the Bible where something similar happened to a human being. This is described in Job 1 & 2, and I provide the whole text for consideration –

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

1:2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.
1:3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.
1:4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.
1:5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.
1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them.
1:7 Yahweh said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”
1:8 Yahweh said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”
1:9 Then Satan answered Yahweh, “Does Job fear God for nothing?
1:10 “Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
1:11 “But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”
1:12 Then Yahweh said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of Yahweh.
1:13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,
1:14 a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,
1:15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”
1:16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”
1:17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”
1:18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,
1:19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”
1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.
1:21 He said,
“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked I shall return there.
Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away.
Blessed be the name of Yahweh.”
1:22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.
Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them to present himself before Yahweh.
2:2 Yahweh said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”
2:3 Yahweh said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.”
2:4 Satan answered Yahweh and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.
2:5 “However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”
2:6 So Yahweh said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”
2:7 Then Satan went out from the presence of Yahweh and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

2:8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.
2:9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”
2:10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

This is a remarkable story or stories. In short, the transcendent author of all reality, the uncreated personal God, challenges one of his creations, who himself is a person but not a human being, Satan, to influence the course of history so that certain human beings steal and kill the possessions and children of Job, a man whom God declares to be an authentic believer in Him and who pursues making good and righteous choices in his life, even trusting God implicitly for all that happens in his life. Satan then produces exactly this kind of misery for Job, and Job does not waver in his faith in God.

God then challenges Satan to affect adversely Job’s physical being, and he does so. Yet, Job still holds fast to his faith in God, in spite of his wife’s encouragement to the contrary. The point is that, while God is in absolute control of all creation and causes all that occurs within it, including Satan’s choices and the choices of human beings, God interacts with and influences these created beings who carry out His ultimate wishes in accordance with His eternal plans and purposes. Yet, the Bible is not clear on exactly what is the mechanism by which one created being, Satan (or any of his demonic followers in the gospel accounts), “enters into” or “incites” and “persuades/urges” or causes another created being, such as the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, David or Judas Iscariot, to do something evil and sin against God. Nevertheless, the point in 1 Chronicles 21, Samuel 24, Job 1&2, and Luke 22:3-4 (and soon John 13:27 during the Passover meal) is that one person, who has been created by God, is influencing another person, who has been created by God, to the extent that there is a common motivation and goal for their actions. And because the one doing the inciting is Satan, the motivation and goal are both evil and in opposition to the goodness and moral commandments of God. In the case of David, for example, he does not trust God for His promise of sufficient soldiers to combat their enemies and has to prove the number for himself. In the case of Judas in Luke 22, he conspires with the evil leaders of the Jewish people who end up murdering an innocent man, indeed, their very Messiah, who has been sent by God as their final king according to the Davidic Covenant to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

Matthew then quotes Judas’ question to the chief priests where he asks what payment he will receive for making it convenient for them to seize Jesus. His interest is obviously not only to help the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to trial, but also to get paid for doing so, thus enhancing his own financial position with evil intent at the expense of a morally perfect and innocent man. Jesus has provided plenty of evidence through his miracles and teaching to prove himself worthy of people’s obedience as the Messiah and of their worship as the icon of God within the creation. However, this does not matter to Judas Iscariot. He is unwilling to acknowledge Jesus for who he is. And Judas’ explicit display of greed is right in line with what we saw in the previous subsection. The gospel of John indicates that, probably the day before this meeting, after Lazarus’ sister Mary had placed a pound of costly perfume on Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair, Judas was indignant at the needless waste of the perfume instead of their selling it for the equivalent of eleven months wages for a day laborer and giving the money to the poor. John is also clear that Judas was not concerned about the poor, “because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to steal what was put into it” (cf. John 12:3-6).

Mark and Luke comment that the chief priests are delighted to hear that he would help them, and so they come to a financial agreement. And what is it worth to the Jewish leaders to take Jesus into custody? Matthew says “thirty pieces of silver,” which they weigh out in front of Judas. The Mosaic Covenant states in Exodus 21:32,

Exodus 21:32, “If an ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”

Assuming a piece of silver is a shekel and in Jesus’ day is worth about 3 Roman denarii, where one denarius is the wage for one day’s work of an average laborer, 3 denarii x 30 = 90 denarii, or about three months wages. But even three months wages seem a bit paltry to compensate for the death of even a slave who is cruelly gored by an ox. In other words, this is not much money in exchange for the life of a human being, especially one as special as the Jesus the Messiah. However, to someone as greedy as Judas Iscariot, it was enough to satisfy him. While Luke calls it silver, Mark says that they promise to give him money, meaning that they will save it for later when he comes through with his offer to help them

arrest Jesus, even though Matthew indicates that "they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him." Consequently, when the time comes for Judas to fulfill his end of the bargain, they will pay him the "thirty pieces of silver" which they have shown him is available. And Luke says that he agrees to their terms. As a result, Judas leaves the meeting with "the chief priests and officers" and begins seeking a good opportunity to betray Jesus. Luke also provides a clearer explanation of Matthew's "good opportunity" and Mark's "conveniently," that Judas wants to make sure the Jewish leaders can arrest Jesus without a crowd around him.

They probably discussed this important point in their meeting, just as the Sanhedrin had already met at Caiaphas' house sometime before and had planned to seize Jesus by surprise and kill him without the knowledge of the crowds, which is to say, after the Passover and Unleavened Bread. This was because they do not want to provoke the large group of followers of Jesus to riot and oppose them on his behalf (cf. Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1b-2; Luke 22:2, and John 11:47-53 above). Judas, therefore, adopts the same strategy, at least concerning Jesus' arrest. But do the Jewish leaders realize that he is going to come to them shortly, indeed Tuesday evening after the Passover has begun? This will make it possible for them to seize Jesus secretly, but have they thought through that then killing him legally and quickly without the crowd's knowing it will probably not be possible? It is hard to say, but we find out that their eagerness to be rid of Jesus is so strong that they will leap at the opportunity when, soon thereafter, Judas shows up to take them immediately to the Garden of Gethsemane without waiting until the feasts have ended and the large crowds have left Jerusalem. And we will also find out that, fortunate for them, they will be able to turn the crowds against Jesus so that, while Pilate is questioning him, they too enthusiastically clamor for his death.

As I mentioned above, we had already considered the story in John 12:1-8 when, the day before, Judas Iscariot led the disciples in being outraged at the waste of money when Lazarus' sister Mary poured expensive ointment on Jesus' feet. John had said that Judas was a thief, who, as the treasurer of the group, kept the money box for Jesus and the twelve disciples but then consistently stole from it. By combining that story of Judas with this event when he demands money from the chief priests for betraying Jesus to them, we learn how remarkable it is that Judas' behavior goes the direction that it does after spending three years listening to every word that Jesus spoke about his being the Messiah of the eternal Kingdom of God and observing every miracle that God performed through him to confirm his role as the Messiah—including raising the dead and calming the winds and water of the Sea of Galilee. And yet, in spite of all the truth that Judas heard and saw to encourage him to trust in God alone for his temporal and eternal well-being, his main goal in life is still selfishly to acquire wealth—even if it means conspiring with Satan to hand the Son of God over to the Jewish leaders so that they, with malice aforethought, can free themselves from his interference in their role as leaders of God's people, the nation of Israel.

This certainly bears abundant testimony to the depth of evil in the human heart, which only God can change and soften in order to make any of us receptive to the truth of His mercy and promise of eternal life through Jesus the Messiah. If a man such as Judas Iscariot can hear what he heard and see what he saw and then still steal from Jesus and reject him and the massive evidence that God supplied as to his identity, then all us sinners are easily swayed by the things of this world, so that we would end up ignoring and rejecting God. This also speaks to how abundantly dependent we are on God's independent choice and sovereign grace to change our inner being and move us to authentic faith and obedience in order to be saved from our sin and its eternal consequences.

Extra Information from John

Within the last six days

John 12:9-50
12:9 Therefore (οὖν) a large crowd of Jews knew that he was there, and they came, not because of Jesus only, but so that they could also see Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead. 12:10 And (δὲ) the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus also, 12:11 because, on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. **[Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-16; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-18]**

12:12 The next day (τῇ ἐπαύριον), the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 12:13 they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. And they were crying out, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh <Psalm 118:26>, even the king of Israel."
12:14 And (δὲ) Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it has been written, 12:15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt <Zechariah 9:9>." 12:16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him, and that they did these things for him. 12:17 Therefore the crowd, who were with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, were bearing witness to it. 12:18 For this reason also, the crowd went to meet him, because they heard that he had performed this sign.
12:19 Therefore, the Pharisees said to one another, "Do you see that you are doing no good? Behold, the world has gone after him."
12:20 Now there were some Greeks who were among those who had gone up to worship at the feast.
12:21 Therefore, these came to Philip who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and they were asking him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."
12:22 Philip came and spoke to Andrew. Andrew and Philip came and spoke to Jesus.
12:23 And Jesus answered and said to them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
12:24 Truly, truly I say to you, if the grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. 12:25 He who loves his existence loses it, and he who hates his existence in this world will guard it into eternal life. 12:26 If someone serves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also the one who serves me will be. If someone serves me, the Father will honor him."
12:27 "At this moment my existence has become troubled. And what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But, on account of this I came into this hour. 12:28 Father, glorify Your name." Therefore, a voice came out of heaven, "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again."
12:29 Therefore, the crowd, who were standing there and heard it, were saying that it had thundered. Others were saying, "An *angelos* has spoken to him."
12:30 Jesus responded and said, "Not for my sake has this voice occurred, but for your sakes. 12:31 At this moment there is judgment of this world. At this moment the ruler of this world will be cast out.
12:32 And I, if I am lifted up off the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."
12:33 Now he was saying this in order to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.
12:34 Therefore, the crowd responded to him, "We have heard from the Torah that the Messiah remains into the age. And why are you saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"
12:35 Therefore Jesus said to them, "For a little while the light is in your midst. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness does not overwhelm you. And he who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 12:36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light." Jesus said these things, and he went away and hid himself from them.
12:37 But though he had performed so many signs in front of them, they were not believing in him,
12:38 in order that the statement of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled, which says, "Yahweh, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed <Isaiah 53:1>?" 12:39 On account of this they were not able to believe, because again Isaiah said, 12:40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they may not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be turned, and I heal them <Isaiah 6:10>."
12:41 Isaiah said these things, because he saw his glory, and he spoke about him.
12:42 Nevertheless, even many of the rulers believed in him, but, because of the Pharisees, they were not admitting it, so that they would not be banished from the synagogue. 12:43 For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.
12:44 And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in me does not believe in me, but in Him who sent me, 12:45 and he who sees me sees the One who sent me. 12:46 I, the light, have come into the

world, so that everyone who believes in me will not remain in the darkness. 12:47 And if anyone listens to my words and does not guard them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 12:48 The one who rejects me and does not embrace my words has that which judges him. The message which I have spoken will judge him in the last day, 12:49 because I have not spoken from myself. But the Father Himself, who sent me, has given me the instruction—what I say and what I speak. 12:50 And I know that His instruction is eternal life. Therefore, the things which I speak, just as the Father has said to me, thus I speak."

Six days before Passover, Jesus has dined at Lazarus' house, and his sister Mary has poured ointment on his head and feet and been criticized by the disciples, especially by Judas. In addition, the Jewish leaders have met and decided to arrest and kill Jesus as soon as possible. After Jesus and his disciples have had dinner with Lazarus and his sisters, a crowd forms when they hear that Jesus is nearby Jerusalem.

Then, 'the next day," which may be Thursday or Friday, indeed, the same day that Judas Iscariot goes to the chief priests and offers to betray Jesus to them, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a "young donkey" to the acclaim of "a large crowd," while those who had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead a couple months earlier were bearing witness to this fact to the crowd. The Pharisees are apoplectic and even more worked up about getting rid of Jesus. In the midst of these circumstances, some Gentiles who have come to Jerusalem to join the Jews in celebrating the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread ask his disciples to see Jesus. When they inform him of these Gentiles' desire, Jesus knows that his own end on this earth is near and calls upon God the Father to glorify Himself. A voice speaks "out of heaven" and indicates that God has already glorified Himself (through Jesus' ministry of miracles and preaching), and He will glorify Himself again (through Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and return).

The crowd hear the voice, and Jesus tells them that he will be "lifted up" and "draw everyone to himself." But they ask him about the Old Testament's stating that the Messiah will remain on the earth with them. So why is he saying that he will be "lifted up" and leave them? Jesus encourages them to believe in him nevertheless. However, even though he has performed so many miracles, John indicates that the crowd were not believing in him. But there were a few of the Jewish "rulers" who did, who also "were not admitting it," because they feared being ostracized by the Pharisees from their synagogues.

Jesus finishes speaking to the people by encouraging them to believe in him in order to avoid being condemned at the judgment "in the last day." Because to believe in him is to believe in God the Father, who has given him all that he has said, so that believing in him will result in the people acquiring "eternal life."

e. Jesus' Disciples Ask Where They Are to Eat the Passover

Tuesday during the day

Matthew 26:17	Mark 14:12	Luke 22:7-9	John
26:17 With regard to the first day (τῇ δὲ πρώτῃ) of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Where do you want for us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?"	14:12 With regard to the first day (καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"	22:7 And the day (δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα) of Unleavened Bread approached, when it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. 22:8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us so that we may eat it." 22:9 And they said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?"	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

As will become clearer in the next subsection, it is probably early in the morning on Tuesday, after the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 on Sunday. Jesus and his disciples are in Bethany where they spent the night a couple miles (3 km) east of Jerusalem and on the other side of the Mt. of Olives. They are very likely at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, at whose home they had dinner six evenings before when Mary poured the expensive ointment of Jesus' head and feet.

The Passover will begin at sundown on Tuesday, when all the Jews who have come to Jerusalem will eat their Passover meal. They will be commemorating God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt approximately 1,500 years earlier. And they will eat the same meal that their forefathers did—roasted lamb and unleavened bread. Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer here to "the first day [or just "the day" – Luke] of Unleavened Bread" and identify it as the Passover. Does this mean that they are thinking that the two are exactly the same feasts? No, because we know from the Old Testament passages that we looked at in a previous section and we will see in the passages of this large section describing Jesus' death and resurrection that the High Sabbath of the actual first day of Unleavened Bread is different from the Passover and occurs the next day. It was on the 14th of the first month of the Jewish calendar, Nisan/Abib, that God required the ancient Israelites to eat the Passover before He performed His last sign on the Egyptians by killing their firstborn sons and animals. Then, the next day, the 15th, was a High Sabbath as the first of a total of seven days for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, these gospel authors are using the words "Unleavened Bread" as shorthand to refer to both feasts that comprise a total of eight days as described in the Old Testament.

But God also stipulated that the Jews eat the same Passover meal on the 14th of Nisan/Abib every year after the Exodus to celebrate His wonderful act of salvation from slavery in Egypt for them, who are His unique and chosen people among all the other ethnic groups in the world. It is the Jews whom God will make the greatest nation in all human history and to whom He will remain faithful until He does (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 28). Thus, Matthew, Mark, and Luke use the word Passover in this context, which is the proper name for the day before that of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and which will begin at sundown on this particular Tuesday. Luke tells us that the Passover is approaching. So we know that it is still daytime, while everyone is looking forward to sundown and the evening meal. But before Jesus and his disciples can observe this feast, they must bring their lamb to the temple in Jerusalem to be sacrificed by the Levitical priests.

We can wonder if, in accordance with God's instructions in Exodus 12, Jesus and his disciples had gone to the vendors at the temple and picked out their lamb (or lambs, since there will be thirteen of them at the meal) on Friday, the 10th of Nisan/Abib, soon after they arrived in Jerusalem. Or perhaps did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus provide them with a lamb on that day? Because we have two instances in the gospels, one at the beginning of his ministry in John 2 and the other at the end in Matthew 21:12ff. (cf. Mark 11:15ff.; Luke 19:45ff.), when Jesus forces the vendors and moneychangers to cease their commercial practices in the "house of God" by driving them out of the temple, we can probably rule out that they would even consider the first option. However, none of the gospels informs us of this detail as to how they obey God's requirement of choosing their lamb on the 10th. So a fairly safe assumption is that they acquired their lamb(s?) from Lazarus' (or Simon the Leper's) household and will have to take it (them?) from Bethany to the temple in Jerusalem two miles away to be sacrificed. Or there is a third possibility that is probably the best option and can be inferred from the next subsection. We will explore this option in the explanation following the subsection.

In addition, Deuteronomy 16:6 says, "But at the place where Yahweh your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset (בָּעֶרֶב כְּבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ = literally "in the evening as the sun is going") (ἑσπέρας πρὸς δυσμὰς ἡλίου = literally "in the evening towards the setting of the sun" (LXX)), at the time that you came out of Egypt." And each family in Egypt, 1,500 years earlier, most likely killed their own lamb at sundown in preparation for this meal. But now there are probably thousands of people in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover and who need their lambs sacrificed at the temple by the Levitical priests. Therefore, it would be physically impossible for this to happen at or after sunset so that everyone could eat their Passover meal in the evening. So the steady progression of the sacrifice of the lambs must have begun even in the morning.

Is this a violation of the commandment in Deuteronomy? No, it is an obvious case where the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law. What was and is always the issue for the Jews and

their obligation to the Mosaic Covenant is their inwardness, that they be people of circumcised hearts and genuine faith and belief. Therefore, if the practical circumstances warrant breaking the letter of the law and the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, then they are permitted to do so if their hearts are right before God. The corollary of this is true too, that if they follow the letter of the law, but they lack hearts of genuine faith, then they are breaking God's commandments, because biblical obedience must come from the whole person and not just involve his outward actions. This is the case for all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Our tendency is to take rituals and ceremonies, e.g., baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion), and think that if we do not follow the biblical instructions exactly, then our practice of them is ineffectual and disobedient to God. However, it is our hearts that are the foundation of our relationship with God so that even if we are not perfectly obedient to Him in all our outward actions, whether we are talking about moral behavior or rituals and ceremonies, our genuine repentance and perseverance in our belief and trust in God still mean that we are at peace with Him.

Continuing with the story in the above passages, before the Passover actually begins at evening on Tuesday, Mark and Luke explicitly mention the need to sacrifice the Passover lamb, which must take place at the temple and be performed by the Levitical priests. So being in Bethany, two miles east of Jerusalem, someone must at least go to the temple and accomplish this sacrifice. In addition, Jesus and the disciples must decide where they will eat their meal. If we read only Matthew and Luke, who state that the disciples ask Jesus where he wants them to prepare the Passover, we might assume that they all are asking this question and wondering if they will eat together in Bethany, since it is part of the environs of Jerusalem, or does Jesus have some place in Jerusalem in mind? Luke, however, mentions that Jesus first instructs Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us so that we may eat it." And then they ask Jesus, "Where do you want us to prepare it?" In this way, Luke is clearer, and it is only Peter and John who ask this latter question after Jesus instructs them alone to go and prepare the meal for them. But most likely the rest of the disciples are there too and wondering the same thing. Hence, Matthew and Mark are correct in stating that "the disciples" ask this question.

In the next subsection it will also be clear that Jesus is sending only Peter and John into the city of Jerusalem to sacrifice the lamb(s) and prepare their meal. Thus, we can also assume that he wants to be alone with his disciples and eat this last meal in the evening of the Passover before he is crucified the next morning. Jesus knows that his role as the Messiah requires that he die the next day, but the disciples still have not yet caught on to this important fact that he has been trying to communicate to them periodically during the last three years (cf. Matthew 16:21; 17:12; 20:19; Mark 8:31; 9:12; 10:33; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 18:32,36). In other words, God has not yet caused them to grasp all the truth of what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, just as He brings us along in the growth of our understanding as quickly or as slowly as He desires. Each of us is obligated to work hard at thinking about the Bible and understanding its message completely and accurately. But God as the author of our stories controls our intellectual growth, and we rely on Him for it as we watch ourselves come to a better understanding of truth during the course of our lives. This should also remind us to be very humble with respect to our understanding so that when we encounter people who hold to a different theology of the Bible, even adamantly and stubbornly hold to a different theology, that this in itself does not make them evil. Indeed, we may be the ones who are wrong and need correction, and our own experience and emotional make up should teach us that being willing to change our ideas about anything is often very difficult. This is because we sinful human beings consider our ideas to be such an important part of our identity and sense of well-being. And they are. But no one in Christian history other than the apostles has had an accurate grasp of the gospel. Therefore, the rest of us are always working towards but never arriving at their level of accuracy. Thus, the need for our humility and patience with other Christians.

In the question that Peter and John (and the rest of the disciples) ask, Matthew and Mark use the phrase "prepare for you" and not "prepare for us," i.e., "Where do you want us to prepare for <u>you</u> to eat the Passover?" This indicates that they are thinking specifically about Jesus and where he wants to eat this meal. As suggested above, they have not caught on to the fact that he is going to suffer death the next day, even though they have previously acknowledged in various ways that they (except Judas Iscariot) believe him to be the Messiah. So they are at least deferring to his desires as to where they all should eat this required meal in order to commemorate God's rescue of the Jewish people from Egypt. Considering all the events recorded in the four gospels and their chronology, it most likely is the case that Jesus and all his twelve disciples have never been together in Jerusalem for the Passover. So not only is this a special occurrence of the feast because Jesus is going to die the next day for the sins of mankind, but also it will be the first time in Jerusalem that his twelve disciples and he celebrate God's salvation for

the Jews from Egypt. This is why their question is not, “Do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover where we ate it before?”

To recap briefly the chronology in the gospels, John 2 mentions Jesus’ first appearance in Jerusalem at a Passover in the very beginning of his ministry. But even if those who had become his disciples in John 1 are with him, there are only five of them. There is no record of his attending the Passover the following year. Plus, Luke 6:12ff. indicate that Jesus does not formally gather the twelve disciples into a group who remain with him until approximately five months after this second Passover and, therefore, a year and half after his baptism by John and becoming the rabbi of the five disciples in John 1. Then, John 6 implies that Jesus did not go to Jerusalem for the Passover the next year for what would have been the third possibility of his attending it. Therefore, this fourth Passover of the Passion Week story is the first time Jesus has been in attendance with all twelve disciples. This means that he is most likely presenting them with fresh information when he declares that the bread of the meal is his body, which is being given in death for them, and the wine is his blood, which is being poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Hearing Jesus say this must have come as quite a shock to them, and we will explore these ideas when we arrive at this segment of the narrative.

Luke says that when Jesus instructs Peter and John, he wants the meal prepared for “us,” all the disciples and him, even though they have asked only where he wants it prepared. As we will see below, Peter and John will leave Bethany and go to Jerusalem for both sacrificing the lamb and finding a place in the city to eat this meal together. Because Bethany is so close to Jerusalem, they all could have just as easily eaten the Passover there and then walked down the western slope of the Mt. of Olives afterwards to the Garden of Gethsemane. Then Jesus would have prayed as did and been arrested by Judas and the temple guard. But Jerusalem is truly the city where God has chosen to establish His name. Therefore, Jesus more likely wants to honor this fact by eating his last meal, that commemorates God’s act of salvation for the Jews, in Jerusalem itself. I quoted Deuteronomy 16:6 previously in this explanation, but here is Deuteronomy 16:5-7 where Moses tells the Israelites as they are poised on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, ready to enter into the land of Canaan which God has promised them, to see Jerusalem eventually as the special place that Jesus is now recognizing it to be, “5 You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which Yahweh your God is giving you. 6 But at the place where Yahweh your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset at the time that you came out of Egypt. 7 You shall cook and eat it in the place which Yahweh your God chooses. In the morning you are to return to your tents.” We should also consider that eating the Passover in Jerusalem will be meaningful to Jesus because he is becoming God’s new sacrificial lamb for salvation, not from slavery in Egypt, but from slavery to sin and its eternal consequences of God’s condemnation and punishment.

As suggested above, Jesus is choosing to be completely alone with his closest disciples. Other friends such as Mary, Martha, and Lazarus must be eating the Passover somewhere else—in their own home or perhaps at a friend’s home in Jerusalem. Thus, Jesus spends his last hours of freedom with the eleven disciples (the twelve minus Judas Iscariot who betrays him), whom he teaches one final time before his crucifixion and to whom he assigns the responsibility of becoming his apostles. In this way he will send them into the world to proclaim him as the Messiah with authority, clarity, and accuracy unparalleled in Christian history (cf. John 13-17). All other Christians will depend on either listening to the apostles personally or reading and learning their written documents to come to only an approximate and less than completely accurate understanding of the gospel.

f. Jesus Instructs Peter and John and They Prepare the Passover

Tuesday during the day

Matthew 26:18-19	Mark 14:13-16	Luke 22:10-13	John
26:18 And he said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, “The Teacher says, ‘My time is near. I am performing the Passover at your house	14:13 And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a jar of water. Follow him, 14:14 and wherever he	22:10 And he said to them, “Behold, when you enter the city, a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house in which he goes.	No parallel in John

with my disciples.’” 26:19 And the disciples did as Jesus commanded them, and they prepared the Passover.	enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’ 14:15 And he will show you a large upstairs room furnished and ready. Prepare for us there.” 14:16 So the disciples went out and came to the city, and they found it just as he had told them. And they prepared the Passover.	22:11 And you shall say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher says to you, ‘Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ 22:12 And he will show you a large furnished room upstairs. Prepare it there.” 22:13 So they went away and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.	

Explanation of the Above Passages

In this subsection, Jesus provides instructions for preparing for the Passover that he will eat with his twelve disciples. Matthew had said in the previous subsection that “his disciples” asked where they should prepare it. Now he says that Jesus instructs them and they do as he commands, which makes it sound as though all twelve disciples are involved. Mark had also said that “his disciples” asked this question, but now he states that Jesus sends only two of them to carry out his instructions. Luke had said that Jesus sent Peter and John only, so that we have the name of the two disciples whom Mark mentions and whom Matthew implies. Thus, Matthew is the least clear, and Luke is the clearest, but none of the three is in error or inaccurate.

Matthew and Mark continue with Jesus’ first words to Peter and John, “Go into the city…” Luke has already mentioned Jesus’ command, “Go…” But now he provides the rest of the command but slightly differently, “Behold, when you enter the city,…” Thus Luke is either being more interpretative or more accurate. In the either case, the sense is the same as Matthew and Mark—that Peter and John are to leave Bethany and go to Jerusalem, and they are to keep a sharp eye out for what Jesus will describe next. Thus, as mentioned in the explanation of the previous subsection, an important detail is that Jesus and his disciples are not currently in Jerusalem. They must be in Bethany, which is their customary place to spend the night whenever they are in this part of the country. And it is also clear that Jesus is sending Peter and John to Jerusalem to make sure that not only they have a sacrificed lamb for their meal, but also they find a place where they can eat it together.

Matthew says next that they will encounter “a certain man,” but he does indicate how they will find him. Mark and Luke speak of Jesus’ describing how “a man will meet” them, and he will be “carrying a jar of water.” Then they are to “follow him…wherever he enters” (Mark), that is, “follow him into the house in which he goes” (Luke). How does Jesus know that Peter and John will encounter this specific man who is carrying a jar of water in some specific location? We are not told, but we can assume that the gospel authors are leaving out certain details of Jesus’ instructions that would allow us to answer this question, such as the exact time and place where the two disciples should be in Jerusalem in order for this event to take place as Jesus is describing it. I suggest that Jesus knows that the “house” where they will enter is an inn, as I will explain in more detail below. And he knows the owner well enough that he sends someone to collect water at specific times of the day, so that Jesus can tell Peter and John where exactly in Jerusalem and when they will be able to see the man carrying the jar of water. Certainly, another option is that Jesus has received all this information by direct, divine revelation. So either explanation works.

Mark and Luke then show that once Peter and John enter the house, they are to speak to “the owner.” This must be the “certain man” of Matthew 26:18. And what are they to say, “The Teacher says, ‘My time is near’” (Matthew only). Referring to Jesus as “the Teacher” (“Rabbi” in Aramaic, which the

disciples are probably speaking) shows that this man knows who Jesus is. Then there are Jesus' words, "My time is near," that Peter and John speak to the owner. It does not make sense that Jesus is referring to the Passover meal. Of course this event is near. So why would Jesus instruct his disciples to say this? Because he is providing very intimate information to the man, i.e., that his death is approaching quickly. Indeed, this man may have grasped better than Jesus' disciples, even better than Peter and John, that he will die the next day. Therefore, I think we can conclude that Jesus and the owner of this house have spoken before, maybe several times, so that they already know each other. When did these conversations take place? We are not told. But the two men have agreed that Jesus and his disciples will share their last meal before his death in the owner's "house."

Following this statement regarding Jesus' death, Matthew has Peter and John make another statement to this man, "I am performing the Passover at your house with my disciples." Mark and Luke have written it as a question, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" Probably Mark and Luke are closer to the actual words Jesus uses in his instructions. And Matthew is certainly not wanting Jesus to sound harsh and demanding. He is simply putting the question in statement form to mean that, of course, the man's response is going to be, "Yes," to their question.

Then Mark and Luke, but not Matthew, finish Jesus' instructions with his telling Peter and John that the man will show them a large, furnished (and "ready" – Mark) room upstairs, so that they are to prepare the Passover for them in it. This would mean that they would have purchased wine and unleavened bread from somewhere. From the local market in Jerusalem? From the owner of the house who already knew to have these ready for Jesus and his companions? Or rather than purchasing them from anyone, will the owner be providing everything Jesus and his disciples need to celebrate the Passover—including the sacrificed lamb(s)? It is hard to say exactly, but this last option makes sense in the light of the clues which indicate that Jesus and the owner had made prior arrangements. In this case, Peter and John do not have to worry about going to the temple to sacrifice the designated lamb(s), and their "preparations" are quite minimal. They just need to find this man and his "house" and confirm with him that Rabbi Jesus will be appearing later with his disciples to eat the Passover.

While Jewish homes in those days were single story buildings with outdoor stairs leading to the roof which served as the family's living room, especially on temperate evenings in the warmer months, it is unusual to find mentioned in this 1st century setting a house with a second-story room. Mark and Luke say that Jesus calls it his "guest room" (τὸ κατάλυμά). The Greek word can mean lodging place or inn as in Luke 2:7 when Mary and Joseph found no room in the local inn of Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Perhaps here the meaning is simply a rented room for whatever function the renter desires. But does the fact that Jesus identifies it as an "upstairs room" indicate that he is speaking of the roof of a single-story building? Maybe, but because this building is in the largest and most important city of the land, Jerusalem, it is perhaps of grander construction than normal, so that it has two stories and is an inn. And because the owner has become a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, he is providing it and all the necessary food, including a sacrificed lamb or lambs for the most important Passover meal for the most important Passover gathering in all human history—that of the soon to be crucified Messiah and his apostles.

Lastly, we should recall that in Exodus 12:3 God originally told Moses and the Israelites in Egypt to choose a lamb for each "household," literally each "house" in the Hebrew (בַּיִת) and the Greek (οἶκος). And then the other Old Testament passages concerning the Passover imply that it is individual households that repeat and share this meal every year. Therefore, Jesus considers his disciples to be his "household" and family. We know that his own mother, Mary, is in Jerusalem at the time, because the very next day in John 19:25 she will be standing at the foot of the cross with several other women, including her sister, watching Jesus die. This makes it all the more striking that Jesus chooses to eat this important "household" meal of the Passover with only his disciples, especially when one of them is Judas Iscariot who betrays him. In addition, Jesus has not invited his blood brothers, who were born of Joseph and his mother Mary and who may be in Jerusalem also. They previously seemed eager to attend the required festivals in the city as indicated in John 7. But John 7:5 states that his brothers did not yet believe in him, and this was just seven months before these events in the Passion story and his death. His brother James does become an important leader in the Jerusalem Christian community as shown by his statements in the important meeting of Acts 15. But he (or any of the other brothers) probably did not become believers until after Jesus' death and resurrection.

And, at an earlier time near the middle of Jesus' three-year ministry, when told in Luke 8 that his mother and brothers are looking for him, he looks at the people sitting around him and listening to his

teaching, and he responds in v. 21, "…My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." In this way, Jesus points out the importance of a heart that has been changed by God and results in genuine faith and obedience to Him that comes from a desire for biblical truth. As much as he surely loved his own blood relatives, Jesus knew that the only condition acceptable by God for salvation and eternal life with him in the Kingdom of God was authentic obedience to his teaching, not being in the same blood family—whether this "family" was as closely connected to him as his mother and her other sons or as distantly connected as the rest of the Jewish nation. Therefore, someone can be so far removed by blood from Jesus as are the most remote Gentiles, but if God has changed his heart so that he is a committed believer in him, then he is a closer relative to Jesus than his own mother, if she is not a believer. We should note, though, that Mary his mother is most likely a genuine believer, because her conversation with the angel Gabriel in Luke 2 certainly demonstrates this. However, rather than eating the "household" Passover with his mother and blood brothers, Jesus chooses to do so alone with his twelve disciples. Why? I think that it is in the light of his role as the Messiah who must die the next day and pass on to them the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel of God's salvation and eternal life through him. In other words, Jesus considers the commissioning of his apostles to continue publicly announcing the good news of God's eternal mercy to be more important than obeying the literal command of the Mosaic Covenant to eat the Passover with one's blood family. Therefore, here is an instance where the spirit of the Law appropriately leads to violating the letter of the Law by the Messiah himself.

This also teaches us that, as important as our own families are to us and as much as we love, care for, and provide for them, it is our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world and throughout history, going all the way back certainly to Abel, who are "closer" in their relationships to us—if the members of our families never become authentic Christians. This is because all believers are Jesus' own "brothers" and "sisters" and are destined to spend eternity with him in the Kingdom of God. It is truly an emotionally difficult choice we have to make in order to grasp and affirm this truth. But Jesus puts it bluntly in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Of course, implied in this statement is that God as the author of the story of creation has the right to orchestrate each individual human being's story and whether the person becomes an authentic believer and receives eternal life or remains an unbeliever and receives eternal death. Submitting to this truth is part of what it means for us to have biblical faith, and therefore our wrestling with it and choosing to subordinate ourselves to God is vital for the sake of our own eternal destinies. And, by extrapolation, the need to face into and embrace everything that the Bible teaches, no matter how easy or difficult, is what is necessary for us Christians to do. Clearly, persistently coming to grips with our sin and repenting of it in order to obtain God's eternal mercy and forgiveness contributes heavily to our willingness to submit to all the truth of the Bible.

3. The Last Supper and Jesus' Arrest, Trials, Crucifixion, and Burial

TUESDAY sundown – WEDNESDAY sundown (the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the year, the Passover)

Extra Information from John

Tuesday about 7 p.m. after sundown

John 13:1-11
13:1 Now, before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own in the world. He loved them to the end. 13:2 And dinner time having arrived, and the devil having already put into the heart of Judas of Simon Iscariot to betray him, 13:3 knowing that the Father had given all things to him, into his hands, and that he came from God and was going away to God, 13:4 he got up from dinner and laid aside his garments and, taking a towel, he wrapped it around himself. 13:5 Next, he poured water into a basin, and he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he had wrapped himself. 13:6 Therefore he came to Simon Peter, and he said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not yet know, but you yourself will understand after these things."

13:8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet into the age!"
Jesus responded to him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me."
13:9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and head."
13:10 Jesus said to him, "He who has been bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but he is completely clean. And you are clean, but not all of you." 13:11 For he knew the one who was betraying him. Because of this, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

We finally arrive at one of the most famous events in all human history, because every time Christians celebrate the "Lord's Supper," also called "Communion" and the "Mass," they are referring to this scene that will be covered in the first four subsections of this larger section of Tuesday sundown to Wednesday sundown. And Leonardo da Vinci has made it even more famous with his painting of "The Last Supper" on the wall of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy that shows Jesus and his twelve disciples all seated on stools on the far side of a table facing the viewer. But the painting most likely depicts subsection **b.** below just after Jesus has declared that one of them will betray him and they are intensely discussing with one another who it might be.

The other authors do not mention the above story of Jesus' washing his disciples' feet. Only John does. Jesus' point is that, if he is willing to become a servant to his disciples by sacrificing his life on the cross, then they, if and when it becomes necessary, should likewise serve one another in a sacrificial manner—even that might result in their own deaths.

a. Jesus and His Twelve Disciples Gather to Eat the Passover Meal

Tuesday about 7 p.m. after sundown

Matthew 26:20	Mark 14:17	Luke 22:14	John
26:20 When evening came, he was reclining at table with the twelve.	14:17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve.	22:14 When the hour had come, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him.	See John's parallel below

Explanation of the Above Passages

In the previous subsection of these three gospel authors, Jesus gives Peter and John instructions to go to Jerusalem and prepare the Passover. This small segment now says that when the time came for them to eat the meal, Jesus and his disciples do so. Matthew and Mark state that it is "evening" as the Jewish day is beginning after sundown. Luke says "the hour had come," meaning the sun has set, the day of the Passover has begun, and it is time for the Jews to partake of their annual Passover meal as commanded by God in the Old Testament and which became a part of the Mosaic Covenant. Plus, this day is the 14th of Nisan/Abib, and in Exodus 12:2 God had declared that this was to be the first month of the year for His people. Then, in Exodus 12:6ff. God had declared the 14th as the day on which they should kill the lamb they have chosen on the 10th of the month and eat it. And as we saw in the previous large section regarding Old Testament passages, Leviticus 23:4-8, Numbers 9:1-5, Numbers 28:16-25, Numbers 33:1-4, and Deuteronomy 16:1-8 confirm and clarify God's requirement that the Jews repeat and celebrate this meal annually to commemorate His rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.

Matthew goes on to say that Jesus "was reclining at table with the twelve," while Luke says the same thing a little differently, "he reclined at the table and the apostles with him. Thus, they are sitting on the floor in Ancient Near Easter fashion, probably with supporting pillows, and are taking food from a low table. Mark states here only that "he came with the twelve." He will mention their "reclining at table" in the next segment.

We notice also that Luke calls the men with Jesus his "apostles," where the Greek word *apostoloi* literally means "those who are sent away." Three times already, in Luke 6:13; 9:10;17:5, Luke has mentioned that these men are apostles, because, except for Judas Iscariot, Jesus knows that, after his death, resurrection, and ascension, he is going to send them out to proclaim to the Jews and the world the good news of God's eternal mercy that comes through him. Also, Matthew and Mark use the word "apostles" once each in Matthew 10:2 and Mark 6:30 to refer to these men. Later, in Acts 1 Matthias will

replace Judas Iscariot, and in Acts 9 Saul of Tarsus whose name is also Paul will join them to make thirteen apostles. And God will send out Paul as the only apostle to the Gentiles, all the peoples who do not trace their ancestry back to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

It is ironic that John never uses the word “apostle” in his gospel, when he is the sole author who includes Jesus’ lengthy speech and prayer in 13:31-17:26 to and for the men to commission them as his authoritative spokesmen. Fortunately, we have this lengthy passage of the gospel of John that makes clear that their role is different from all other Christians in their time and later in history. While the apostles spoke with the same level of authority as Jesus, the rest of us Christians can only study and refer to their documents and should never take on the same authority that they have. In other words, we can never claim to follow in the line of the apostles, because no other Christian speaks with the same authority or accuracy as they did. We study their documents and learn the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah from them. But we do so merely as their students, not as their equals. This is different from the Levitical priests of the Mosaic Covenant. The High Priests of each generation of Jews functioned with the same authority as the original one, Aaron, who was Moses’ brother. And the regular priests of each generation functioned with the same authority as the original ones in Moses’ time. But only Jesus and his apostles as the first teachers of his good news that he is the crucified Messiah had a higher level of authority than all other Christians.

It is a longer explanation than I can properly give in this paper, but I believe that understanding what Paul, Peter, and John say in their New Testament letters leads to the conclusion that, after the apostles’ death, the pastors, elders, and teachers of Christian communities, i.e., “churches,” do not have any greater authority than the Christians whom they teach. The main reason I think this is true is that the church leaders whom Paul, Peter, and John mention were mostly appointed by them and had direct access to them as *living* apostles. All later church “leaders,” regardless of their seminary degrees, approval by ordination committees, sanctioning by elder boards, or election as popes are just like all other Christians—entirely dependent on the biblical documents for their understanding of the gospel. Therefore, they should be granted no more authority than anyone else, which obviously means that church communities should be far different from what traditional denominations and non-denominational churches have been. There should be much more reciprocity in studying, learning, teaching, and encouraging than what has existed and continues to exist in churches. The real danger is that pastors, ministers, elders, priests, and popes have “seated themselves” in the chairs of the apostles just as the “scribes and Pharisees” of Jesus’ day had “seated themselves in the chair of Moses” (cf. Matthew 23:1,2). The Jewish leaders should not have ascribed to themselves the same authority as Moses. And Christian leaders should not consider themselves as authoritative as the apostles. All Christians are equally authoritative in their proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, while it is obvious and only realistic that some Christians will understand it better than others.

After the Passion Week narrative, the word “apostle” next appears in the New Testament in Acts 1:2 just before Jesus’ ascension to his place of waiting for his return. He gives his final instructions to these men to stay in Jerusalem until God baptizes them with the Holy Spirit when they will gain clarity of understanding of all the information that Jesus has taught them over the last three or so years, depending on when they first encountered him and became his close disciples. It is therefore striking but no surprise when Peter presents his first public sermon in Acts 2 and speaks with a bold confidence and depth that he had not possessed. Earlier in the chapter, the Holy Spirit had worked within the entire group of disciples, “about one hundred and twenty persons,” so that flames of fire appeared over their heads and they declared “the mighty deeds of God” in foreign languages which they had never learned. For the twelve apostles, these miracles affirmed their transition from dull-witted students to wise, knowledgeable, and authoritative teachers of Jesus as God’s eternal King and High Priest of Israel and all genuine believers.

We also note that there is no record of Jesus’ activities between the previous small subsection when he instructs Peter and John to prepare the Passover and this element when he sits down to share it with them and the other ten disciples. Either Jesus and the remaining disciples departed Bethany and went to Jerusalem after Peter and John had left them, or they stayed in Bethany until it was time to walk the two miles to the inn where they are to eat the Passover in the evening. Let us consider that Jesus knows that this is the last day before he dies on the cross, which will happen around 9 a.m. the next morning. John 13:1 tells us this, “Before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world. He had loved them to the end.”

Therefore, as much as Jesus has taken the opportunity each of the last five days or so to make himself known as the Messiah by teaching in and around the temple, perhaps he is now more interested in resting before the ordeal of his arrest, trials, and death which is coming upon him soon. So it would certainly not be unreasonable to assume that the silence of the gospels regarding his activities during Tuesday means that he stays in Bethany with his closest friends, including Mary, Martha, and Lazarus after sending Peter and John into the city to prepare their evening meal. This would be instead of his usual activity in Jerusalem of teaching in the temple and maybe even performing some miracles that affirm his identity as the Messiah. A few days earlier, probably on Friday, he had ridden into the city on a young colt to the delight of the crowds who hailed him the king of the Jews. But he knows that these same crowds are going to turn on him within the next twenty-four hours and demand that the Romans crucify him. Consequently, he maybe just wants to spend some relaxing time in relative seclusion before he is confronted by the angry Jewish leaders and the mob and is finally handed over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Plus, one would think that the gospel authors would want to provide their readers with an account of Jesus' very last teaching while he is a free man on this Tuesday before sundown and the Passover begins. And the fact that they do not is most likely a good indication that Jesus stayed in Bethany and took the day off from his regular work of proclaiming the gospel and performing miracles.

If this is the case, then it is a good example for us of the freedom we all have even as committed servants of God to care for ourselves when we have the opportunity in the midst of difficult circumstances. Of course, Jesus knew exactly what was in store for him, that he would be up all night and then nailed to a wooden cross the next morning. In contrast, we do not always have such foreknowledge of our circumstances, and using our time in what looks like an unproductive way requires thoughtful wisdom and humility on our part. Indeed, we may end up doing what is completely contrary to both the strong advice of other people and the critical voices in our heads.

Because of his being an authentic human being, Jesus probably felt at some level within him that he should be in Jerusalem proclaiming the gospel instead of resting with his friends in Bethany. Similarly, we can feel, for example, that we really ought to be engaging in "ministry" and doing something to help people who are in spiritual, emotional, or physical need instead of resting our own minds, bodies, and souls—even if for a little while. Certainly there are situations when it is unavoidable but to stay busy serving God and our fellow human beings. For example, a mother who is caring for young children who need feeding and emotional nurture cannot tell them to find their own food and comfort themselves. Nor can a soldier in the heat of a protracted battle inform his enemies that he needs a break so that they cease their attack on him. And, of course, there are many other examples where Christians find themselves in situations that require their continued attention and activity out of love for God and their fellow human beings. Nevertheless, sometimes we can give ourselves permission to take a recreation break in preparation for the next event in our lives that will also require our attention, time, and energy to fulfill our calling to love both Christians and non-Christians to the glory of God. And because each of us is an individual who is solely responsible for himself before God, i.e., an "individual, existential, subjective, human being" in the words of Soren Kierkegaard, no one can claim the authority to tell us exactly what our lives should look like in this regard. We are each one of us accountable ultimately to God for how we fulfill our unique and specific callings.

I also suggest that regularly scheduled opportunities to engage with people and that are provided by established programs in organizations such as churches and parachurch organizations can be both helpful and harmful. The same is true of routines and activities of our own creation and scheduling. They are helpful to the extent that we serve and care for those in need. But they are harmful to the extent that we think that our consistently participating in these activities is the substance of our obedience to God. This is instead of recognizing that our hearts matter most to Him as the underlying spiritual condition of all our actions—whether we are currently focused on serving others in their need or on ourselves in our own need. And these endeavors of serving others can also be harmful when they distract us from taking proper spiritual, emotional, and even physical care of ourselves as it is wise and appropriate to do so. But it this last part, the wisdom and appropriateness of our actions that only we as individuals can discern in the light of others' counsel and the moral commandments of God in the Bible. And when we take advantage of our discernment and spend suitable time recharging our batteries with our friends and family, we can appreciate that much more Jesus' last day before his death.

Extra Information from John

Tuesday about 7 p.m. after sundown

John 13:12-20
13:12 When therefore he had washed their feet and taken his garments and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13:13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you speak well, for I am these. 13:14 If, therefore, I, the Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also are obligated to wash one another's feet." 13:15 "For I have given you an example, that just as I did to you, you also should do to one another. 13:16 Truly, truly I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, and the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sent him. 13:17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." 13:18 "I am not talking about all of you. I know the ones whom I have chosen. But in order that the scripture be filled out, 'He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me <Psalm 41:9>.'" 13:19 "From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that whenever it does happen, you may believe that I am he." 13:20 "Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me. And he who receives me receives the One who sent me."

I have separated John's comments about Jesus' reclining with his disciples for the Passover meal after washing their feet to highlight his point that they should sacrificially serve one another as he is doing so by dying on the cross as the basis for God's forgiving them for their sin. We also see that Jesus alludes to Judas as one of them who will betray him in accordance with Psalm 41:9. Then, he finishes his comments here with the importance of listening to and believing God, him, and the ones whom he will send to continue proclaiming the good news of his role as the crucified, risen, and returning Messiah.

b. Jesus Predicts His Betrayal and Judas Leaves to Betray Him

Tuesday about 7:30 p.m.

Matthew 26:21-25	Mark 14:18-21	Luke 22:21-23	John 13:21-30
26:21 And as they were eating, he said, "Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me. 26:22 And being deeply grieved, each one began to say to him, "Surely not I, Lord." 26:23 He answered and said, "The one who will hand me over is one who has dipped his hand in the bowl with me. 26:24 The Son of Man is proceeding just as it has been written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for him if that man had not been born." 26:25 And Judas, who was handing him over,	14:18 As they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, one of you who is eating with me will betray me. 14:19 They began to be grieved and to say to him, one by one, "Surely not I?" 14:20 And he said to them, "It is one of the twelve, he who dips with me in the bowl. 14:21 For the Son of Man is going away just as it has been written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be good for that man if he had not been born."	Quasi parallel passage in Luke in that this follows Jesus' speaking about his body and blood of the New Covenant (see below) – [22:21 "Yet, behold, the hand of the one betraying me is with mine on the table, 22:22 for, indeed, the Son of Man is proceeding according to that which has been determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." 22:23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this.]	13:21 After saying these things, Jesus became troubled in his spirit, and he bore witness and said, "Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray me." 13:22 The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to which one he meant. 13:23 There was reclining on Jesus' chest one of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved. 13:24 Therefore, Simon Peter motioned to him to inquire which one it was of whom Jesus was speaking. 13:25 As that one leaned on Jesus' chest, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?"

answered and said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” And he said to him, “You have said it.”			13:26 Jesus answered, “The one for whom I dip the piece of bread and give it to him.” Therefore, after dipping the piece of bread, he took it and gave it to Judas of Simon Iscariot. 13:27 And after the piece of bread, Satan then entered into him. So Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” 13:28 But no one of those reclining at the table understood why he said this to him. 13:29 For some supposed, because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. 13:30 Therefore, after receiving the piece of bread, he went out immediately, and it was night.

Explanation of the Above Passages

This scene takes place approximately thirty minutes into the Passover meal, and we see that, after Jesus has washed his disciples’ feet “during supper” in John 13:1-20, the verses of 21-30 are parallel to the ones above in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While Matthew and Mark present the details of this subsection in the same order as one another, Matthew adds one more detail than Mark when Jesus addresses Judas Iscariot directly. Luke is quite different in that his parallel passage of 22:21-23, which is included here, follows his description of the meal in 22:15-20, which will be in the next subsection. In fact, I think that the manner in which Luke presents this and the next four events indicates that he is not concerned about getting the chronological order of the events correct. Instead, he is only concerned about conveying the information of each event correctly, so that he readers understand the various interactions that Jesus had with his disciples. Therefore, I have put brackets at the beginning and end of Luke’s passage in order to show that timing of this event is not as important to him. Lastly, John starts similarly to the other gospels but then provides completely different details with an end that is similar but slightly different from Matthew when Jesus speaks to Judas. This means that most likely Matthew and Mark are describing this event literally while Luke is more interpretative, which is not unusual for him. And John is providing more and different details for his own purposes.

Matthew starts by saying that Jesus and his disciples are “eating.” As Matthew and Luke had stated in the previous subsection, Mark says that they are “reclining at table,” meaning that they are eating the Passover meal while sitting on the floor before a low table and perhaps resting on pillows. Matthew goes on to record Jesus’ words, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Mark and Luke add that it is someone “who is eating with” him (Mark), and “the hand of the one betraying [him] is with [his] on the

table" (Luke). Thus, both Mark and Luke are probably quoting more than Matthew of what Jesus actually says. This is after Luke has written Jesus' words as, "Yet, behold,…" Probably Luke is more verbatim here, too. John's account begins, "After saying these things, Jesus became troubled in his spirit." Jesus has washed his disciples feet in the midst of their meal and encouraged them to do metaphorically the same for one another after his ascension from the earth. Now he has reached the point that the thought of his impending death has become very difficult for him emotionally, and he, as the other gospels state, informs the disciples that one of them is going to betray him to the Jewish leadership. Jesus' words in John to this effect are the same as Matthew's except for an additional "truly, i.e., "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

Mark then says that the disciples respond to the news of a traitor in their midst by being "grieved," while Matthew reveals the intensity of their feelings and states that they are "deeply grieved." Of course they are. For eleven of them, to hear that one of them is going to turn on Jesus, their Messiah, would be shocking, because they firmly believe in their hearts that they are committed to him and his project. John says that they simply "looked at one another, at a loss as to which one he meant." But then after a few moments of staring at each other, Luke indicates that "they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this." So all of them, including Judas Iscariot, appear grieved at Jesus' disturbing revelation and wonder which one of them will commit this heinous act. Matthew goes on to say that, either during or after their discussion, "each one began to" ask Jesus who is the culprit, and Mark informs us that each disciple "one by one" asks Jesus if it is he. "Surely not I, Lord?" they all say in succession. Mark leaves out the word "Lord," but this omission reveals his style to be shorter sometimes in his descriptions.

It seems reasonable to assume that Jesus provides the general answer to the group's question that appears in Matthew and Mark before answering one of the disciples more specifically in the gospel of John. Luke omits both the questions and the answers. Thus, Jesus' first general answer is that it is someone who eats with him, "who has dipped his hand in the bowl with me" (Matthew). Mark says that his answer includes, "It is one of the twelve," once again emphasizing that it will not be a person who would be considered a distant follower of Jesus. Sometimes conspiracies arise from outside a close-knit group, from those who have little or no relationship to their target. Sometimes they arise from within and are generated by those who are closest to him. In this case, it is coming from someone who has demonstrated ostensible and constant loyalty to Jesus. It will be one of his most intimate associates, someone who has experienced Jesus up-close and personal for a significant period of time. It depends on when Judas Iscariot joined this group. Maybe he has been with them for the entire three years of Jesus' public ministry.

Next, all three synoptics describe Jesus' biblical and theological understanding of his betrayal. Luke indicates that Jesus tells them that the "Son of Man is proceeding according to that which has been determined." Matthew also mentions this fact, that the "Son of Man is proceeding just as it has been written of him." And Mark says, "For the Son of Man is going away just as it has been written about him." Thus, both Matthew and Mark make it clear that not only has God predestined Jesus' death and suffering as Israel's king and Messiah on behalf of the people, but also a person can read about it in the Old Testament. We can consider, for example, Isaiah 53:5,10,12,

> Isaiah 53:5 "He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed…
> 10 Yahweh was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief. If he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, He will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in his hand…
> 12 Therefore, I [Yahweh] will allot him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong, because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."

In line with certain statements in Isaiah 53 above, Luke interprets what Jesus says as the fact that his fate has been "determined." We get our word "horizon" from the Greek word for "determined," ὁρίζω (*horizo*). In other words, God has established the limit and boundary of Jesus' life, that it will necessarily and by divine decree include his betrayal and death in order for him to qualify as the Messiah and High Priest of believers in the nation of Israel and also among the Gentiles. Therefore, we see that Jesus had to live by the same theological parameters as we do. God was the author of his story and life just as

much as He is of our stories and lives. And Jesus was the perfect example of submitting to God's sovereignty so that we may be encouraged to do likewise, even though we are imperfect in our submission but willing to pursue obedience on the basis of changed hearts which God has brought about within us through the work of His Holy Spirit.

As already mentioned in a previous explanation, the label "Son of Man" is one of Jesus' favorite ways of referring to himself and comes from Psalm 8 where David expresses his wonder at God's willingness to use human beings as His created proxies on earth who rule over Israel and His creation. Indeed, eventually Jesus will restore the Kingdom of Israel and rule over the Jews on their land and over the Gentiles living on the rest of the earth.

Next, all three of the synoptic authors include Jesus' warning, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man ["he" in Luke] is betrayed." His words may refer to only the fact that it will be a horrible choice that Judas Iscariot makes, but a choice from which he will recover by repenting of his sin and sinfulness, thereby acquiring God's eternal mercy and the gift of eternal life like all other genuine believers. Or Jesus may be referring to Judas' eternal destiny, that his willful and committed participation in the greatest evil in all human history, the murder of the eternal King of Israel, who is God's Messiah, will result in his eventually becoming an object of God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction. While the first option is both theologically possible and plausible, the second seems more in line with Jesus' additional words in Matthew and Mark, "It would have been good for [the traitor] if that man had not been born." Why? Because then he would not be destined to experience God's anger, punishment, and destruction. In other words, Jesus is admitting that never coming into existence for sinful human beings who eventually become subject to God's justice, punishment, and eternal destruction is better than existing as abject rebels against God who eventually do so.

Certainly, this is another concept in the Bible that is spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally difficult to understand and accept. But it is right in line with the apostle Paul's description of our having been created in comparison to the uncreated God—that He is the Potter and we are the clay. And just as we would grant to a human potter the right to mold the lump of clay on his potter's wheel into whatever kind of item he wishes, whether a beautiful vase or a plain chamber pot, we must do likewise to God. God's existence is dependent on no one. He simply is, just as He was and will be without needing anyone else to cause Him to exist and live. In contrast, we are entirely dependent upon God for whether we will take part in the story which He is telling and for when and how we will do so. God crafts and molds human beings as He desires and according to His purposes. And He is always good and right to do so—whether the clay pots choose to ignore and reject Him for the entirety of their lives, or they repent and pursue loving and obeying Him at some point along their earthly journey. And then He has the right to deal with them as He wishes as a consequence of their choices, even choices He has predestined and caused. He can either grant them mercy and eternal life or justice, eternal death, and destruction. As difficult as it is for us to wrap our minds around these concepts, the Bible teaches them and exhorts us to embrace them. As the apostle Paul writes in Romans 9:16, "[Whether or not a sinful human being receives God's justice or His mercy] does not belong to the one who wills, nor to the one who exerts himself, but it ultimately belongs to God who is merciful." Certainly, we exercise our wills and we exert ourselves. But God is the sovereign ruler over our wills, our exertions, and the eternal outcome of our lives.

At this point in Jesus' conversation with his disciples it seems reasonable to place John's additional information. He says that there is one disciple "whom Jesus [particularly] loved" and who is leaning against him. Is this the apostle John himself, the author of this text, and he is humbly hiding behind not explicitly mentioning his name? Most likely. For example, we have another clue in John 19:26,27 as Jesus is dying on the cross,

> John 19:26 "When [he] then saw his mother [standing at the foot of the cross with several other women], and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' 27 Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

There are similar references to this man in two other contexts near the end of John. In the second one, this man states, "This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). Therefore, the disciple whom Jesus loved and who is leaning against him is John, the author of this gospel.

And without speaking, Peter motions to John and communicates that he should “inquire which one it was” to whom Jesus is referring. So John says to Jesus, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answers him more specifically than in his first response to all the disciples, “The one for whom I dip the piece of bread and give it to him.” Then Jesus puts some bread in the lamb and bitter herbs on the table and hands it “to Judas of Simon Iscariot.” This is probably when Judas asks Jesus as recorded in Matthew, “Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?” Of course Judas knows that it is! Just the night before he conspired with the Jewish leaders to hand Jesus over to them. So this question is quite naturally only a means to deflect attention away from him because of his sense of guilt. Then, Matthew 26:25 indicates that Jesus uses the cryptic statement, “You have said it,” thus announcing that, indeed, it is Judas. John also tells us that it is after Jesus has handed Judas the bread that Satan enters into him.

We already saw in a previous subsection that Luke 22:3 stated that Satan entered into Judas the previous Thursday to motivate him to meet with the Jewish leaders and plan Jesus’ betrayal. Now, approximately five days later, on Tuesday evening during the Passover meal, Satan “enters” into him again, so that Judas becomes fully committed to handing Jesus over to the Sanhedrin. And Jesus says to him, “What you do, do quickly” (John 13:27).

As I commented in the subsection regarding Satan’s entering Judas and his approaching the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus, the Bible does not spell out exactly what happens to a sinful human being like Judas when Satan influences him to choose to do something as evil as betraying the Messiah. But we can conclude that Judas’ goal is in line with Satan’s goal. He is conspiring with the evil leaders of the Jewish people to put an innocent man on trial, indeed, their very Messiah, who has been sent by God to be their king and restore the Kingdom of Israel and of David.

Now, after all the wondering and questioning that the disciples have done in regard to the identity of the guilty party and after Jesus clearly answers that it is the one who is eating with them and to whom he hands the piece of bread, the other disciples are clueless as to what is actually happening. It is possible that Jesus answers John without the others’ hearing that the betrayer is the one to whom he gives the piece of bread. But in their close quarters, it seems reasonable to assume that they all hear what Jesus is saying. Plus, it is hard to imagine that they all do not hear Jesus confirm to Judas that it is he after he asks him if it is he. John then goes on to say that “no one of those reclining at the table understood why” Jesus said to Judas, “What you do, do quickly.” Some of them think that, “because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy what we need for the feast.’” This would be a reference to the continuation of the feast of the Passover the following day of Wednesday and perhaps to the Feast of Unleavened Bread the following seven days beginning at sundown on Wednesday. And others of the disciples conclude that Jesus is instructing Judas to “give something to the poor.”

Again we can be grateful that the disciples are so dense and dull-witted, that they are slow to comprehend what Jesus is saying. One reason is that, if the eleven others had truly understood that Judas was going to ruin Jesus’ earthly ministry by handing him over to the Jewish leaders, they would most likely have stopped him. And what would be the result? We would not have a crucified Messiah who acts as our High Priest before God, which would prevent us from obtaining God’s eternal mercy, salvation, and life through him. This would be eternally disastrous for us sinners who have come to authentic faith and belief in God. In spite of our faith, we would have no Messiah who can intercede for us before God. And since God requires that only a crucified Messiah can make this appeal on our behalf, we would be trapped in our sins and condemnation before Him. Therefore, we are eternally grateful that the other disciples completely misunderstood what was going on with Judas.

There is another reason why we can thank God that the disciples were so uncomprehending. If this is the case for them who have been in his presence for as long as three years, who have been personally taught by him in their own language with all the background knowledge they have of the Old Testament, and who have observed the numerous miracles he has performed, then we can grant ourselves plenty of grace and patience as we seek to grow in our understanding of the Bible and its truths. Of further encouragement to us is to remember that, after Jesus had asked his disciples in Matthew 16 who people think that he is, and they responded that they think he may be a prophet or some such man of God, he then questioned them as to whom they consider him to be. Peter answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). And Jesus informs him, “Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). In other words, we human beings can hear the very words of truth from the Messiah himself, but it still takes the transcendent God to connect the dots in our

heads and cause us to understand and embrace the ideas with genuine belief. In the case of Judas Iscariot and his role that Jesus has clearly revealed, God has not given the rest of the disciples the capability to understand exactly what is going on. Likewise, we may struggle to understand certain theological ideas, thus making it entirely appropriate to pray that God will open our minds to grow in our knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as we study the Bible, which is our sole authoritative and inerrant source of truth.

John then provides us with the last detail of this scene, that "after receiving the piece of bread" from Jesus, Judas has finished his time as one of his close disciples. Single-mindedly resolved to complete his personal project of betraying Jesus, "he went out immediately." In addition, "it was night," which certainly makes sense because God has ordered the Jews in Exodus and the other Old Testament passages to eat the Passover at sundown. Thus, enough time has elapsed that it is dark outside in the early spring as Judas leaves the group to fulfill his mission of betraying Jesus to the Sanhedrin that they might do away with him—they think and hope. But God has other plans for the Messiah!

This presents us with another good lesson. As much as unbelievers attempt to silence the truth of the Bible, they always fail, because God is so much bigger than they are. In order for the plans of those who are opposed and even hostile to the Bible to succeed, they would have to destroy God and take control of the entire universe. And obviously this is never going to happen. They can even kill the Messiah on a wooden cross, but this merely plays into God's hands as it was necessary for Jesus to die in order to qualify for his eternal role as King and High Priest on behalf of all believing sinners. They can persecute and kill the Messiah's genuine followers, and this also plays into God's hands, for, as Peter says, we Christians are "called to this purpose, since the Messiah also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example to follow in his footsteps" (1 Peter 2:21). Satan and those human beings who buy his lies may think that they are gaining the upper hand in this world, but God begs to differ. As the apostle Paul says in Romans 8:28, He is always fulfilling His eternal plans and purposes while also causing "all things to work together for the good [of eternal salvation and life] for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Judas and the Jewish leaders are thinking that they are overpowering Jesus and will finally be rid of this pest. But Jesus will die, rise from the dead, ascend from the earth, and then return to overpower and conquer all his enemies. And with him we Christians by our faith will conquer Satan and the world so that we will live with Jesus for all eternity in the Kingdom of God. This is John's point in 1 John 5:4,5 –

> 1 John 5:4 For whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our belief. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Even if the world kills us, we conquer the world and are victorious over them because of the faith in God and Jesus that resides within us. The only one powerful enough to take our faith away from us is God, and He has promised to remain eternally loyal to us and cause our faith to persevere. Therefore, the very existence of our faith right up to the moment of our death is our victory over any enemy of God.

c. Jesus Redefines the Passover for the Remaining Eleven Disciples

Tuesday about 7:30 p.m.

Matthew 26:26-29	Mark 14:22-25	Luke 22:15-20	John
26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took the bread and praised God for it. And he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take and eat. This is my body." 26:27 And he took the cup and gave thanks for it. He then gave it to	14:22 While they were eating, he took some bread, and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take. [Eat.] This is my body." 14:23 And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to	22:15 And he said to them, "I have really wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 22:16 For I say to you that I definitely will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." 22:17 And he took the	No parallel in John

them, saying, “All of you drink from it, 26:28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 26:29 And I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vineyard from now until that day when I will drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.”	them, and they all drank from it. 14:24 And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many. 14:25 Truly I say to you, that I will never drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”	cup and gave thanks for it. And he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves, 22:18 for I say to you that I definitely will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now until the Kingdom of God comes.” 22:19 And he took the bread, and after giving thanks for it, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is being given for you. Do this as a reminder of me.” 22:20 Likewise, after they had eaten, he took the cup, saying, “This cup which is being poured out for you is the New Covenant because of my blood.”	

Explanation of the Above Passages

We know from the previous two subsections that Jesus and the disciples have been eating their Passover meal for a while. Jesus has washed their feet (John 13:1-20), announced that one of them is betraying him, made it clear that Judas Iscariot is the guilty party, and Judas has left to go to the Jewish leaders and fulfill his task of handing over Jesus to them. Now it is time for Jesus to provide the remaining disciples with an explanation of a new significance that he is assigning to the Passover. But first, Luke tells us that he says to them, “I have really wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Jesus knows that his final act as the mortal Messiah is to die by crucifixion. And he must also know that this will take place the next morning which will still be the Passover after the evening when he has celebrated this feast with the eleven loyal disciples who become his apostles and whom he sends out to proclaim the gospel.

But why has he really wanted to eat this Passover with these specific disciples before he dies? I think that the next verse in Luke indirectly provides the answer when Jesus says, “For I definitely will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” To what does the “it” in this statement refer? The Passover, which God instituted when He rescued the Jews from bondage in Egypt around 1500 B.C. and for which Jesus becomes the instrument of God’s filling it out completely as he will go on to say in this segment. It is in the future that God will fulfill, i.e., bring to its conclusion, the Passover when Jesus returns and rescues the Jews from all their enemies, including their enemy of sin and its eternal consequences of God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction. Thus, God’s purpose for Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews is to bring about the restored Kingdom of Israel by means of his death, resurrection, ascension, and finally his return, when he will rule over not only them as forgiven sinners, but also both forgiven and unforgiven Gentiles in the rest of the world until God destroys the present realm and creates the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21. It will then be on the future earth that all forgiven Jews and Gentiles, who have become authentic believers in God throughout history, will dwell.

But it will also be during the time of the Kingdom of Israel on this earth when the Passover “is fulfilled in the [future] Kingdom of God.” Jesus and the Jews, including his apostles, will eat it together annually

for the thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20. This implies that the Jews will follow and obey the Mosaic Covenant during the millennial kingdom, and it will be the first time in all their history that they do so as an entire nation. God has always instructed them to be a people of changed hearts and authentic belief. And possessing this characteristic is one of the things that He meant in Genesis 12:2 when He promised Abraham to make his descendants "a great nation." Their greatness will include their authentic belief that comes from circumcised hearts as stated in Deuteronomy 30. And God will fulfill this promise when Jesus returns for the "144,000" Jews of the book of Revelation. This means, too, that not only will all the Jews during the time of the restored Kingdom of Israel worship and submit to Jesus as their God and King, but they will do so collectively within the context of following the Mosaic Covenant. And because the Passover is part of the covenant, Jesus and his fellow Jews on the land of Israel will celebrate this feast in Jerusalem annually with all resurrected and transformed believing Jews, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David.

However, in order for Jesus to reach God's final objective for him of ruling over the Kingdom of God and eating this meal again with his faithful apostles, he must suffer death on the cross. Therefore, the joy of the glory of establishing God's kingdom on earth can exist for Jesus only by means of his experiencing the pain of execution by the Romans at the full request of his own people, the Jews.

So of course, like any human being who knows he must suffer before he experiences the joy that necessitates the pain, Jesus is deeply troubled by the fact that he has reached that moment when the misery must begin soon after he enjoys the fellowship of a last good meal with these men, his eleven best friends. In this way, Jesus is honestly and realistically anticipating the next Passover he will enjoy with these same committed companions. He will be crucified, buried, raised from the dead, and ascend from the earth. Then, eventually God will send him back to restore the Kingdom of Israel, what Revelation 20 identifies as the millennium, i.e., the millennial kingdom. For Jesus, the satisfaction of the present meal, in the midst of acknowledging that he will be crucified the next morning with nails through his hands and feet, will be nothing in comparison to the joy and fulfillment that he will feel after his death, after his resurrection, after his ascension, and after his return.

It is similar to any of us who might enjoy a meal with our family or friends before a lengthy surgical operation that will require extensive and painful rehabilitation, but that will also result in the cure of a dread disease, the elimination of a health problem, or the relief of constant and debilitating pain. How we may want to eat the first meal with those who support us and encourage us that we may move forward with courage and anticipation towards a second meal with them after the pain and hard work are all gone. So we can imagine the joy and relief when Jesus eats the second Passover in Jerusalem with his resurrected apostles that is still future to us after his return.

This also implies that resurrected or raptured, immortal, and morally perfect believers will eat in the eternal Kingdom of God just as they do now. But again, how much more enjoyable these future meals will be for us—and for Jesus. I suppose that it was almost as satisfying for Jesus to eat with the apostles after his resurrection as explained in Luke 24:41-43,

> Luke 24:41 "And while they still did not believe from their joy and amazement [that it really was Jesus who had risen from the dead], he said to them, 'What do you have here to eat?' 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in front of them."

I say that it was almost as satisfying because it stands to reason that the meal in the restored Kingdom of Israel will be hugely more satisfying than this one in Luke 24. But every minute of Jesus' life, and now every minute from the beginning of this Passover before his crucifixion is a necessary step towards his goal. And the same is true for us who believe in him. Every minute for us is an important and necessary step towards our final goal of obtaining God's forgiveness and eternal life.

Having left out Jesus' statements regarding his desire to eat this meal with these eleven men, Matthew explains, "While they were eating, Jesus took the bread and praised God for it." Mark says that he took "some bread" and blessed it. Luke writes that he gives thanks for it. Thus, all three gospel authors mean that Jesus naturally is grateful for the food, but it may not be only because it can be used to sustain their physical lives. Jesus is also going to use the unleavened bread of the Passover meal as an object lesson for his disciples. Nevertheless, before he does, he acknowledges God for His having provided them with this food and his teaching tool.

Then Matthew says that "he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body.'" Mark says likewise but that he gave it "to them," while Luke adds an explanation regarding the

bread's being Jesus' body, that it "is being given for you." Luke may simply be helping with the interpretation of Jesus' statement as recorded by Matthew and Mark, so that his readers know that Jesus is referring to his violent death as a gift to his believing and loyal disciples. This is to say that they will benefit greatly by Jesus' permitting himself to be crucified the next day. The rest of the New Testament teaches us that God views Jesus' death as an offering to Him so that Jesus qualifies to intercede for believing sinners that they may obtain God's eternal mercy and gift of eternal life.

It is striking that Jesus uses the bread as referring to his body and not the lamb of the Passover meal, especially when the New Testament in several places, especially in Revelation, calls him the Lamb of God. Indeed, before Jesus even begins his public ministry, John the Baptist, when he first sees Jesus, says as much to his own disciples and the crowds who have gathered to be baptized by him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John the Baptist knew from the beginning that Jesus was going to be a sacrifice and offering to God for the forgiveness of our sins.

But rather than associate the lamb of the Passover meal with his body and his death, Jesus refers to the unleavened bread. I think it is because he wants to emphasize the violent nature of his death by breaking it in front of these men, "And he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body.'" After being baked, unleavened bread is typically hard, so that it makes a snapping sound when it is broken. I think that Jesus wants the sound of his breaking the bread to be as important as his words for teaching his disciples. He is not simply going to die a quiet and easy death in his sleep this night as an offering to God for the sins of the world. He is going to suffer the violence of the hammered nails and the pain of six hours of hanging on the cross before his body finally completely breaks and he takes in his last breath and expires. And this after experiencing the mistreatment of the lashes with a whip and the crown of thorns by the Roman soldiers.

Luke then adds another important detail, which I suggest has been misunderstood by most Christians. Jesus tells his apostles, "Do this as a reminder of me." The question is, what does Jesus mean by "this?" Is Jesus instituting a new ceremony, i.e., the "Lord's Supper" (also called communion or the Mass), for Christians to perform from that point on and throughout the rest of human history? I do not think so. My explanation lacks the depth and extent that this subject deserves, but here it is briefly. As a result of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, it certainly seems that not only is Jesus establishing a Christian ritual and tradition, but Paul is also confirming it. In 1 Corinthians 11, he is criticizing the Corinthians for the manner in which they "eat the Lord's Supper." They are not mindful of each other's needs so that wealthy people are gorging themselves while the poorer Christians receive such little food that they are still hungry. Then Paul says,

> 1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
> 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

For two millennia Christians have interpreted Paul as interpreting Jesus as commanding them to celebrate "The Lord's Supper" as often as possible, even every Sunday when they go to church. Again, the question is what does Jesus mean by "this" in his charge to the apostles, "Do this in remembrance of me"? In addition, what exactly does Paul mean by the phrase, "as often as" when he speaks of the Corinthians' eating and drinking the Lord's Supper? And why is he instructing them to eat this meal? My answers to these questions come from looking carefully at the contexts in which these men gave their instructions. First, Jesus is in the midst of eating the annual Passover in Jerusalem with his Jewish disciples. Therefore, I think he is referring to it only. In other words, he is telling them, who are authentic believers in him as their Messiah, that every time they come to Jerusalem in the spring to celebrate God's rescue of the Jewish nation from slavery in Egypt, they should remember him as the key instrument of God for rescuing them from His eternal condemnation. In this way, he is extending the meaning of and redefining the Passover for them.

If the above is true about Jesus' intent, then it does not make sense that Paul is collaborating with him and instituting a regular ceremony for the mainly Gentile Christians in the city of Corinth. Instead, I think that these former worshipers of pagan idols had already established a tradition in their culture of eating what may have been a weekly religious meal together as a way to demonstrate their shared bond

of idolatry. In order to accommodate their cultural tradition, Paul borrows from Jesus' words and his meaning at the last Passover with his disciples and provides the Corinthian Christians with a good reason for continuing their religious tradition. However, now, instead of eating their meal in remembrance of Poseidon, the patron god of Corinth, they are to do so in remembrance of Jesus as their crucified and risen Lord and Savior. And they should do this "as often as" they eat together, which may have been every time they actually met. The problem, therefore, that Paul has discovered is that they are still acting the way they did when they were worshiping the pagan gods, with selfishness, gluttony, and drunkenness. Obviously Paul wants to correct their behavior and instructs them to treat each other with kindness and love. But, for our purposes, the bottom line is that neither Jesus nor Paul is commanding all Christians throughout all time to eat The Lord's Supper whenever they gather as believers. Nevertheless, the religious freedom that the gospel affords us permits us to remember Jesus whenever we eat a meal together as his followers.

To emphasize, when Jesus says, "Do this as a reminder of me," I think that he is referring to eating the unleavened bread of the Passover, just as he will refer to drinking the feast's wine. Therefore, very simply, he is telling his Jewish apostles that from now on, every year when they come to Jerusalem in the spring to celebrate God's rescue of the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt and eat the unleavened bread, they are in addition to think of the importance and significance of what will happen to Jesus within the next twelve hours or so. Luke quotes Jesus in regard to the bread, "This is my body which is being given for you." Jesus will place his living, mortal body at the disposal of the Jews and Romans as a gift to these Jewish apostles, and, by extrapolation, to all authentic believers in God down through history. And we know from other biblical passages that this "gift" is his death on the cross as an offering to God so that Jesus may qualify to become the High Priest of sinners and intercede on their behalf for God's eternal mercy.

Another issue that has arisen in Christian history is how to interpret Jesus' words, "This is my body." Is he saying that the unleavened bread turns into his actual physical body every time believers eat it—as according to the Roman Catholic Church? Or is he saying that he accompanies the bread when Christians eat it, i.e., that he is "with" it—as according to Martin Luther? Or is he saying that the bread is merely symbolic of his dead body—as according to other Protestant Christians? Having concluded that Jesus is not establishing a new and different tradition from the Old Testament Passover, I think the last option is correct. Jesus is saying that, just as the Israelites were to consider the unleavened bread as symbolic of their leaving Egypt in haste (cf. Exodus 12:39), his Jewish disciples should now see it as symbolic of the gift of his earthly body that results in their eternal salvation from God's justice. And, again, they encounter this symbol only once a year at the Passover in Jerusalem. Therefore, if Gentile Christians really want to follow Jesus' instructions, they too need to make the trek to the capital city of Israel, sacrifice their lamb in the temple, and then gather after sundown at the beginning of the Passover and eat the lamb and unleavened bread. This would be so that they too can commemorate God's miracle of the Jewish exodus from Egypt 3500 years ago, and, more importantly, they can remember His miracle of their risen, crucified Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Now we should add what the gospel writers say next, that Jesus took the cup of wine that they were sharing, and as he did with the bread, he thanks God for its sustenance for their physical bodies and for what he is about to do with it. Matthew says, "He then gave it to them, saying, 'All of you drink from it, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" But what covenant is he talking about? Mark is similar, but he leaves out the comment about the purpose of Jesus' death and shedding his blood, that it is for the forgiveness of sins. Luke is more interpretative, so that he has Jesus say, "This cup which is being poured out for you is the New Covenant because of my blood." Clearly, there is a connection between Jesus' death and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 where the prophet writes,

> Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
> 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares Yahweh.
> 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares Yahweh, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

> 34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Yahweh, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

We notice that God is making this New Covenant with the nation of Israel, the Jews, i.e., "the house of Israel [the northern kingdom of ten tribes over so which was destroyed around 700 B.C.] and the house of Judah" [the southern kingdom of one tribe which was destroyed around 600 B.C.]. We also notice that God will change the hearts of the Jews so that He will write His "law," His Torah, and most specifically the Mosaic Covenant, on their hearts. In other words, He will "circumcise" and change their hearts according to His promise in Deuteronomy 30. And most importantly for Jesus' and our purposes as we look at these verses in the Passion Week narrative, God will forgive the sins of all these changed of heart Jews. Very simply, therefore, Jesus is saying that his blood as symbolized by the cup of wine of the Passover meal refers to shedding his blood in death by which his Jewish apostles, and by extrapolation all authentic believers in God during human history, will obtain His eternal mercy. As I have already suggested, Jesus' death leads to his acting as advocate and High Priest for sinners. The author of Hebrews indicates that Jesus becomes the sacrifice of the New Covenant, so that God grants complete forgiveness of sins to those who embrace Jesus as both offering and priest. This is how we sinners, who cannot rescue ourselves from God's condemnation, obtain His eternal mercy and eternal life.

Matthew and Mark place the final element of Jesus' instructions to his apostles in this subsection at the end. Luke places it near the beginning, right after Jesus has said that he will not eat the Passover until he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel. Luke then indicates that "he took the cup and gave thanks for it." And Jesus says, "Take this and share it among yourselves, for I say to you that I definitely will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now until the Kingdom of God comes." Then Luke says that Jesus takes the bread and gives it to his apostles, and afterwards takes the cup of wine and makes his comment about its representing the New Covenant. In contrast, both Matthew and Mark state at the end that Jesus comments on his not drinking wine again, i.e., <u>after</u> he has given them the bread first and then the wine. I think that Luke is providing more of what Jesus says before he takes the bread and wine and gives them to his apostles. And then Matthew and Mark state was Jesus has already said, so that he actually repeats that he will not drink wine again until he establishes the Kingdom of God. Thus, Luke leaves out the second reference by Jesus to his abstaining from wine and focuses on interpreting Jesus' statement about the New Covenant.

So in Matthew's account at the end, Jesus says, "And I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vineyard from now until that day when I will drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." In Mark Jesus says , "Truly I say to you, that I will never drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." This is not that different from what Luke reveals of Jesus' comments at the beginning of his instructions, "I say to you that I definitely will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now until the Kingdom of God comes." Therefore, Jesus is not only going to refrain from eating the Passover until he restores the Kingdom of Israel on earth as the first stage of the Kingdom of God, but now we know also that he is looking forward to his first cup of wine at the same annual celebration of both the Jews' exodus from Egypt and sinners' exodus from God's wrath and justice. This will be in the kingdom of Jesus' "Father" (Matthew), which is to say in the kingdom that God the Father has purposed in the story which He is telling and which He will bring forth in its time. Of course, this is the same kingdom that is "of God" (Mark and Luke) in the same manner.

In the previous segment and the beginning of this one, we have seen John and Luke respectively refer to Jesus' emotional state. John says that he is "troubled in his spirit" as he anticipates his crucifixion. Luke says that he has "really wanted to eat this Passover with" these eleven apostles because the next time he eats it, he will be with them in the millennial kingdom after his return. As a result, Jesus is experiencing both a painful sorrow and an anticipatory joy. And Hebrews 12:1,2 encourage the readers to adopt the same emotional state,

> Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, indeed, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses [who were believers in Old Testament times] surrounding us [as though they are cheering us on towards the finish line of our race to eternal life], let us also lay aside every impediment and the sin that so easily distracts us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 12:2 while we fix our eyes on Jesus, the leader in belief and the one who finished his race. For the joy set before him,

he endured the cross, while thinking nothing of the humiliation, and he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

So I end this explanation by encouraging us all to face into the easy and difficult aspects of our lives squarely and honestly, neither enjoying the easy parts with the expectation that we can always make life pain-free, nor despairing during the difficult parts so that we give up hope of laughing and taking delight in our existences as God has given them to us, especially when we enter into eternal life when Jesus returns. He humbly submitted to God the Father who required that he die on a cross for our salvation, and there was both grief and joy in his obedience as he looked forward to the future Kingdom of God. May the same be true for us as we encounter God's sovereign will for our lives that are similar to that of Jesus in the midst of enduring hardship, enjoying moments of laughter, and anticipating the inexpressible shalom of Jesus' kingdom.

d. Jesus' Response to the Apostles' Dispute as to Who is the Greatest

Tuesday about 8 p.m.

Luke 22:24-30
22:24 And there also arose among them a dispute as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest. 22:25 And he said to them, "The kings of Gentiles exercise control over them, and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' 22:26 But it must not be like this for you. Instead, the one who is greatest among you, let him be like the youngest. And the one who is the leader, let him be like a servant. 22:27 For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am in your midst as the one who serves." 22:28 "You are those who have always remained with me through my trials. 22:29 And just as my Father has formally decreed that a kingdom be brought about for me, I formally decree for you 22:30 that you eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And you will sit on thrones ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel."

Explanation of the Above Passage

Except for the long passage called The Upper Room Discourse in John 14-17, this is the only part of the Last Supper that just one gospel author describes. So it is certainly appropriate to wonder why Luke includes this brief episode, while Matthew, Mark, and John omit it, especially when it contains some key principles about not only mankind in general, but also the apostles specifically. Of course, as in instances when any author provides information that is unique, Luke is doing so here for his own purposes (under the direct supervision and causation of God as the sovereign Ruler of the creation, but this is an entirely different, and yet important, subject that we will not cover here). Therefore, we trust that Luke's purpose naturally involves his wanting his readers to grasp the meaning of both the disciples' actions and Jesus' words. But the more obvious reason he is including this incident is that Matthew in 20:25-28 and Mark in 10:42-45 record that Jesus uses the same response, at least that of vs. 25-27 of Luke 22, *after James' and John's mother have requested that her sons sit on his left and right in the Kingdom of God*. Therefore, Matthew and Mark must think that it would be superfluous to repeat the same instructions or even include them with Jesus' additional comments that Luke presents in vs. 28-30.

I believe also that Luke is more interested in presenting information that his readers can use to learn about Jesus than he is in being chronologically correct. Notice how this subsection begins, "And there also arose among them…", rather than with a definite adverb that indicates sequence, such as "Then…" or "After this…", etc. Consequently, the conversations presented by Luke in this episode and those of the next two could have taken place in a different order in which Luke actually writes them, and they would still convey what he intends. The common element of all three is that they most likely happened between Jesus' redefining the Passover in the subsection immediately preceding this one and the group's leaving the upper room to walk to the Mt. of Olives, which starts in the next subsection. This is all part of what it means for each of the gospel authors to be a storyteller whose accounts are part of the inerrant Word of God, i.e., the Bible. While their stories are slightly different, their meanings never contradict one another.

Let us continue with an explanation of the current event. We recall that Judas Iscariot has left the group to go to the Jewish leaders and finish his plans with them to betray Jesus this same night. We also remember that the remaining eleven disciples do not understand why Judas has left, meaning that they are unaware of his unique and evil role in the events of this night leading up to Jesus' crucifixion the next morning. Being thus insensitive to all that is transpiring, the eleven disciples further display their ignorance in the form of explicit selfishness. Jesus has said that he looks forward to eating his next Passover in Jerusalem with them once the Kingdom of God has come into existence—which we know from other New Testament passages will be upon his return (cf. Matthew 24; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4, etc.). As a result, these disciples perhaps have at least surmised that they will play important roles in this messianic kingdom. But their own appropriate humility and sensitivity to Jesus' predicament (that he is going to give his body and blood in death for them and their eternal salvations within approximately 12 hours) is still very much lacking. Consequently, after Jesus has bared his heart and soul to them now that events are definitely in motion with Judas' absence, they start arguing with one another about who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. It would be like a wealthy father's informing his children that he is dying of cancer, and they immediately start arguing with one another about which one of them is going to take control of his multi-million dollar business. "Gee, thanks kids, for caring so much about me," he would probably say.

And one question we can ask is, greatest "what" in the Kingdom of God? Human being? Disciple of Jesus? Some other option? Probably the second is correct—disciple of Jesus. The eleven disciples have caught on to the fact that they are the Messiah's closest associates, and they are probably convinced from the Old Testament and Jesus' own teaching and miracles, which he performed to affirm his identity as the Messiah, that he is the greatest human being in all history as well as the very centerpiece of the entirety of God's creation from its inception on into eternity. Indeed, he is God within the story of the reality in which they are living and will live for all eternity. So to be this close to Jesus at the present moment is definitely an honor. And to eat his next Passover with him in the Kingdom of God as they are so closely doing now, indeed as they are uniquely doing now, is and will be an almost indescribable honor for them. Therefore, naturally, each of them is wondering if he might be able to claim to be the most honored of Jesus' close associates, especially in the future kingdom. And their individual, internal wondering turns into a full-blown, outward argument. Plus, this is very likely just after Jesus has stated, as he gave them the bread and wine, that he is shedding his blood and giving his body as an offering for their eternal benefit.

Is it possible for sinful human beings to demonstrate greater lack of consideration for another person's plight? If we regard the crucifixion of Jesus as the pinnacle of evil in human history, then these disciples' arguing over who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God is right up there with Judas' own actions of handing him over to his enemies in terms of mistreatment of Jesus. But this is what we sinful human beings are like. We are selfish, insensitive, and uncaring of others—to the extent that we manipulate our circumstances so that they serve our own greedy purposes and advance our own personal agendas. There will be more about this in a moment.

What is Jesus' response to this argument taking place in front of him? He gently rebukes the eleven disciples by encouraging them to consider themselves as servant-leaders like him instead of just rulers like those in the political arena. He begins by describing the dynamic that exists between political leaders of this world and their subjects. He says that "the kings of nations exercise control over [their subjects], and those who have authority…are called 'Benefactors.'" Jesus and his disciples are living in a time where only monarchies, and no other forms of government, exist. While we have seen and experienced the benefits of democracy in the modern era, the ancient world (except Greece and the Roman Empire to a degree) knew only kings, kingdoms, and empires without representation by elected representatives in a republic (from the Latin *res publica*, meaning a public matter, i.e., the concern of the people). And the kings of the ancient kingdoms exercised such absolute authority and wielded such boundless power that there was little if any dissension tolerated by them. They were, by and large, tyrants so that their subjects did not think of themselves as being able to exercise the level of freedom that many people have enjoyed in the modern era. Instead, their subjects' livelihoods and lives were not only dependent on their leaders to a greater degree than ours, but they could be taken away much more easily and quickly if the kings so chose.

As a result, Jesus says that the kings of his day are called "Benefactors," which translated literally would be "Well-doers." But I do not think that he is using this word with a positive connotation, as if the ancient rulers had everyone's well-being in mind whenever they enacted their policies. Instead, the

course of people's lives depended on the capricious whims of their rulers. One moment people may be enjoying relative freedom and prosperity. The next moment the kings may decide to make people's lives miserable for their own selfish purposes. Consequently, the subjects of kingdoms and empires viewed their rulers as having the power either to grant them the opportunity to pursue freely the good things of life (and thus be Benefactors, "Well-doers") or to snuff out their lives cruelly and quickly if it suited their own desires (and thus be Malefactors, "Bad-doers"). In either case, the kings exercised authority and power over their subjects in such a way that the latter were highly, if not completely, dependent on them for the immediate and ongoing quality of their existences in this world.

Jesus also puts it in terms of these kings "lording it over" (NAS95), "exercising lordship" (KJV), or "exercising control over" (my translation) their subjects. The meaning that I think he is getting at is that the political leaders of the ancient world could demand whatever they wanted whenever they wanted from their subjects and could expect to receive it both easily and quickly, whether it was the inward choice to obey them or it was material things such as money for taxes. Indeed, I think that Jesus is indicating that this is the natural tendency of human beings in the political realm—to seek the opportunity to control and demand absolute obedience from other human beings. As the Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "Dominandi cupido cunctis affectibus flagrantior est" (the lust of ruling is more powerful than all other desires). And as Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, 2nd president of the United States, said, "Remember all men would be tyrants if they could." In the end, the Beast of Revelation will demonstrate this lust for power and control more than any other government in human history. The additional biblical explanation for this is man's moral depravity. We all are inherently rebels against God. And without either humanly placed checks and balances such as those of our American constitution or divinely placed checks and balances within us by the Spirit of God who motivates us to hunger and thirst for righteousness, we all naturally seek to dominate our "subjects," whether within our families, the circle of our friends, our Christian communities, our businesses, our societies, our country, or the world.

Jesus then says to his disciples, "But it must not be like this for you." He is instructing them to think and act in the exact opposite manner as political leaders. "Instead, [he says,] the one who is greatest among you, let him be like the youngest. And the one who is the leader, let him be like a servant." In the days of Jesus, children had no rights or status in society except to the extent they could be helpful in sustaining the lives of an entire family. This was in what we would label as an agrarian or agricultural society, where every able-bodied family member was expected to work in the fields to grow food and keep them all alive. So at a very early age, children had no choice but to obey their parents and work with them in the fields. They were like slaves and servants who had no freedom to do otherwise. Their parents were their kings and "lorded over" them and "exercised control over" them. They could demand that their children work in the fields, and no dissension was permitted. In addition, servants and slaves were common in Roman households, where they, too, were in complete bondage to the desires and whims of their masters—just as in other cultures and societies throughout human history, including, unfortunately here in the United States. And this is such a heinous manner of treating fellow human beings that we fought a five-year Civil War to rid ourselves of it, resulting in over 600,000 deaths, more than the number of Americans who died in World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War combined.

As Jesus listens to his disciples arguing, he is sensing that the sin of political leaders exists within these remaining eleven men. Therefore, he is instructing them to shun the temptation to demand the unwavering obedience of others, and, by extrapolation, of those who will end up following them as Christians after Jesus ascends from the earth and leaves them to proclaim the gospel on his behalf. Instead, he wants these men, who will become his apostles, to humble themselves like children and servants who cannot force people to think or do what they want—even if it would be for their own eternal best interests. The apostles must teach the gospel, but without demanding the loyalty of their fellow Christians. They can encourage other sinners to be loyal to God and Jesus only, but this is always a matter of the heart that is out of anyone else's control but God Himself.

By gently rebuking the disciples through referring to the natural tendency of leaders to exercise their authority in an overbearing manner, Jesus is indicating to them that the greater threat to their faith is not from outside them—from their culture or selfish political, corporate, social, or religious leaders who would love to oppress those under their authority. Instead, it is from their own sin within them. We all are inclined to worry about the effects on us of sinful people in the world, whether in our government, our business environments, or even our families. But our greatest concern should be for our own personal sin and its effects, which we must combat every moment by God's grace and our faith. This is what Jesus is

urging his apostles to do so that they teach the gospel without demanding the loyalty of their fellow Christians, which loyalty belongs to only God.

As a result, I think that Jesus is implying two things. The first is that God ultimately is in control of what people think and do and, therefore, in exactly how they will respond to the truth of the gospel. Political leaders tend to believe that they are God and have the absolute right to control people's choices. Religious leaders also tend to believe that they should manage and direct people's lives with more authority than the Bible allows. Jesus is exhorting his disciples to avoid this mentality and to remember that God is the only one who has the right and ability to cause any sinful human being to respond positively to the gospel and believe in Him with authentic faith.

The second thing that Jesus is implying is that all Christians have the responsibility and right to choose for themselves to believe and obey God without coercion from other human beings, including the most authoritative spokesmen for Jesus, the apostles. I have mentioned this in a previous explanation, but the effect of Jesus' statements is that these disciples must exhort and encourage people to believe in him as the Messiah from the humblest of positions. It is not as though they can say or do nothing, but all that they say and do must be with the utmost respect for the other people as created by God to have their own unique and sovereign individual responsibility before Him. As Soren Kierkegaard explained, the apostles must treat all people as "subjective, individual, existential human beings."

1. They are "subjective" because it is their inwardness that determines whether, from their birth, they remain committed to rebelling against God or, if God eventually changes their inwardness through the work of His Holy Spirit, they become committed to believing and obeying Him. In addition, the Bible makes a changed subjectivity and inwardness the condition for sinful human beings to obtain God's eternal mercy and life through Jesus as their Advocate.

2. They are "individual" because every human being is responsible for his own choices and will stand alone before God at the final judgment with no pastor, Bible study teacher, family member, or friend (EXCEPT Jesus as their sole Advocate) to assist them in defending themselves before God.

3. They are "existential" because God alone causes them to exist at any moment of their lives on earth.

And if it is true for the apostles that they must treat people with the utmost respect, serving them instead of dominating them, how much more so for average, everyday Christians, regardless of their roles and who lack the apostles' level of authority and precision of understanding of the gospel. Such a dynamic in relationships inevitably injects a degree of instability and uncertainty into Christian communities and churches that is going to be very uncomfortable for both many pastors and congregants. Church leaders and those whom they lead are both sinful human beings, and leaders will want to maintain a level of order within their churches by controlling people's behavior, and their followers will permit them to do so for their own reasons. But Jesus' exhortation to his apostles to avoid any level of authoritarianism implicitly emphasizes the tremendous amount of love and grace among Christians that is necessary for them to enjoy as much peace and harmony as possible between them.

Then Jesus uses his disciples' immediate circumstances as an object lesson. They are reclining at table and eating the Passover meal. So he says to them, "For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table?" There has been no mention of someone else in the room who is serving Jesus and the disciples as they eat. Has the innkeeper provided them with such a servant? We do not know for sure, but it seems likely that the room was ready with at least a table, pillows, and food, so that Jesus and the others have been serving themselves. However, Jesus asks, if there were a servant in addition to these twelve men, then who in that culture is considered to have greater honor and authority—the servant or the ones seated at the table? And his answer is that it is anyone who is eating the meal and being cared for by the servant. So this seems to contradict the point that Jesus is trying to make, because would not anyone want to be a recliner rather than a servant and have the recliner's honor and prestige?

Indeed, but then Jesus goes on to say, "But I am in your midst as the one who serves." Therefore, Jesus' intent with this analogy is to point to himself as the one reclining at table who not only has a higher honor than any servant, but who has the highest honor of any human being in history. He is the Jewish Messiah sent from God. There is no one among the billions of people who have and will exist who deserves more honor than Jesus. In fact, he deserves our praise and thanksgiving for dying in order to qualify to be our Lord and Savior, and he deserves all our worship as the very person of God within the creation. Nevertheless, Jesus is saying that he, the most honored man of all time, is also the greatest

servant of all time. As he has already stated, his death will be “for you,” i.e., for the apostles, and for all like them who embrace him as King, Lord, Savior, Priest, and Ruler.

And how much more can any human being “serve” another than by giving his life so that the other may be rescued from God’s wrath and eternal condemnation? There simply is no greater service or gift by someone than this. Consequently, through this metaphor Jesus is referring to himself as the prime example of what he wants his disciples to do. They must be willing to give their lives for the eternal and spiritual benefit of each other and of those who will believe in Jesus through their teaching. Tradition informs us that most, if not all, the apostles were both persecuted and executed for their faith.

Jesus’ final point in this discourse is to commend his apostles for their faithfulness and loyalty to him in the midst of all the difficult circumstances of the last three years. He says, “You are those who have always remained with me through my trials.” Obviously, Jesus’ greatest “trial” will be his crucifixion. But he has already experienced many trials and afflictions. These have been times of “testing” literally, where God the Father has brought circumstances into his life that have tried his soul and obedience to Him. It began with Satan’s temptations and testing in the desert, when Jesus was alone. Then, it continued in the disciples’ presence for three years with the harsh criticism and anger from the Jewish leadership and will now culminate in their conspiring and manipulating the Roman government to crucify him.

Ironically, it will be Jesus’ mother and several other women, who are not officially his apostles, but who will courageously stand at the foot of the cross for six hours and watch him die, all the time risking being arrested and either imprisoned or executed for their allegiance to this blasphemous “criminal.” Only John will stand with them and represent the apostles, while “bold” Peter will deny Jesus three times this same night during his trial before the Sanhedrin. Yet Jesus is saying that, up to this point, all the eleven apostles present at the Last Supper have faithfully stood by him and continued to learn the gospel from him through thick and thin. Their endurance of faith and loyalty to Jesus will not go unnoticed by God and him. As their reward so to speak, Jesus goes on to say, “And just as my Father has formally decreed that a kingdom be brought about for me, I formally decree for you that you eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” As the morally perfect icon of God and through his obedience to the Father by willingly being crucified, Jesus will earn the right to rule over God’s future, eternal kingdom. In contrast, as sinful men who cannot earn anything from God but His condemnation, these disciples will nevertheless qualify to eat not only Jesus’ next Passover with him when he returns, but also to eat with him all his meals in the millennial kingdom. Thus, God the Father has officially set in the stone of His mental plans that Jesus will be in charge of the creation for all eternity. Likewise, Jesus, the Son of God, has officially determined that these eleven apostles will eat multiple meals with him in the restored Kingdom of Israel.

In addition, the Father and Jesus will grant his apostles the privilege of ruling with him. Thus Jesus ends this subsection by saying, “And you will sit on thrones ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel.” In the vision of Revelation 20, John relates that after Satan is bound and imprisoned in the abyss, 4 “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

The question is, who are “they” who sit on the thrones? Are they all believers from all history who come to life and reign with the Messiah for a thousand years, or are they only the apostles? I think that they are all believers, but the apostles are their main representatives because of their unique role of having learned the gospel directly from Jesus and having authoritatively proclaimed his message after his ascension. They will hold a primary position of “sitting on thrones” (which is probably metaphorical) while other believers from throughout history, who are either raised from the dead or lifted alive off the earth, will reign with Jesus and his apostles. Consequently, he is referring here to the same thing as Revelation 20:4, that these close associates of his will qualify to share with him the exercising of authority and power over the Jews on the land of Israel and over the Gentiles in the rest of the world. This will be when he returns to establish the restored Kingdom of Israel. In addition, Revelation 20:4 means that all believers from all history, starting with at least Abel and ending with the believers who are alive at Jesus’ second coming, will also rule with him and the apostles. The difference will be that the apostles will have been those who were “always with [Jesus] through his trials” during his first appearance and who went on to proclaim the gospel authoritatively and accurately after his ascension.

One lesson that we should learn from this passage is that we are naturally inclined not only to crave to be the greatest but also to seek to manipulate and control others in order to gain it. But we should work hard by God’s grace and the strength He gives us through His Spirit to choose not give in to this

inclination. Instead, we should go about fulfilling God's calling and vocation for us, while leaving it up to Him as to what greatness we may or may not achieve in this life. In addition, God instructs us to serve our fellow Christians so that this may be the only honor that we obtain, that is, the honor of our being the only ones who know just how honorable we are by virtue of the service we provide to others. And finally, just as the apostles never left Jesus' side during his trials of the three years of his ministry until his crucifixion, we should remain faithful to him and follow his instructions as our Rabbi during our own trials throughout our entire lives.

e. To the Mount of Olives Where Jesus Predicts That All His Apostles Will Abandon Him

Tuesday about 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Matthew 26:30-35	Mark 14:26-31	Luke 22:31-34	John 13:31-38
26:30 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 26:31 At that time, Jesus was saying to them, "All of you will fall away because of me this night, for it has been written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered <Zechariah 13:7>.' 26:32 But after I have been raised, I will go before you into Galilee." 26:33 Peter responded and said to him, "If everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away." 26:34 Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, this very night, before a rooster crows, you will refuse to acknowledge me three times." 26:35 Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples said the same thing.	14:26 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mt. of Olives. 14:27 And Jesus was saying to them, "You will all fall away, for it has been written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered <Zechariah 13:7>.' 14:28 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 14:29 But Peter said to him, "Even if all fall away, I will not." 14:30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night you will deny me three times before a rooster crows twice." 14:31 But he kept saying emphatically, "Even if I die with you, I will not deny you." And they were all saying the same thing.	22:31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat. 22:32 But I have prayed for you that your belief may not fail. And you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." 22:33 But he said to him, "Lord, with you I am ready to go to prison and to death." 22:34 And he said, "I say to you, Peter, a rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me."	13:31 Therefore, when he had gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man to be glorified, and God is to be glorified in him. 13:32 Since God is to be glorified in him, then both God will glorify him in himself and He will glorify him without further delay. 13:33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going you are not able to come,' I also now say to you. 13:34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." 13:36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going, you are not able to follow me now, but you will follow later."

			13:37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why am I not able to follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 13:38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times."

Explanation of the Above Passages

The first question about this subsection is how to understand the relationship between Luke 22:31-34, John 13:31-38, and the other accounts in Matthew and Mark that include Peter's interaction with Jesus about his affirming his willingness to follow Jesus wherever he goes and Jesus' response that he will deny him three times? We notice once again that Luke provides no clear segue from the previous argument among the disciples about their status, while John places this interaction just after Judas Iscariot has left to betray Jesus and long before the rest of them leave to walk to the Mt. of Olives. It also seems that it is this later event when Matthew and Mark indicate that the interaction between Jesus and Peter takes place. This means that, in the gospel of John, the Upper Room Discourse of chapters 14-16 and Jesus' prayer in chapter 17, both of which I have not included in this document, exist between Jesus' and Peter's discussion and their walking to the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mt. of Olives. In other words, John is placing this conversation at a time during the meal and not after it as Matthew and Mark do.

In addition, depending on how we interpret the beginning of Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27 ("At that time, Jesus was saying to them…" and "Then Jesus was saying to them…" respectively), there are three options for what they mean as to when the conversation between Peter and Jesus took place –

1) As Jesus and the eleven disciples are leaving the room and the Passover meal as they head to the Mt. of Olives
2) After Jesus and the eleven disciples reach the Mt. of Olives
3) During the Passover meal just after Judas Iscariot leaves the room to betray Jesus as John describes the conversation in John 13:36-38

Thus, Matthew and Mark they seem to indicate that the conversation occurs sometime after the end of their meal. We also notice that there is an abrupt transition in Luke from the disciples' argument about their status and this conversation between Jesus and Peter. This is not unusual for Luke, and it also will not be until the episode after the next that he will mention Jesus' going out to the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mt. of Olives (cf. Luke 22:39). And then John places the conversation squarely during the meal right after Judas Iscariot has left the other men to go to the Jewish leaders and betray Jesus. Therefore, it seems best to place the conversation that Luke records before they all go to the Mt. of Olives and therefore within the multiple interactions between Jesus and the disciples while they are eating the Last Supper. In other words, in Luke, Jesus and Peter discuss these issues during the meal and not after it.

I mentioned in a previous explanation that I believe Luke was not concerned about the exact chronological order of these events. He cares only that his readers understand the different conversations that Jesus had with his disciples. Yet, it does seem more reasonable to assume that for Luke (as with John), Jesus and Peter talk about the latter's denials sometime during the meal and before the group leaves to walk to the Mt. of Olives. Therefore, we seem to have two witnesses, Matthew and Mark, for an interaction between Jesus and Peter after they eat the Last Supper and as they are either leaving the upper room or arriving at the Mt. of Olives, and we have two witnesses, Luke and John, for an earlier

interaction during the meal. Could it be that Matthew and Mark are correct in their chronology of this event, while Luke and John are wrong, or vice versa? No, because we are talking about the Bible which is the inerrant message of God, so that He guided the human authors to think and write the truth as they composed their documents. Therefore, here is how I would put together all the data and reconcile the four gospels.

It seems most reasonable that the conversation between Jesus and Peter took place only once, and that all four authors are engaged in story telling so that they are not bound by any fast rules that require that they always present events in their exact chronological order. This, therefore, allows us to understand that when Matthew are Mark basically say, “After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives,” and then they present the interaction of Jesus and Peter about his denial, they are not intending to say that this event took place on the way to the mountain or when they arrived at it. They mean only that there was an important conversation between Jesus and Peter that will figure prominently in the upcoming narrative and that took place during the Passover Meal. They just are not saying exactly when it happened. This also means that Luke and John are correct in placing Jesus’ conversation with Peter during the meal—and, as John says, right after Judas Iscariot leaves the room.

Consequently, there is one conversation when Jesus and Peter discuss his commitment and his denials, so that a brief analysis goes like this: John indicates that right after Judas Iscariot leaves, Peter assures Jesus that he will not abandon him. But Jesus reveals to him that he is incorrect and will deny him three times this very night. Matthew and Mark say that Jesus warns his disciples that they are all going to abandon him, and Peter tries to assure him that he will not. Therefore, Jesus tells Peter that he is wrong and that he will pretend three times during the night that he does not know him. And Luke has provided us with only a brief account of a conversation that fits with John’s narrative, because he will write about one more incident during the Passover meal and then mention everyone’s leaving.

And we remember that the disciples are not understanding everything that Jesus is saying. For example, before this evening, they had not grasped that he is going to suffer death on the cross (cf. Matthew 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31, etc.). In addition, during this meal, they had not picked up on the fact that it is Judas Iscariot who has his mind set on betraying Jesus. It also makes sense that, because Jesus says in John 13:31 that, now that Judas Iscariot has left, he is going to be glorified by what follows and then goes on in John 14:1-17:26 to instruct, exhort, and pray for these eleven disciples to be his authoritative apostles, that John 13:31-17:26 occurs after Jesus redefines the Passover (as described in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; and Luke 22:15-20) and even after the disciples dispute their status in the coming Kingdom of God (as described in Luke 22:24-30). Both Jesus’ calling attention to the fact that the disciples should remember him every time they celebrate the annual Passover in Jerusalem and his clarifying that they are to relate to another by serving each other sacrificially seem foundational for his going on to instruct them that God through His Spirit will enable them to be his authoritative and accurate spokesmen for all sinful human beings who will embrace him as their Messiah throughout the rest of history.

As a result, Jesus gets these issues of the Passover and status out of the way, and then in John 13:31-38 he speaks of his glorification and begins giving instructions to the disciples. But this passage includes v. 37 where Peter makes one naïve comment to the effect that he will remain completely loyal to Jesus. This instance of the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John’s gospel is Peter’s wondering why he cannot follow Jesus where he is going, while the instance in Matthew and Mark is his stating that he will not abandon Jesus as his disciple. And in both cases, Jesus’ response is the same—that Peter will deny him three times. However, Peter is so unaware of what Jesus is saying that later this night he will not even remember what Jesus has said until he does deny him three times. This would mean, too, that Luke’s abrupt change from the disciples’ argument about their status, but before they all leave to walk to the Mt. of Olives (two subsections later), is a reference to the same conversation between Jesus and Peter that John describes and that Matthew and Mark place after their comments to the effect that Jesus sand the eleven disciples head towards the Mt. of Olives. This also fits with the fact that Luke has already presented Jesus’ identifying Judas Iscariot as the one who betrays him and also presented Jesus’ redefinition of the Passover. Consequently, neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke is as concerned about chronology as John, and Luke lumps together certain events and conversations that are chronologically before or after other groups of events and conversations.

Therefore, let us start our explanation of these passages by looking at John 13:31-38 and Luke 22:21-34. Knowing that Judas Iscariot’s departure has really started the ball rolling towards his crucifixion within the next twelve hours, Jesus states in John 13:31-32 that God the Father is going to glorify him.

Certainly his resurrection will be a glorious victory over his death, but the real glory will arrive when he returns, ushers in, and rules over the eternal Kingdom of God, first on this earth with the temporary millennial kingdom and then on the new earth where the kingdom will last forever. Jesus goes on in John 13:33 to tell his disciples, using the endearing words “little children” as he calls them, that he is with them for only a little while longer and will leave for a place where they cannot yet go. In the meantime he commands them in John 13:34-35 to love one another just as he has loved them—sacrificially, so that other people will be able to identify them easily as his followers.

All groups start out with people who are enthusiastic to be with each other as they share some common bond, and this will be true of the apostles also. But over the course of history, many groups, whether empires, nations, cities, businesses, or even churches and families, eventually lose their cohesion. As a result, they either get transformed into something their founders never intended, or fragment into multiple groups, or dissolve completely, because human sin takes its toll and people end up mistreating each other so that they implode from within or external forces take them over or destroy them. Consequently, Jesus is saying that authentic biblical love is the glue that holds people together, and without it unity and common purpose is very difficult to maintain among sinners.

Fortunately, God has promised that authentic Christians will remain unified. But, even then, it will take great effort and faith with the common source of the inerrant biblical truth to do so. We see this by how the apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesian church community to “be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of shalom” (Ephesians 4:3). For Paul, love towards other believers involves putting up a protective wall around the apostolic message that instructs all of them in what God is doing. First, the Spirit of God, i.e., His operating within the creation, gives them a common divine factor in their lives. This is their unity or oneness. No one becomes an authentic believer without God’s causing him to do so through the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all believers share in God’s divine work within them.

Second, they are looking forward to the same eternal destiny, shalom, i.e., an existence in the Kingdom of God that will be completely devoid of evil, heartache, and disappointment. And the inference is that a person’s knowledge of this kingdom comes from only the Bible and the message that Jesus conveyed to his apostles. Thus, Paul wants the Ephesian Christians (and all other Christians by extrapolation) to work hard at preserving and respecting their unity and oneness that ultimately comes from God’s creative work of operating within them through His Spirit and that has its basis in the same destiny that each of them shares and that is taught in the Bible, the wonderful environment and experience of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Consequently, Christians’ common and mutual eternal destiny of an existence of shalom, which has been brought about by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, becomes the very intellectual means and motivation to remain united in their ultimate goal and purpose, so that they love one another in spite of things which make it difficult to do so. In other words, Christians do not create their unity (as pastors are often tempted to say by urging people to follow the doctrines and programs of their particular church). Instead, Christians recognize that God has already created their unity and oneness through His Spirit and the goal of the gospel, eternal life, to which they respond by loving one another and not allowing human differences to keep them from being unified inwardly as they await their eternal destiny of the Kingdom of God.

But not fully grasping what Jesus is saying about his leaving, Peter asks him in John 13:36, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answers, “Where I am going, you are not able to follow me now, but you will follow later.” Is Jesus referring to his resurrection and the eternal Kingdom of God that he himself will enter by acquiring an immortal body, even though the kingdom does not actually come into existence until he returns and first restores the Kingdom of Israel on this earth and establishes the eternal kingdom on the next earth? Or is he referring to the kind of death he will experience the next morning, that of being executed for his faith? The first option makes sense in that Jesus is more likely to want to encourage his disciples in their faith, even though in the present subsection he forewarns them that they will all abandon him. But this itself should be seen as his way of not only describing what must happen in regard to his death that will frighten them into hiding but also exhorting them to continue in their faith in spite of difficult circumstances surrounding his crucifixion.

In John 13:37, Peter first asks, “Lord, why am I not able to follow you?” And then he continues, “I will lay down my life for you.” Peter is thinking that Jesus is going somewhere on earth where he “cannot” follow him and where there will clearly be danger. And Peter is so bold as to assure him that he will sacrifice his own life for him rather than abandon him out of embarrassment or feeling ashamed. In other words, there is no place on earth where Peter is not willing to follow Jesus, even if it means death! But

Jesus responds in v. 38, “Will you lay down your life for me?” Thus, he asks him if this is what he intends to do from the bottom of his heart? And then Jesus goes on to declare, “Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.” Jesus is absolutely certain that Peter will flee from the opportunity to call Jesus his Rabbi. And he will do this not just once, but three times before the next morning dawns when a rooster will utter its characteristic loud cry.

Now let us look at Luke’s explanation of this conversation. Luke 22:31-32 provide us with an expanded version of Jesus’ words to Peter. First, Jesus says in v. 31, “Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat.” The “you” here is plural, so that Jesus is speaking directly to Simon Peter, but he is referring to all the disciples, that Satan has demanded to sift each and every one of them like wheat. What does this analogy mean? A farmer places grains of wheat in a sieve and shakes it so that small pieces of dirt fall to the ground and leave only the desired wheat in the sieve. Likewise, when Satan, God’s and God’s people’s archenemy, appears to triumph over Jesus by having him crucified by the Romans and Jews, he will also be testing the belief of the disciples. Are these men willing to believe in Jesus as the Messiah while he is humiliated by the governing authorities during his trials and eventually hangs on the cross and dies? Or will they completely abandon him and go back to the Judaism they learned in their synagogues and is promoted by the Sanhedrin? Will any of them remain in the sieve after the sifting? This is what Satan wants to reveal, hoping that at least one of the them will fail completely in his faith and fall to the ground and to eternal destruction through the sieve.

Jesus goes on in Luke 22:32, “But I have prayed for you that your belief may not fail.” Jesus has personally prayed to the Father for Peter (the “you” here is singular) that he persevere in his faith. And then he says, “And you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” In this way he states categorically that Peter will persevere in his faith. But of course he will! What does it mean for the eternal Son of God to pray for something? It is the same as having God pray to God. Of course the Father will respond in the affirmative to the one who is God in the story of the creation. Indeed, God will answer the prayer with a resounding, “YES!” And Jesus’ praying for Peter is like his interceding on our behalf at the final judgment. It is like his appealing to God the Father to grant us mercy and forgiveness, just as the apostle Paul indicates in Romans 8:34-39,

> Romans 8:34 The Messiah Jesus is he who died and who, even more, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who also appeals to God on our behalf. 35 What will separate us from the love of the Messiah? Will tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword—36 just as it has been written, ‘Because of you we are being put to death all day long. We are considered as sheep for slaughter <Psalm 44:22>?’ 37 However, in all these things we are overwhelmingly victorious in view of him who loved us. 38 Consequently, I have become convinced that neither death, nor life, nor messengers, nor rulers, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in the Messiah Jesus our Lord.

Will the Father refuse the Son what he requests, whether eternal mercy for us when he returns or the perseverance of Peter’s faith during this dark, dark night for Jesus and his disciples? Of course not. This is also the same as what the apostle Paul says that the Father does in response to the Holy Spirit’s appeals during our lives now. Earlier in Romans 8:26-27, Paul says,

> Romans 8:26 And likewise, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what is necessary to pray, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us in the manner of our wordless groanings. 27 And He who carefully examines the hearts knows what is the intent of the Spirit—that He pleads on behalf of those who are holy in accordance with God.

Here Paul refers to the radical psychology of human pain and suffering, especially that of moral guilt and despair in the face of God’s justice. This state of being for a human being can be so overwhelming as to make him completely incapable of expressing himself in a manner that he thinks is helpful in his relationship with God. Indeed, as far as he is concerned, all that he can do is groan in the midst of his guilt, pain, and suffering that is ultimately caused by his sinfulness and the problematic condition of the whole creation that surrounds him.

The good thing, though, is that a person’s groans are not for nothing. In fact, they are themselves an effect of the work of God’s Spirit within him. Thus, Paul can say that God is communicating to God

through a human being's groaning over his sinfulness and living in this present realm that itself brings a lot of suffering into his life. This is to say that there is a divine element to our groaning over our evil condition and the deteriorating condition of the creation in that this is the Spirit's doing. It is a manner of communication by God the Spirit to God the Father of our desire for not only His mercy but also His future gift of moral perfection and eternal life. For, as Paul also says in v. 24, one hopes (and therefore groans) for that which he does not have—perfect goodness within an eternal existence. And God's promise to us is that He will grant the Spirit's request—life forever in the Kingdom of God.

And v. 27 of Romans 8 tells us that, in this process of the Spirit's leading authentic believers to groan over our immoral condition, God is the best interpreter of what is transpiring within us by reading our groanings as those that come from people who are truly different from the rest of the rebellious world and who are pleading for mercy and moral goodness as their future experience. Plus, this whole process contributes to the eventual outcome of human existence—eternal life. Therefore, eternal life should not be described as simply what God is doing through His grace and mercy. It is also what man is "doing" in conjunction with what God is accomplishing internally for a person. The Spirit of God causes sinners to participate in the process of salvation by moving them inwardly to lament their sin and any other pain this world causes. And God hears their cries of suffering and faithfully keeps intact their faith and longing for salvation to the end of their lives and into the Kingdom of God at Jesus' return when they are either raised from the dead or lifted alive from the earth.

Therefore, what can we surmise will happen to Peter as a result of Satan's testing him and Jesus' praying for him? That once he gets close to giving up his faith, he will then return to a firm commitment to God and Jesus. And this, in turn, will allow him to empathize with his fellow Christians in the weakness of their faith and then even help them existentially so that their faith becomes stronger. I think this indicates the biblical path to a firmer commitment for us sinners to the truth of the gospel and to our ability to provide aid and comfort to one another with respect to our faith in the midst of life's difficulties. How can we be truly compassionate towards those who are hurting and struggling in their faith if we have not gone through similar circumstances? We cannot. Indeed, this was true for Jesus, too. As we will see soon in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus will struggle to believe God the Father for His plan that he suffer death on the cross. And he did this not only to empathize with us sinners when we struggle to believe, but also to help us by interceding for us at the judgment.

This is what the author of Hebrews means when he writes in Hebrews 2:18, "For since he himself was tested in that which he has suffered, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tested." We Christians suffer and our faith is tested as to its authenticity. But by virtue of God's faithfulness to us, we will persevere in our faith just as Jesus did through his ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. And the combination of his persevering in his faith when he was crucified and our persevering in our faith when we experience the trials of this life will result in Jesus' standing with us before God at the final judgment and in his appealing to Him for eternal mercy on our behalf. His appeal will succeed, thus coming to our *eternal* aid, to which the author of Hebrews is referring. But, again, his own suffering is necessary to help us in regard to our eternal destinies, and our own suffering is appropriate to come to each other's assistance through prayer and personal encouragement in persevering in our faith in order that we may gain eternal life.

Before turning to the passages in Matthew's and Mark's gospels, we note that before Peter's question as to where Jesus is going that no one can follow, Jesus instructs his disciples in John 13:34-35,

> John 13:34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Certainly, the biblical authors and prophets of the Old Testament before Jesus have encouraged God's people to love one another. For example, the second greatest commandment is Leviticus 18:5, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Matthew 22:39). Therefore, what is "new" about this commandment that Jesus is giving his eleven disciples? It is the part "just as I have loved you." Jesus will go on to say in John 15:12-14,

> John 15:12 This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends, if you do the things which I command you.

Jesus has loved and will continue to love his disciples not only in the conventional way of simply caring for their well-being (for example, by instructing them in the truth of God), but also in a very unconventional way by dying for them on the cross. He is going to sacrifice his life for them and for a very specific purpose—that they may obtain eternal life through him. As a result, this sacrificial manner of loving people is what Jesus means by the "new" commandment. Is Jesus asking his disciples to die for one another such that their deaths will somehow aid in each other's obtaining eternal life? Perhaps. For example, in Acts 12 we are told that Herod Agrippa intentionally persecuted Christians "because he saw that it pleased the Jews," to whom he desired to ingratiate himself. This included putting the apostle James, the brother of John, to death by sword. James, therefore, became the first apostle to lose his life for his faith, which God must have used both as a reality check for the remaining apostles and as an encouragement to them to continue loving one another sacrificially as the human glue that would hold them together.

In this way, Jesus is instructing the eleven disciples to be mindful of each other's spiritual well-being and to do what they can that will help them grow and persevere in their faith, even if it means that they have to suffer some kind of inconvenience in their lives. And it certainly makes sense that all Christians, besides the apostles, perform their God-given roles within the Christian community with the same strategy. We all need as much encouragement in our faith as we can provide each other in the face of the hostility and opposition that will naturally come from many unbelievers. Perhaps some unbelievers are blandly indifferent and outwardly not hostile towards God and His people. But others at different times in history will express their hostility in more overt ways that will certainly test Christians' faith. No matter what the external environment in which we Christians live, we can always use as much mutual sacrificial love as possible as encouragement to persevere in our faith.

Now we come to Matthew's and Mark's accounts of Jesus' warning and his interaction with Peter. It would seem that he and the remaining eleven disciples have finished eating the Passover together. After they have finished, both Matthew and Mark write the same words, "And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." What a thrill to have been there and listened to them, especially to Jesus with his perfect pitch (which I assume he had as the man who is God in the creation!). What a joy it would have been to hear them sing this hymn and even more to have understood it in their native tongue Aramaic. We can guess that they sang one of the Psalms in praise of God. But the gospel authors do not provide us with any clue as to the exact words. Then, after singing the hymn, they all leave the upper room and go to the foot of the Mount of Olives, which is just east of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

However, Matthew and Mark describe an event that does not actually occur after they leave for the Mount of Olives. It is the same conversation as that in Luke 22:31-34 and John 13:31-38 where Jesus and Peter talk about his leaving, Peter's commitment to him, and Peter's upcoming three denials during Jesus' trial. Jesus warns the eleven disciples similarly to how he spoke about Judas Iscariot who has left to complete his task of betraying him. Matthew's words are, "Then, Jesus said to them, 'All of you will fall away because of me this night, for it has been written, "I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."'" Mark's account is almost the same, but he omits "of the flock." The Greek word that I translate "fall away" is that from which we get our word "scandalize," and it means to shock or horrify someone by something that is inappropriate.

Jesus is warning his disciples that the upcoming events of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion are going to be so upsetting and terrifying to them that they will abandon him in his darkest hour. While they have been aware of the threats from the Jewish leaders on his life, Jesus has always managed to protect himself and them from harm. And even though he has repeatedly told them that he is going to suffer and die at the hands of the Sanhedrin, they have not yet believed him (cf. Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). But now they are going to be confronted with the raw reality of the Jewish leaders' anger and hatred towards him as well as the arrogance, lack of compassion, and irresponsibility of the Romans, who will crucify him the next morning. As a result, the disciples will become so frightened by this turn of events that they will run and hide, afraid for their own lives. And Jesus knows this and informs them beforehand that they will abandon him.

When the disciples do go underground and hide from the authorities to save their own skins, will they be giving up their faith in Jesus? I do not think so, but we might conclude that this is what Jesus means because of the Old Testament passage that he quotes as the basis for their unfortunate and cowardly actions. Jesus' words in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27 are, "for it has been written, 'I will strike down the

shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered,'" the latter part being a quote from Zechariah 13:7. The whole verse in the Old Testament reads,

> Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate [literally 'the man of My community']," declares Yahweh of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones."

Zechariah was speaking and writing around 520 B.C. when the Jews had returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Through him, in Zechariah 1:1-6, God exhorted these previous exiles to "return" to Him so that He would "return" to them, unlike their unbelieving fathers who were driven off their land by the Babylonians starting in 605 B.C. Then, after many chapters of visions and messages of hope for the Jews, God also predicts in Zechariah 13:7 that their future, primary Shepherd, the Messiah, would become subject to a "sword." God means that the Messiah will suffer death, which we now know was through crucifixion. And the result of his death will be that his "sheep" will be scattered.

But the question is, who are these sheep whom God will scatter? Are they the Messiah's disciples, the men to whom Jesus is speaking when he quotes this verse. Or are they others of his "sheep," perhaps the rest of the Jews whom he is supposed to lead and guide and even act as their advocate and intercessor before God in order that they may receive God's eternal forgiveness and life? The context of Zechariah points to the latter, to the whole nation of Israel, especially those who reject the Messiah and refuse to embrace him as their God, King, and Savior. And how will God respond to these unbelieving people, His "little ones" in the nation of Israel? He says in Zechariah 13:7 that He will "turn [His] hand against" them and "scatter" them so that they will endure another lengthy exile from the land of Israel, which we can see has been going on for almost two thousand years with Jews living in the far reaches of the globe. And why will God treat them this way? Because they reject their Messiah and put him to the "sword." This is to say that they will refuse to believe that he is their king and priest so that they accuse him of blasphemy and execute him as a common criminal by crucifying him.

Are Jesus' eleven disciples unbelievers like the Jewish leadership and most of the nation of Israel in his day so that they are completely rejecting him? Not at all. Indeed, they go on to become his faithful apostles and authoritative spokesman after his ascension. Then how can Jesus quote Zechariah 13:7 which refers to unbelieving Jews who crucify him and use it to refer to his believing disciples who only physically abandon him temporarily? Is not Jesus misquoting the Old Testament passage? I do not think so. We again notice that he is taking this statement by God in the Old Testament to foretell the dispersal of these eleven believing disciples when they encounter the full force of the Jewish leadership in collusion with the Roman government. They will turn away from Jesus out of only fear of being arrested and put to death by the Sanhedrin, while most of the Jewish nation will turn away from him out of unbelief and hostility towards the very God whom they claim to obey. I think that Jesus is using the extreme situation described by Zechariah 13:7 as a clear warning to his disciples that, while leaving him to a degree is forgivable, abandoning him completely and rejecting him out of abject unbelief is not forgivable. And just as Zechariah 14 goes on to predict that God will faithfully regather the Jews onto the land of Israel in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham that they become the greatest nation in human history, Jesus is implying that God will ensure that these eleven men do not completely abandon him.

I would also suggest that, from their study of the Old Testament within their synagogues as well as their conversations during the last three years with Jesus, the disciples knew the entire context of Zechariah 13 & 14, and now they can conclude from what Jesus is saying that they will persevere in their faith and become his true apostles and spokesmen of the gospel in the face of all the future threats that they will experience from both the Jews and the Romans. This is also evident from what Jesus says next in both Matthew 26:32 and Mark 14:28, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you into Galilee." Yes, these eleven disciples (except John as we will see) will run and hide, but they will not choose to remain hidden. Jesus predicts that the future is bright for him and for his disciples. He will die on the cross the following day, but then he will rise from the dead, having qualified to be the eternal king of both believing Israel and believing Gentiles. And we find out that, after his resurrection, he first appears to his disciples in Jerusalem. But here in this subsection he says that eventually he will also be with them in person in Galilee. He means that, after they have physically abandoned him, they will "return" to him and he will "return" to them—just as God exhorted and predicted of the nation of Israel at the beginning and end of Zechariah (See **Further Notes from Zechariah** below).

Next, just as we saw that Peter said in Luke's and John's accounts, he assures Jesus that his loyalty is rock solid, so that he will stick with him through thick and thin and whatever difficulties he encounters. Peter says in Matthew 26:33, "If everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away." Mark's account of Peter in 14:29 is shorter, "Even if all fall away, I will not." Obviously, Peter, like the other disciples, has not been absorbing all that Jesus has been telling them. This is certainly similar to our own self-absorption and blindness even as Christians when we somehow convince ourselves that we can perform just about perfectly for God. Then we fail miserably at what we thought was going to be so easy to do, and God sovereignly reminds us through our failure just how dependent we are on Him for *everything* we need from Him and cannot produce for ourselves. We need to be reminded and to remind ourselves constantly that we are His creatures and we are sinners at the very core of our being. God has changed our hearts and inner commitments so that we are dedicated to Him and biblical goodness, but He has not yet changed our foundational moral nature, which is still evil. As a result, we occasionally sin while remaining inwardly committed to God and His moral commandments. This is what the apostle Paul says about himself as a Christian in Romans 7:25, which I paraphrase, "With my mind I am a slave of the stuff of God, while with my flesh I am a slave of the stuff of sin." Therefore, our existence, even as Christians, as God's creatures is a humbling journey, but it is also an important part of what God is teaching us as sinners of genuine belief in the present realm—as Jesus now goes on to say to Peter.

Following his arrogant and bold assertion, Jesus informs Peter that God's sovereign story requires that Peter learn this difficult but important lesson about his absolute dependency upon Him. Jesus' words in Matthew 26:34 are, "Truly I say to you, this very night, before a rooster crows, you will refuse to acknowledge me three times." And Mark records them in 14:30 as, "Truly I say to you, that this very night you will deny me three times before a rooster crows twice." Thus Mark provides his readers with an extra detail of Jesus' response. A rooster will *twice* make his characteristic sound of the arrival of dawn. However, Peter will ignore the warning of his first crowing and continue on his way to denying Jesus three times. He will thoughtlessly forge ahead in his fear and insecurity, so that he fulfills completely Jesus' prediction. In this way, Peter might as well be any unbeliever in human history, even similar to Judas Iscariot, because he will "refuse to acknowledge" Jesus as his Messiah, Lord, and Savior (Matthew 26:34).

Now Jesus has really put Peter on the spot and backed him into a corner. Peter's pride is hurt. His status and reputation before the other disciples is at stake. As a result, he boldly, brashly, and energetically declares, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you" (Matthew 26:35). Mark means the same thing by his account of Peter's words, "Even if I die with you, I will not deny you" (Mark 14:31). And both gospel authors report that the rest of the disciples likewise feel the pressure of confidently insisting that their loyalty to Jesus is abiding and permanent and that they will not abandon him—as Jesus himself has actually predicted! Matthew writes in v. 35, "And all the disciples said the same thing" as Peter. Mark's statement in v. 31 is, "And they were all saying the same thing."

Are we not like these disciples? Both our pride and peer pressure are powerful forces in our lives, especially when it concerns our relationships with God. If other Christians declare their unfailing loyalty to Jesus, even out of pride, we overlook their arrogance and claim the same loyalty—perhaps unaware of our own pride or thinking that hopefully we are more humble than they are. If other Christians declare their strong faith which has resulted in their conquering some sin in their lives, we seek the opportunity to do the same, even if we have to make something up and even if we purposefully hide our secret and most embarrassing sins from both ourselves and them. Because of our pride and peer pressure, making a good appearance in our Christian gatherings easily becomes more important to us than honesty, humble belief, and truth. But this is only another good example of how we persistently avoid expressing the truth about ourselves as sinful human beings, even for us who are genuine Christians this side of eternal life. As Martin Luther put it in the first of the ninety-five theses that he attached to the door of the church at Whittenburg and that helped spark the Protestant Reformation, "When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he meant that our entire lives be ones of repentance." There is no room for our pride and arrogance before God.

And Peter will soon weep over his own arrogance and presumption. But, as Jesus prayed, he will "return" to God and to Jesus to become more committed to the gospel of mercy than he was before. Like Peter, our periodically becoming mindful of our pride and being willing to repent of any arrogance and sin we presumptuously commit is what the apostle Paul means in Philippians 2:12-13, **12** "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13** for it is God who is at work in you, both to

will and to work for His good pleasure." We appropriately "fear" God with great respect and reverence because He is not only the author of our existences and lives, but He is also our future Judge before whom we will want to appear as those who have exercised genuine belief and obedience on this earth. And because we have, at his return Jesus will intercede for us so that eternal life and forgiveness will be ours!

Further Notes from Zechariah

At the beginning of Zechariah, God exhorts the Jews who have returned from exile to orient their hearts towards Him that He might remain faithful to them.

> 1:1 In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying, 2 "Yahweh was very angry with your fathers." 3 "Therefore say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Return to Me," declares Yahweh of hosts, "that I may return to you," says Yahweh of hosts.'"

Later in Zechariah God uses the phrase "in that day" twenty times to refer to both the future discipline of Israel for rejecting their Messiah and the future glory of Israel when he restores their peace, safety, and prosperity through the Messiah. These are some of the verses with this phrase that refer to Israel's future glory—

> Zechariah 9:16 And Yahweh their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they are as the stones of a crown, sparkling in His land.
> Zechariah 12:6 "In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem."
> Zechariah 12:9 "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."
> Zechariah 13:1 "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."
> Zechariah 14:4 In that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.
> Zechariah 14:8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. 9 And Yahweh will be king over all the earth; in that day Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one.

The first of the above verses, Zechariah 9:16, speaks of how precious and valuable the Jews are to God. In spite of their repeated disobedience and even rejection of their Messiah, Jesus, God still considers them the gems with which a craftsman would adorn the crown of a king. And the result will be that God will rescue them from their enemies and from the consequences of their sin "in that day," i.e., when Jesus returns to reestablish the Kingdom of Israel. Then, in Zechariah 12:6, God declares that the Jews will destroy their surrounding enemies as a firepot and flaming torch would burn up kindling and bundles of grain lying on the ground. And this will be "in that day" when the Jews also live safely and securely in their homes in Jerusalem—and, by extrapolation, on the rest of the land of Israel. This too will be when Jesus returns. Zechariah 12:9 refers to the same event and the Messiah's second coming, that God will be the source of the Jews' destructive power over their enemies, because their enemies are His enemies, whom He intends to annihilate on the lands surrounding them.

Zechariah 13:1 speaks of a metaphorical fountain of water in which the Jews will immerse themselves in order to wash off the dirt and grime of their sin. "In that day," i.e., when Jesus returns, the 144,000 of the book of Revelation, who are protected by God from His judgments and from the evil intents of the Beast, will formally and authentically believe in Jesus as their Messiah and metaphorically wash themselves in the blood of his crucifixion as they repent and appeal for mercy to God, who will forgive them of all their sins. This will be at the same time as the event of Zechariah 14:4, when Jesus will

descend "in that day" from above to stand on the Mt. of Olives in Jerusalem, when he will metaphorically (?) produce a great earthquake on the land of Israel that will produce a path for God's power to bring life and healing to the Jews and all other people on the earth who are willing to take advantage of God's grace and mercy. Thus, as Zechariah 14:8 says, "Living waters will flow out of Jerusalem" towards both the east and the west through the great valley of Jesus' return to bring the promise of salvation and eternal life to all peoples who are willing to believe in him during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This will be especially for all the Jews, because God will cause them to have hearts that are committed to Him as a fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make them a great nation (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). And all this "in that day," so that neither the disciples' *physically abandoning* Jesus out of fear nor the Jews' *spiritually abandoning* him out of unbelief will stop God from fulfilling His promises to both the Jews and the Gentiles who embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

In the midst of all the moral, spiritual, relational, and physical decay in the world, with just about everything we touch and construct falling apart, so that nothing we make or try to preserve remains permanent, including our bodies, God stands eternal, faithful, and loving, working through His Spirit in the hearts of His elect, both Jews and Gentiles, and ready at the moment of His choosing to bring the present age to an end and usher in His kingdom by means of Jesus' return.

f. A Money-Belt, A Coin Bag, and A Sword

Tuesday about 9 p.m.

Luke 22:35-38
22:35 And he said to them, "When I sent you out without a money-belt (βαλλαντίου), coin bag (πήρας), and sandals (ὑποδημάτων), you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing." 22:36 And he said to them, "Whoever has as money-belt (βαλλάντιον), let him take it with him. Likewise also a coin bag (πήραν), and whoever does not have a sword (μάχαιραν), let him sell his garment and buy one. 22:37 For I say to you, this which has been written must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was numbered with lawbreakers <Isaiah 53:12>,' for that which concerns me has its conclusion/goal." 22:38 And they said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

Explanation of the Above Passage

Here is a second conversation of the Passion Narrative that Luke records that is missing in the other three gospels. It is a strange conversation in that it refers to a previous incident where Jesus commanded his disciples to be *unprepared* to meet their own needs to now where they must be *prepared* to do so. In addition, it moves from the present moment when some, if not all, of them are *unprepared* to fight against their enemies to the future when Jesus says they must be *prepared* to do so. And the change for both issues is based upon Jesus' death in the midst of criminals. The disciples will answer Jesus by saying that they are partially prepared to fight while also probably implying that they have their money-belts and coin bags ready for traveling. As a result, Jesus will commend them for their preparedness. The peculiarity of this conversation is partly because later this night Jesus will rebuke Peter for using one of the two swords that the disciples mention that they have. If he is serious about selling their clothes and buying a sword, then why criticize one of them for not only having a sword but even using it?

The answer to this question and the interpretation of this passage may be as simple as Jesus' wanting his disciples to appear to the armed mob, who will soon come to arrest him in the Garden of Gethsemane, as a band of traveling insurrectionists, which he will suggest is how his enemies view him and his followers. Or the interpretation of this conversation may be more complex and involve understanding at least two Old Testament passages and Jesus' instructions to his disciples in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. I am going to suggest that the second option is the correct one, and we will now explore the clues in this interaction between Jesus and his disciples.

The conversation begins in v. 35 with Jesus asking his disciples, "When I sent you out without a money-belt, coin bag, and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" In other words, when he told them to travel to various cities and preach the gospel completely unprepared to provide for their physical

needs of shelter and food, were they ever hungry, and did they ever have to sleep out in the open air? He is referring to the event that Luke records in chapter 9, vs. 1-6. And there is a similar one in Luke 10:1-12,16 –

> Luke 9:1 And [Jesus] called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. 3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag (πήραν), nor bread, nor money (ἀργύριον); and do not even have two tunics apiece. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. 5 And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."
> Luke 9:6 Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

> Luke 10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. 2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."
> 10:4 "Carry no money belt (βαλλάντιον), no bag (πήραν), no shoes (ὑποδήματα); and greet no one on the way. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Shalom be to this house.' 6 If a man of shalom is there, your shalom will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house."
> 10:8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city…"
> 10:16 "The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects the One who sent me."

At the beginning of both these events, Jesus commands his disciples (in Luke 9, the twelve closest disciples to whom he is speaking now, minus Judas Iscariot, and in Luke 10, seventy other disciples) to travel very light. He is sending them out to heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the good news of him as the Messiah. But they are to take no money, very few clothes, and to set their minds to reach certain cities for this purpose. He is implying that God will supply their needs for shelter and food through the people with whom they stay. Thus, all the miracles, whether the healings or God's supplying their needs, will be His way of affirming the truth of the gospel in the same way that God affirms it through the miracles which Jesus performs. As a result, both the disciples and the people whom they serve can know that God is at work in Jesus and in them during this important time of his first appearance.

Jesus also makes it clear that he is sending them out into a hostile environment. Not every Jew will accept them and their message just as not every Jew is accepting (or has accepted during the last two thousand years!) Jesus and his claim to be the Messiah—in spite of the multitude of miracles his disciples and he performed. Consequently, Jesus commands the disciples to make explicit that certain people are rejecting them and their message by declaring it verbally and showing it symbolically. They are to say, "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near." Shaking the dust off one's feet as a person leaves a specific house, village, or city must have been a common way to communicate an understanding of being rejected by people. For even the apostle Paul and Barnabas perform this as they leave Psidian Antioch in Acts 13:51.

Here in Luke 9 & 10 Jesus' disciples are bringing the message of God's eternal shalom to Jews through him as their Messiah. And those who embrace this message will obtain God's mercy. But Jesus says that for those who reject it, it will be more tolerable for the perversely immoral people of Sodom and Gomorrah than for them in the day of the final judgment. By this he means that it will not be tolerable at all for them. All people who reject God and Jesus during their lives will encounter and experience the wrath,

condemnation, and destruction of God—whether they lived in Sodom in Old Testament times, Jerusalem in New Testament times, or any other city or village at any time during human history.

In Luke 10:16, Jesus says explicitly to the seventy, "The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects the One who sent me." We notice that he is not addressing only the twelve disciples who become his apostles (except for Judas Iscariot of course). Therefore, we can conclude that any genuine follower of Jesus is a legitimate spokesman for both him and God the Father, the transcendent Creator. This is why it is so important for us to be careful of what we say, how we say it, and what we do. We are always "prophets" and "priests," i.e., spokesmen and teachers, for God. And people who are willing to listen to us and believe us, even two thousand years later, are listening to and believing Jesus and God Himself. This is how important our roles are in the world, even though we are still sinners and we may not always articulate the biblical message accurately. If all we say is, "I am a follower of Jesus of Nazareth," we are conveying the truth of God and providing people with the opportunity to respond to Him with faith.

Returning to the Passion Narrative, in Luke 22:35 Jesus asks the eleven disciples, who are still with him after Judas Iscariot has left, if God failed to supply their needs miraculously during the circumstances of Luke 9? Their answer is, "No." They lacked "nothing" as they traveled from village to village. However, Jesus goes on to indicate that the circumstances will change beginning tonight with his arrest that will be followed by his crucifixion. He says in v. 36, "Whoever has as money-belt, let him take it with him. Likewise also a coin bag, and whoever does not have a sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." The gospels never indicate that Jesus worked for a living, at least not during the three years after he began publicly declaring that he is the Messiah and after he began gathering this group of close disciples, eleven of whom become his authoritative apostles. He may have helped his father Joseph in his carpentry and stone business, but, starting with his baptism by John as he set out to demonstrate to the Jews and the rest of the world that he is the Messiah as predicted by the Old Testament, he seems to have relied strictly on the gifts of money, food, and lodging from the people whom he was serving with his teaching and miracles.

And on the basis of what we learn in the above passages where Jesus sent out his disciples without him, they appear to have survived in a similar manner. But now Jesus will be leaving them and the earth, because most the people of Israel are hostile towards him, which will lead to his execution. In addition, Jesus is implying that the Jews' hostility will persist and be directed towards his apostles who will have the responsibility after his departure to proclaim his message of the grace and mercy of God. These men, who are now sharing the Passover with him, will find the spiritual climate within the nation of Israel to be the same that he is experiencing. So he is telling them that they will not always be able to count on people's generosity for surviving in the world. Even though the apostles, like Jesus, will perform miracles as God's way of affirming their roles and message, they will eventually have to go back to making a living as they had before. In this way, they will proclaim the gospel and care for the spiritual well-being of their fellow Christians who have responded positively to their message.

The lesson for Christians after the time of the apostles is that we should always be prepared to make our living as others do in this world, regardless of our roles within the Christian community. Certainly we can be generous and loving with our money, food, and shelter to fellow believers as circumstances may require and allow. For example, the Christians in Thessalonica sent financial gifts to the apostle Paul several times (1 Thessalonians), and those in Corinth did the same to the Jewish Christians who were experiencing a famine in Judea (2 Corinthians 8-9 and Romans 15:22-29). Yet, Paul also worked for a living as did most Christians in his day. There is no shame in doing either one or the other as a situation may dictate.

Continuing with the Luke 22 passage, surprisingly in v. 36 Jesus also encourages these closest disciples to arm themselves with swords. How does this make sense in the light of Jesus' other teaching which calls us Christians to love each other and also non-Christians, indeed even those who persecute us—instead of fighting them? For example, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount,

> Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'
> 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may
> be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good,
> and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what
> reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 If you greet only your

> brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Therefore you are to be complete, as your heavenly Father is complete."

How do we reconcile Jesus' commandment for his followers to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them with his commandment here in Luke 22:36 to his disciples to sell their clothes, if they must, in order to purchase a sword? I think that we do so by observing carefully the context in the light of what Jesus has already taught in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and in the light of what God has promised the Jews in the Old Testament. First, in Genesis 12:1-3, God promises Abraham that his physical descendants, the Jews, will become the greatest nation in all human history. In the rest of the Old Testament, God declares that He will fulfill this promise even by using the Jews to destroy their surrounding enemies. For example, we saw in the previous subsection that around 540 B.C. God speaks to the Jews who have returned from the Babylonian captivity, and He predicts through Zechariah this very thing, specifically in Zechariah 12:6 & 9—

> Zechariah 12:6 "In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem."

> Zechariah 12:9 "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

Another passage which predicts God's use of His people Israel to destroy their enemies is Isaiah 11:11-14, which Isaiah presents to the Jews around 740 B.C. before the Assyrian invasion and exile of the northern Kingdom of Israel—

> Isaiah 11:11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.
> 13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim. 14 They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west. Together they will plunder the sons of the east. They will possess Edom and Moab, and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.

There is much to analyze in the Isaiah passage especially, but we will stick to the salient points for our purposes. The day of which God speaks in these verses is Jesus' return when he will restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel as God brings Jews back to the land who have been loyal to Him and who have been living in the far reaches of the earth. God's use of the Ancient Near Eastern names of these places does not mean that they will have the same names, but that they will be the areas which contain Jews whom He will bring back to the land of Israel.[81] And the fact that it is a "second time" is in contrast to the first time when God restores the Jews to the land after the Babylonian captivity a little over two hundred years after Isaiah. And God will bring peace between all the Jews, thus eliminating the antipathy that existed between those of the northern Kingdom of Israel, i.e., Ephraim, and of the southern Kingdom of Judah during the divided kingdom of 900-600 B.C. Indeed, He will solicit the help of the Jewish people to fight against their enemies and empower them to destroy them.

Consequently, there is coming a time at Jesus' return when the Jewish people will need their "swords," offensive weapons to conquer those who oppose them in the Middle East. The Jews will not be called upon by God to "love" their enemies and to "pray" for them as Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount. Instead, His instructions will be that the Jews, through whatever military means are available to them, and, with God's obvious help through theophanies (appearances of God like that of the angel of Yahweh in Genesis 18), along with transformed believers, at Jesus' return will be called upon to wield their swords against the Gentile nations who have invaded their land and to destroy them. And this is exactly what they will do.

One New Testament passage that refers to this event is 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 where the word "angels" in v. 7 means manifestations of the transcendent God Himself who will appear with Jesus when he returns—

2 Thessalonians 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Normally we think of "angels" as what I call "conventional angels," i.e., created heavenly beings such as Gabriel who is mentioned in Daniel 8:16ff. and 9:21ff. and speaks with Daniel, and is mentioned in Luke 1:19 & 26 and who speaks with Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and with Mary, Jesus' mother. But there is another kind of "angel" in the Old Testament, such as the "angel of Yahweh" in Exodus 3:1-4—

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."
3:4 When Yahweh saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

In v. 2 above, the Hebrew phrase of "angel of Yahweh" is *malak Yahweh* (מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה), which in the Greek Septuagint is *angelos kupriou* (ἄγγελος κυρίου). We get our word angel from the Greek word. But the basic meaning of both the Hebrew *malak* and the Greek *angelos* is messenger. In other words, God can send a messenger to people either by appearing himself (a theophany, which literally means "appearance of God") as He did to Moses in the burning bush or by a created being, who is similar to a human being but is not God, as He did with Gabriel to Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary.

I think that by describing God's "mighty angels" with the additional words "in flaming fire" that are similar to the description of the burning bush in Exodus 3:2, "a blazing fire," and the fact that Paul is most likely implying that these "angels" will accompany Jesus to destroy Israel's enemies indicate that these will not be conventional angels like Gabriel but theophanies like the burning bush. Therefore, when Jesus returns, the Jews will engage in their fight against their enemies alongside theophanies of the transcendent God.

And another New Testament passage that adds more data for this event is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18—

1Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

In this passage, the apostle Paul describes both the resurrection of believers who have died and the lifting off the earth of believers who are alive when Jesus returns to destroy Israel's enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel that God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3. These believers will join Jesus as he "descends from heaven" when God decides it is time for his second appearance. And what will be their first responsibility? I think that we can infer from all all the various passages, including the next one I will quote, that these believers will be transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings who will fight with Jesus against Israel's enemies who have invaded

their land and whose goal is to destroy all the Jews. But, of course, Jesus with God's "mighty angels [theophanies] in flaming fire" of 2 Thessalonians 1:7, and with the Jews mentioned in Zechariah 12:6 and Isaiah 11:14, and with these immortal believers will destroy them.

The most explicit New Testament passage that refers to this event is the vision that John sees in Revelation 19:11-21 where the "armies which are in heaven" who are accompanying Jesus in v. 14 are the joint forces of appearances of the transcendent God Himself, i.e., theophanies, and former resurrected and lifted off the earth believers who have been transformed into immortal human beings. Because there is so much symbolism in this passage and the entirety of Revelation, these armies may even refer to the Jews of Zechariah 12 and Isaiah 11 who are living on the land of Israel and who fight with Jesus, the theophanies, and the former believers. This would be the case if the phrase "in heaven" is not taken literally to mean a place but instead the source, which is God and His eternal plans and purposes.

> Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges [rules] and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems [crowns]; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."
> 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."
> 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

To repeat, there seems to be three different fellow "soldiers" who will accompany Jesus in his task of fighting against the beast and his armies which invade Israel. One kind of soldier will be manifestations of the transcendent God, His "mighty angels in flaming fire." Another will be the resurrected and raptured believing human beings from all history who are also transformed into immortal and morally perfect people, "those who have fallen asleep in Jesus" as well as those "who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord." And the third will be loyal Jews on the land of Israel, "the clans of Judah [who will be] like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves." I use the word "loyal" to distinguish these sinful human beings from actual believers. If these Jews were to have completely changed hearts with authentic faith and belief, then they would be lifted from the earth at Jesus' return like all other living believers and given their eternal bodies. But I think that they will remain on the earth and live on the land of Israel when Jesus restores the Kingdom of Israel. More on this in a moment.

We should also take note that Jesus sometimes gives instructions to his current disciples when he is obviously referring to people, and probably mainly Jews, who will be Christians at the time of his return. A clear example is in the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus describes the astronomic signs that will take place just before his return, which the Olivet Discourse also makes obvious is long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, an event which occurred in A.D. 70. For example, in Luke 21:25-28, Jesus says,

> Luke 21:25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great

> glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Jesus exhorts his disciples to "lift up your heads" when they see the sun, moon, and stars involved in cataclysmic "signs" that affect all the people of the earth as even the ocean "roars" and frightens everyone around the world. This will all constitute the "powers of the heavens" being "shaken." However, these events are still future to us. So in what sense can Jesus say to his disciples, "Lift up your heads"? It must be in the sense that whoever of his followers as bona fide Christians are alive during these events long after his current disciples have died, they should embrace his words and act on them. And, as I said, this will be at a time still future to our current circumstances (but also it may be soon, we can hope!!).

Therefore, by combining the information from Zechariah and Isaiah (and other Old Testament passages), and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians, Revelation, and the Olivet Discourse (and other New Testament passages), I think that here in Luke 22:36 Jesus is looking far into the future when he instructs his disciples to sell their clothes and buy swords. He has already taught them in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 that his return is a long way off. There will be many wars, famines, earthquakes, and global diseases that will take place first—all of which are intended by God to urge all people and especially the Jews to change their minds about Jesus and embrace him as their Messiah. Now, during the Passover meal, Jesus is telling his immediate disciples not only that they will need to be prepared to make their own living while fulfilling their role as his apostles, but also that *eventually* those who are loyal to God will find themselves assisting him in destroying their earthly enemies when he returns.

As I have pointed out, this is not unusual for Jesus to be speaking to his immediate audience, even using the second personal pronoun "you," when he instructs them, but then to be referring to those who will come after them much later in history. He did this in the Olivet Discourse, and I think that he is doing it again here as they all head towards the Garden of Gethsemane. As a result, this comment about owning a sword is not for the "church," particularly the "church" during the last two thousand years comprised mostly of Gentiles, as some commentators interpret it.[82] Instead, Jesus through his apostles is instructing the Jews at the end of this age to be ready to fight with him against their enemies when he returns. And to be more specific, these Jews will be the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4-8 and 14:1ff., who will be inclined towards God without yet being genuine believers, whom He will protect from death before Jesus' return, and who will become the first generation of genuine, Jewish believers in the Millennial Kingdom. They will have sold their "garments," i.e., whatever they have available to sell, and will have obtained some kind of weaponry in preparation for participating with Jesus, God's theophanies, and former and current transformed believers in fighting against their enemies and defeating them.

In Luke 22:37, there are two options for how to understand Jesus' quote from Isaiah 53. Either he is basing all these immediate instructions to the disciples on this Old Testament statement, or he is referring to only the last instruction to buy a sword. The fact that the disciples respond by indicating that they have two swords without mentioning any money-belts or coin bags may appear that they understand him to be referring to only his last instruction to buy a sword. However, I think that swords are the unusual items for Jesus' disciples in comparison to money-belts and coin bags. Of course, they have money-belts and coin bags, so that it is unnecessary to mention them. But swords? Why would these followers of Jesus, who has already taught that love for God and love for one's neighbor are the most important commandments, need weapons of violence, even of death? Thus, the whole discussion of being prepared in several ways *for the future* leads me to conclude that the quote from Isaiah is the basis for all these immediate instructions—to take a money-belt, a coin bag, and *eventually* a sword.

Jesus states, "For I say to you, this which has been written must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was numbered with lawbreakers,' for that which concerns me has its conclusion/goal." Jesus is quoting Isaiah 53:12, where the context is all about himself. He is God's "suffering servant," whose death at the hands of his enemies leads to his success in fulfilling his role as the Messiah (Isaiah 52:13). And He will be "despised and forsaken of men" (Isaiah 53:3) and even "smitten of God" (Isaiah 53:4). But by "his scourging" sinners will be "healed" of their deserving God's condemnation and destruction (Isaiah 53:5). And Isaiah 53:12 says that this suffering servant will be so rejected that he will be "numbered with the transgressors," which means that his own people, the Jews, who desperately need him in order to obtain God's eternal mercy, will instead consider him to be someone who is willfully violating the laws of the Mosaic Covenant by falsely claiming to be the Son of God, thus deserving death. However, to the Jews' surprise, this will lead to his qualifying to "intercede" for them, because they are the true lawbreakers, who

are rebelling against God by virtue of the hardness of their hearts. Here are the last three verses of Isaiah 53, vs. 10-12, in their entirety—

> Isaiah 53:10 Yahweh was pleased to crush him [the suffering servant], putting him to grief. If he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in his hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of his soul, he will see it [the good pleasure of Yahweh] and be satisfied.
> By his knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I [Yahweh] will allot him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong, because he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors. Thus he himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors.

In v.10 and the first half of verse 11, the prophet Isaiah declares that God takes full responsibility for Jesus' suffering and death. Indeed, He crushes him and causes him grief. But if Jesus is willing to be subject to this treatment, he is doing so in order to be an offering to God for sinners, winning His grace and favor in the light of their guilt. And as a result, Jesus will see his children (obviously after his resurrection and then after his ascension and return), i.e., those who embrace him as their Lord and Savior once he has been put to death. In this way, God's desire to rescue His people from His wrath and condemnation will succeed. And although this will bring great anguish on Jesus by his suffering a very painful death as if he himself were experiencing God's anger and judgment, he will understand that this is what God desires for him. The only way that Jesus can fulfill his role as the Messiah is to suffer, which will fortunately also bring a sense of satisfaction to him.

Starting in the middle of Isaiah 53:11, God Himself says through the prophet that Jesus will know exactly what He is doing with him, that he is His tool to provide forgiveness for sinners. Plus in v. 12, God He will grant Jesus, because of his obedience whereby he suffers and dies, to obtain a great reward. From the rest of the Bible we know that this is the Kingdom of God. And Jesus will share this kingdom with his subjects, those who have exercised the strength of faith throughout their lives in the face of opposition and persecution. And all this because Jesus' own people, the Jews, and especially their leadership in Jerusalem, will consider him to be willfully violating the Mosaic Covenant, when, in fact, they are the ones who are rebelling against God by rejecting him as their Messiah. Consequently, it will turn out that some of them will eventually become believers, so that Jesus dies to appeal to God for mercy for even some of his executioners and, of course, for all other sinners who genuinely embrace him as their High Priest.

By quoting this passage in Isaiah, Jesus is using it to substantiate the future developments for his disciples, both in the short term and in the long term. He claims that God's words in Isaiah 53:12, "And he was numbered with lawbreakers," pertain first to the Jews' concluding that he is breaking the Mosaic Covenant (leading to his own death), and second to their concluding the same about his disciples who will continue proclaiming his message (leading to hardship and difficulties, maybe even death, for them). The Jewish leaders probably believe that, by killing Jesus, they are putting an end to his movement. For who would want to continue following a dead "Messiah?" But Jesus knows that, by his resurrection (and even after his ascension), his movement will not only continue but also thrive during the entire time between his first and second appearances.

Therefore, in this section, Jesus is teaching his disciples two things. The first is that, just as he has enemies among the Jewish people and the Gentiles, specifically the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate respectively, they will have Jewish enemies who will be the very opposite of generous towards them. They cannot expect God always to supply their needs of food, shelter, and clothing miraculously through the beneficence of people. They will need their "money-belts" and "coin bags" and may have to return to working for a living and provide for themselves as best they can.

The second lesson is that there is no plan to use swords during the time period of his first appearance on earth as it culminates in his crucifixion and resurrection, but a future generation of Jews who are loyal to God will have enemies whom they will fight and defeat. Thus, in Luke 22:37 Jesus finishes his comments with the words, "for that which concerns me has its conclusion/goal." I have translated the Greek word *telos* with the combination of conclusion and goal. Jesus is saying that all that God is doing with him has an ultimate purpose, goal, and end. What is this conclusion and goal? It is the Kingdom of God that begins with the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel when he returns and culminates in his ruling over transformed, authentic believers from all human history on the eternal earth (cf. Revelation 20 & 21).

But the road to the Kingdom of God is a rough one, involving his own death because the Jewish people refuse to acknowledge him as the Messiah and involving hardship for his disciples who will equally be considered lawbreakers by the Jews. But a fight is coming according to Zechariah 12, Isaiah 11, and Jesus here in Luke 22. And those Jews, who are alive when Jesus returns and who are loyal to God, will participate in the fight and they will win it—with of course God's and Jesus' help. In spite of Jesus' crucifixion and the apparent victory by Satan over him, he will return at the end of this age and conclude God's plans to establish the Kingdom of God—first by destroying the Gentile enemies of the Jews and restoring the Kingdom of Israel on the land which God promised them as described in Revelation 19 & 20 (and many Old Testament passages), and second by ruling over the eternal earth of the new creation as described in Revelation 21.

Jesus' disciples respond in Luke 22:38, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." He says, "It is enough," meaning he does not intend for each of these men, all eleven of them, to have swords. Two are sufficient for now, because he does not expect them to fight those who will be coming soon to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest him. It will only be the loyal Jews of the last generation when he returns who need them. This also fits with Jesus' later this evening rebuking Peter for using his sword during his arrest, further indicating that his instructions regarding swords is not for now, but for the future.

Extra Information from John

Tuesday after 7 p.m. and after sundown during the Passover meal

John 14:1-17:26
14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, and believe in me. 14:2 In my Father's family are many places. If it were not so, I would tell you, because I proceed to prepare a position for you. 14:3 And if I proceed and prepare a position for you, I will come again, and I will take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be. 14:4 And you know where I am going, and you know the way…" 17:25 "Righteous Father, indeed, the cosmos does not know You, but I know You. And these know that You sent me. 17:26 And I have made known Your name to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which You have loved me may be in them and I may be in them."

John alone provides the Upper Room Discourse of John 14-17 where Jesus commissions his disciples to be apostles (those whom he sends) after his ascension, so that they continue to proclaim the

g. Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane While the Disciples Sleep

Tuesday about 10 p.m.

Matthew 26:36-46	**Mark 14:32-42**	**Luke 22:39-46**	**John 18:1**[83]
26:36 Thereupon Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 26:37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and he began to be grieved and distressed. 26:38 Then he said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.	14:32 And they came to the place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." 14:33 And he took with him Peter, James, and John, and he began to be very distressed and troubled. 14:34 And he said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay alert."	22:39 And he went out and proceeded as was his custom to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples also followed him. 22:40 When he arrived at the place, he said to them, "Pray that you not enter into temptation." 22:41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he got down on his knees and was praying, 22:42	**18:1** After saying these things, Jesus, along with his disciples, went out across the brook of Kidron where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered.

Remain here and keep watch with me.” 26:39 He went a little distance beyond them and fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but not as I want, but as You want.” 26:40 And he came to the disciples, and he found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “Were you not thus strong enough to watch with me for one hour? 26:41 Stay alert and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.” 26:42 And again he went away a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass from me except I drink it, let Your desire occur.” 26:43 Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 26:44 He left them again and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same statement one more time. 26:45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 26:46 Get up. Let us go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near.”	14:35 He went a little beyond them and fell to the ground, and he was praying that if it were possible, the hour would pass him by. 14:36 And he was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You. Remove this cup from me. But not what I want, but what You want.” 14:37 And he came and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Are you not strong enough to stay alert for one hour? 14:38 Stay alert and pray, lest you come into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.” 14:39 Again he went away and prayed, making the same statement. 14:40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy. And they did not know what to answer him. 14:41 And he came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 14:42 Get up. Let us go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near.”	saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. But let not my desire be done, but Yours.” 22:43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, and he was strengthening him. 22:44 And being in agony, he was praying fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down on the ground. 22:45 And when he stood up from his prayer he came to his disciples, and he found them sleeping from sorrow. 22:46 And he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray lest you enter into temptation.”	

Explanation of the Above Passages

Two subsections ago, Matthew and Mark related that after Jesus and his eleven disciples had finished eating the Passover and "singing a hymn, they went out to the Mt. of Olives" (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). Jerusalem is 2300 feet above sea level, and the Mt. of Olives rises to an elevation of only 2600 feet just east of the Temple Mount and on the other side of the Kidron Valley, which itself is just a few feet lower than Jerusalem. Now Matthew and Mark will continue describing Jesus' and the disciples' progression as they reach only the foot of the mountain and enter the Garden of Gethsemane. It is here that Jesus will pray, which will be followed by his arrest by the Jewish temple guard being led by Judas Iscariot who is betraying him.

Into the Garden of Gethsemane

The time is around 10 p.m. on Tuesday, and Matthew states that "Jesus went with them [the disciples] to a place called Gethsemane" (Matthew 26:36), which means "oil press" or possibly "oil valley" as there are many olive trees present. I have been in this garden and stood silently looking at the 2,000-year-old olive trees, awed by the fact that they heard Jesus as he prayed in agony to the Father. Mark in his gospel says that "they came to the place named Gethsemane" (Mark 14:32), while Luke omits the name and indicates that "he went out and proceeded as was his custom to the Mt. of Olives" and that "the disciples also followed him" (Luke 22:39). Assuming that Luke means the bottom of the Mt. of Olives and not the top (where, in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus had taught his disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem and his return), we learn from Luke that this was not the first time that they had visited Gethsemane as a group. In fact, whenever he was in Jerusalem with his disciples, which was only three times before (cf. John 2:13ff., 5:1ff., 7:1-10:21), he enjoyed regularly going to Gethsemane with them.

We also find out from John that it is a garden. He writes, "After saying these things [the Upper Room Discourse and Jesus' prayer in John 13-17], Jesus, along with his disciples, went out across the brook of Kidron where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered" (John 18:1). And this is all that John says until the next episode when Judas Iscariot appears with the soldiers to arrest Jesus. Only the synoptic gospels describe Jesus' prayers and interactions with his disciples. And Matthew's and Mark's accounts provide the most details. So we will look closely at them and include Luke's information as it is appropriate, deducing that Luke's interest is to give his readers the salient and notable points of this event, even two important ones that Matthew and Mark do not include.

Once Jesus and his disciples reach the Garden of Gethsemane, he says to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Matthew 26:36), or as Mark puts it, "Sit here until I have prayed." We see that Mark leaves out Jesus' telling them that he will move to another spot in the garden in order to pray. But both Matthew's and Mark's accounts mean that Jesus wants to be alone while he prays to the Father. Therefore, he invites the disciples to sit down and wait until he is finished.

Separating Out Peter, James, and John

After Jesus seems to say to all the disciples that they should remain in one group, we find out that "he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee" (Matthew 26:37). Mark names the two brothers, whose father is "Zebedee," and writes, "and he took with him Peter, James, and John" (Mark 14:33). So he moves away from eight of the disciples (i.e., Andrew, who is Peter's brother, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, who is the tax-collector, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot (cf. Matthew 10:2-4)) and takes with him the other three—Peter, James, and his brother John. Why does he treat these three differently? We are not told, but I think it would be safe to assume that, because of the pain and agony that Jesus is going to experience in the midst of his praying and because of the exhortations he gives the three as to what they should do, he is particularly close to them. Plus, we remember that Jesus has told all of them that they are going to abandon him and run and hide from the Jewish authorities. So it seems that he is resolved in his mind that this will happen very easily for the eight disciples and moves away from them. But what about Peter, James, and John? He is perhaps hoping to derive a little comfort from their presence and consequently wants to keep them closer to him than the other eight. However, as we will see, they do not very well end up fulfilling his hopes. And he probably really is not expecting much from them anyway, because he understands them better than they understand themselves. More on this in a moment.

Jesus' Grief and Distress

Matthew then says that Jesus "began to be grieved and distressed" (v. 37), and as Mark puts it in v. 33, "he began to be very distressed and troubled." He even says to Peter, James, and John, who are most likely out of earshot from the other eight, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and keep watch with me" (Matthew 26:38). Mark's account is different in just the second part, "Remain here and stay alert" (v. 34). It is as though Jesus has held it together up to this point during the Passover meal, but he is now starting to become even more emotionally distraught. His anguished feelings are never an indication of unbelief as ours may be, but his inner turmoil is nevertheless excruciating. Are we surprised by this distressful confession by Jesus? Is it permitted of God incarnate, the "icon of God" (as the apostle Paul calls him in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15), the man who is always perfectly trusting God? Yes, indeed, because he is completely human, even though he is a morally perfect human being and God within the creation.

Of what is Jesus grieved and distressed? We might think that it is only his impending crucifixion. And certainly the thought of being nailed to a cross and suffering the horrible pain of hanging there for as many as six hours that finally results in death must be weighing heavily on his mind. But I suggest that it is more than this, that as soon as Judas Iscariot arrives with the temple guards, the heartache and being betrayed by one of his closest associates and then mercilessly treated as a criminal by strangers, when he is a morally perfect man (indeed God incarnate!), who has never violated any legitimate law, will be both emotionally and psychologically traumatic for Jesus in his humanity. Plus, he is fully aware of all that both the Jews and the Romans are going to do to him because of what he tells his disciples earlier in the gospel of Matthew just before he leaves for Jerusalem for the last time—

> Matthew 20:18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, 19 and will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock and whip and crucify him. And on the third day he will be raised up!"

As Jesus increasingly anticipates his betrayal, arrest, trial, being jeered at and whipped, and finally being crucified and put to death, all which will happen within the next 18 hours, he begins to react emotionally and deeply to everything that he will experience—the mistreatment, false accusations, abandonment by his closest friends, loneliness, and sheer physical, emotional, and psychological agony and pain. And these are crushing him internally to the extent that he feels that he could die just from the psychological and emotional impact of the suspense. When he says, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death," Jesus is referring to his whole existence as he is experiencing himself as a genuine member of the human race. Before he even physically touches the cross and the nails that will attach him to it, he feels as though his physical life could escape right out of his body and vanish into thin air.

If this kind of response is permitted of Jesus, whom God the Father has placed in the story of the world to be God Himself, then certainly we can allow ourselves, even in the midst of our genuine Christian faith, to feel and act similarly. As sinners we lack the moral perfection and perfect belief and trust that Jesus always exercised, so that our grieving over trouble and distress and our feeling that we are dying inside in the midst of painful circumstances will most likely be messier than what Jesus experienced. But we need not feel ashamed that we cannot always respond to life with steady internal calmness, unflappable composure, and perfect equanimity. Clearly, Jesus, as the only pure human being who is consistently obedient to God and the unique person of God within the creation, is struggling with his own emotional and psychological stability. Therefore, we need to permit ourselves and others of both genuine faith and lack of faith to do the same—as part of what it means to grow in our faith (in the first case) or hopefully to come to faith (in the second case).

Jesus' Exhortations to Peter, James, and John

And Jesus encourages Peter, James, and John to stay where he has brought them, some distance from the other eight disciples and to "keep watch" with him and "stay alert." For what should they be watching? For what should they be on the alert? Jesus does not explicitly say, but the first thing they should expect is Judas Iscariot and the temple guard. Jesus knows they are coming for him, so that he desires his closest friends to remain vigilant and wait for his enemies as much as he is. But why would he want this? Again, I think that it is because he is a real human being. He knows that he alone will be arrested, that he will stand trial alone, and that he, and not his disciples, will be crucified and die for the sins of the world. However, it will be nice to have as much support from his disciples as possible to encourage him on his way towards qualifying as the High Priest and King of believing sinners through his

death—a role most clearly explained by the author of Hebrews. There is another reason why Jesus wants these three men to remain alert, but we will wait to discuss it in a moment.

Jesus Moves Away to Pray Alone

In the meantime, Matthew says that Jesus "went a little beyond them and fell on his face and prayed" (Matthew 26:39). Mark states, "He went a little beyond them and fell to the ground, and he was praying" (Mark 14:35). Luke also helps us understand what is happening, "And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he got down on his knees and was praying" (Luke 22:41). Putting the three accounts together, we recognize that Jesus did not remain with Peter, James, and John, but he separated himself from even them after first moving away with them from the other eight disciples. Luke says that he was "about a stone's throw from them," but because he does not mention the special group of the three disciples (Peter, James, and John), he most likely is referring to the total distance between Jesus and the group of eight. This we can then imagine to be approximately 50 to 60 feet. So he may be only about 20 feet from Peter, James, and John when he finally reaches the spot where he is going to pray—at the bottom of the Mt. of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane among the olive trees.

And he falls on his face on the ground. In other words, the weight of the anticipation of the upcoming events that will include his death by execution on a cross becomes so great that he literally collapses on the ground. But then soon afterwards, according to Luke, he pushes himself up onto his knees to pray. Again, we are observing the absolute humanity of the only man who has been assigned the role of God in history. He becomes so emotionally overwhelmed by the thought of the pain and suffering of his death that he cannot even stand up anymore. His strength has left him, his knees buckle, and he suddenly finds himself face down on the dirt. Yet, this is not the position from which he wants to address his God the Father. So he gathers his strength emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, gets to his knees, and starts praying.

This is such a wonderful example for us sinners, who on occasion encounter frightening and disturbing circumstances in our lives. Does having faith in God and His Messiah Jesus mean that we will never find ourselves collapsing in a heap on the floor or ground because we are so emotionally distraught that we cannot even stand up? No. In fact, as we will see with Jesus, this response to our own situations may be the very thing that motivates us to pray—and not just to pray, but to pray with our hearts and minds so that we express truth to God that is right in line with what the Bible teaches about Him. This, of course, makes it all the clearer that learning the truth of the Bible is vital for a proper response of faith and belief in each and every circumstance in which we find ourselves. Therefore, persistently gaining more understanding of the biblical message prepares us for life—both this life and the life to come in the eternal Kingdom of God, which is our greatest desire as the outcome of our present faith.

Jesus' Prayer

Now we can look at Jesus' prayer. In Matthew 26:39, Jesus says, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but not as I want, but as You want." Mark first in 14:35 tells us "that [Jesus] was praying that if it were possible, the hour would pass him by." And then in v. 36, he provides the wording of Jesus' prayer, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You. Remove this cup from me. But not what I want, but what you want." And Luke says that he prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. But let not my desire be done, but Yours" (Luke 22:42). First, we see that Jesus addresses God as Abba and Father. Abba is Aramaic for father and is a term of endearment. It is like a child who says, "Papa" or "Daddy."

I think that there are two reasons why Jesus calls God his "Father" and "Abba/Papa." The first is that he is acknowledging God is the ultimate source of his existence within the creation and, therefore, within this world. Nothing and no one is able to be a part of the reality of this world on this earth or anywhere else in the universe without God's causing it or him to be such. This pertains not only to the beginning of someone's existence, such as when a zygote is formed in a mother's womb, but also to the continuation of someone's participating in the reality of human history, whether now or in the eternal Kingdom of God. And this is true for both normal, sinful human beings like you and me as well as for the morally perfect icon of God, Jesus. God the Father brought Jesus into existence in his mother Mary's womb, and He is sustaining Jesus existence as He sees fit within human history. Knowing this, Jesus cries out to him, "Abba! Father!"

A second reason why Jesus calls God his "Father" is because God promised David around 1000 B.C. that his descendants would be kings of Israel and, as such, would each be a Son of God. With this title,

God was speaking in line with the beliefs of other Ancient Near Eastern people who considered their kings to be the current proxy and representative of the chief of the gods whom they worshiped. Consequently, they saw their kings as the very embodiment of the power and authority of their chief god, so that they would bow before them and speak to them as reverently as they did to the god himself. God told David that this is how He saw him and how all the Israelites should see him, too, as the one human being whom all the people should consider as so intimately representing God that they should treat him and speak to him as if they were speaking to God Himself, the transcendent creator. And this was to be true for David and all his descendants as Israel's kings such as Solomon, Rehoboam, and the others, while waiting for the final and eternal king, whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth. However, in Jesus' case, he is not a sinful human being as God's proxy like David and Solomon for example. He is the morally perfect God within the human race. So for both the reason that he is God's representative, the Son of God as David's descendant who rules as king over Israel, and the reason that he is the only permanent human being who is God within the story which He is telling, Jesus is calling God his "Father" as he prays.

Therefore, Jesus is speaking to the transcendent creator, his Father, who has sent him into the world, who requires that he fully carry out his responsibility as the Messiah and king of Israel, and who also is the closest and dearest person in existence to him. He is the source of Jesus' existence in the world as well as the one whom he represents within the creation and whom everyone should worship and obey. God, consequently, is the one from whom Jesus knows that he can receive the greatest comfort in this difficult situation and also the one whom he wants to please more than anyone else in the world. His relationship with his heavenly Father is the most important one in his life, and he is expressing this fact by the way that he is addressing Him, "Abba! Father!"

We also see that the general substance of Jesus' prayer is that he would like to avoid what he calls "this cup" (Matthew and Luke), and Mark refers to it as "the hour." Jesus will soon be betrayed by a professing loyal associate, arrested by strangers, tried by hostile and indifferent government officials, and crucified by mindlessly obedient Roman soldiers. But it is certainly the last of these events that is going to be the most painful—physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. So even though he would like to avoid his betrayal, arrest, and trial, it is the crucifixion to which he is mainly referring as "this cup." It will be the "hour" of his being nailed to the cross as it lies on the ground, which will then be lifted up, and on which he will hang for six hours before finally dying that he most wants to prevent from happening.

But how can he do so? Either by God's changing His plans or by Jesus' willfully choosing to disobey God and thereby changing His plans for Him. But while this is logically possible, it would require that God first change His plans because Jesus is just as much under the sovereign authority and control of God as any part of the creation. In addition, Jesus is morally perfect and wholly obedient to God. Therefore, it is *biblically* impossible for two reasons for Jesus to prevent his crucifixion from occurring. The first is that God is not going to change His plans. Indeed, He never does. We do have the example in Exodus 32 of God's *apparently* changing His mind when the Israelites worshiped the golden calf and stopped worshiping Him. Indeed, God said to Moses that He was going to destroy the rest of the people and start over with him in building the nation of Israel. But this was clearly only a test for Moses, to encourage him to appeal to God to remain faithful not only to His plans, but also to the Israelites as a collection of twelves tribes where all the tribes, especially that of Judah, needed to exist for God to fulfill all His promises. If God destroyed Judah so that there would be only the tribe of "Moses," then He eliminated any possibility of the Messiah coming into existence as a member of the tribe to which Jacob had previously referred in Genesis 49:10 that will produce the final ruler of Israel. Since this would render Jacob a liar so that the Bible contained an error, God's plan was first to state to Moses that He was changing His mind and was going to destroy all the people. And then His plan was to change His mind again by remaining faithful to His original promises as further described by Jacob's predictions of the twelve tribes. Thus, the first reason that it is biblically impossible for Jesus to avoid his crucifixion is that God never changes His eternal plans. The second reason that it is biblically impossible for Jesus to choose to disobey God is that he is the very person of God within the creation and, therefore, morally perfect. God has assigned him the role of suffering the death of crucifixion, a role which he is obligated to fulfill completely, absolutely, and in every detail. And so, out of both theological and biblical necessity, Jesus will drink the "cup" that God has required of him.

Nevertheless, in his humanity, Jesus is so emotionally and psychologically disturbed that he requests of God that He orchestrate history in such a way that he not have to endure the crucifixion. But, in Jesus' mind and understanding of God the Father, there is a limitation to his request, which we can identify as a

biblical and moral limitation and which we should adopt also. Matthew indicates it by the words, “if it is possible.” Mark uses similar words, that “he was praying that if it were possible,” etc., and Jesus’ prayer in his account provides additional words that he used, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You.” And Luke puts it this way, “if You are willing.” Jesus is very aware that God can sovereignly cause human beings to make whatever choices He wishes. Therefore, his words “All things are possible for You” in Mark reveal that Jesus knows exactly who is in charge of history. However, he is not saying that God can make a rock that He cannot lift—the classic example of what people try to identify as the limitations of human understanding of God. Instead, Jesus is acknowledging that, within the divine boundaries of logic and rationality, God really can do whatever He wants in the creation, including theoretically changing His mind and shifting the course of history so that he does not have to endure the cross.

Thus, the words in Matthew’s text, “if it is possible,” mean the same thing as Mark’s account, “All things are possible for You [God].” Of course it is possible for God to make Jesus’ life easier, just as it is possible for God to make all our lives easier. Luke’s words are more interpretative, “if you are willing.” Indeed, Jesus, at a particular level of his thinking and feeling the effects of his upcoming ordeal and death, is genuinely wondering if God might be willing to have him fulfill his role as the Messiah by some means other than the crucifixion. But is this really legitimate for Jesus to do? Is it moral for him to entertain the possibility of God’s changing His mind, especially when we are talking about the most significant event in human history—the death of the Jewish Messiah that will allow him to qualify to be the only one who can obtain God’s eternal mercy and life for sinners? Does not this seem rather disobedient of Jesus? Fortunately, in regard to the legitimacy of Jesus’ thinking and wondering, the answer is Yes. But also, fortunately, in regard to his being disobedient towards God, the answer is an unequivocal No! Jesus is demonstrating exactly what authentic humanity looks like. It is repulsed by pain and the possibility of suffering, and it wonders if there is another path in life that will lead a person away from them. Genuine human beings wonder whether God Himself might sovereignly bring about this less painful path. At the same time, authentic humanity intellectually grasps that it will be only God who ultimately produces this change. But then it surrenders to God’s telling His story exactly as He wants—with the pain or without it.

A great example of this kind of humble submission to God and His plans is the response of the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar when he threatened to throw them alive in to the blazing fire of a furnace if they refused to worship the 90’ tall image that he had set up on the plain of Dura. They told the king,

> Daniel 3:17 “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

These three men did not know God’s exact plans, but they did know that worshiping and serving the one true God is better than life itself in this realm. And I suggest that their understanding in this regard in Old Testament times was because they were trusting God for eternal life the same as we do as Christians. In Jesus’ case, we can assume that in his youth he studied the Old Testament with great care and perseverance. It probably began with his mother Mary. The angel Gabriel announced to her in Luke 1:30-35 that God was miraculously going to create a child within her and that he would be the “Son of the Most High” who would “reign over the house of Jacob [Israel] forever, and his kingdom will have no end.” Mary probably knew what the angel meant because of her own study of the Old Testament, that she was going to bear the long-expected Messiah who would be not only the king of Israel, but also the offering and priest for both Jews and Gentiles that they might acquire eternal life and forgiveness from God. Therefore, we can also imagine that with this information Mary began gearing up to teach her son Jesus about his identity and role according to the Old Testament. Then, as soon as he could begin to understand basic concepts, she carefully taught him from the most important passages such as Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12 & 13, and many others which predict not only the suffering and death of the Messiah, but also his glorious rule over Israel and the whole earth. (We have already looked at a few verses of Isaiah 53, and we will explore further this important chapter along with verses in Zechariah 12 & 13 and Psalms 16 & 22 in later subsections.) As a result, it is no surprise that at twelve years old Jesus knows enough that teachers in the temple in Jerusalem are “amazed at his understanding and answers” as they converse with him about the Hebrew scriptures (cf. Luke 2:41-47). Did he disclose to them that he is the

Messiah? Not likely. It is actually God the Father who first publicly reveals who he is when, at his baptism by John, “a voice [comes] out of heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; in you I am well-pleased,” so that the term “Son” means that Jesus is the Messiah and king of Israel. Then he makes himself known when he returns to Galilee, quotes from Isaiah 61 regarding the Messiah and says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (cf. Luke 4:14-21).

Thus, after many more years of reviewing and learning the Old Testament, here in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus knows that death by execution is his messianic and divinely mandated destiny with the purpose of his offering himself to God in order to obtain the eternal salvation of sinners. He knows that this is precisely what God’s story requires. In this way, he will fulfill his role during his first appearance so that he qualifies to be the Messiah, who also returns and completes his task of ushering in the initial stage of the Kingdom of God on earth for believing Israel and believing Gentiles. Therefore, his wondering in this garden prayer if God may direct history differently does not contain the level of uncertainty that ours does. While we Christians absolutely know that our existences will end in either death or being lifted from the earth when Jesus returns, we know very little, if anything, that is certain in regard to our future, earthly existences. James in his New Testament letter expresses the same idea—

> James 4:13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

We see that James’ concern is for his readers to do the right thing, which in this case is to adopt a perspective that is in line with the Bible where God is the one who “wills” whether we are even alive and what we do each and every moment. In comparison to Him, we are merely a vapor, like steam that rises from a pot on the stove, and then disappears. How much control does vanishing steam have over the world? And what does tomorrow hold for us? Or the next day? Or next week, next month, next year? We make plans, and we may do all we can to ensure that we can fulfill our plans—even praying that God will permit us to fulfill our plans. But are we absolutely certain that God will say Yes to our plans, and are we completely confident of what we will be doing tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year? Not at all. God simply has not revealed everything that He will sovereignly bring about in our lives. As James says, “[We] do not know what [our] life will be like tomorrow.”

In contrast, Jesus is the Messiah whose life, death, resurrection, return, and rule over the eternal Kingdom of God have all been predicted in the Old Testament. So even as he prays, “if it is possible” that God change His plans, he is completely convinced that God will not change them and he will die on the cross. We may wonder what the next day or days will bring, and we may even ask God that the future be one way and not another—that God will grant us success in our businesses, that He will heal us of some dread disease or physical condition, that we may find happiness in life, that He will bring peace to our families, our country, our world. But we do not know exactly how God will answer our requests (unless we are praying for the perseverance of our faith and Jesus’ return to establish the Kingdom of God!). In contrast, Jesus is wondering if the night and next day may be different, while he is absolutely persuaded from the Old Testament that they will not. Thus, his wondering is more a “Oh, if I could only avoid the pain, but I know that I cannot because of what God has planned from eternity past specifically for me, the Messiah,” while our wondering is, “Oh, if I could only have my life go the way I really want, but I will simply have to wait and see what God has planned from eternity past and trust Him that He causes all things in my life to work together for good,” i.e., for my eternal salvation (cf. Romans 8:28).

Nevertheless, Jesus’ wondering and requests of God are no less human than ours. Or another way of saying this, our wondering and requests of God are no less legitimate and appropriate than those of Jesus. They simply are different on the basis of the knowledge that we have of God and the reality in which we live. God has foretold in the Bible a great deal more of the Messiah’s existence than ours. We know from the scriptures that, after God has changed our hearts and we have genuinely chosen to believe in Jesus as the Messiah so that we are wholeheartedly committed to biblical morality and acquiring eternal life, that we will struggle to obey God more than we would like. In addition, we may even experience persecution, disease, war, economic disruptions, etc. But we should always compare ourselves and the uncertainty of our futures on this earth to Jesus who grew up reading on the pages of

the Old Testament that, as the Messiah, he would unavoidably die on the cross. This truth confronted him every day of his life from the moment as a young man he began to grasp what his Abba, Father was teaching him as he studied the Bible and as he even asked questions of and conversed with the most learned Old Testament scholars of his day in the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 2:42-52).

We also see that, in the midst of his wondering, Jesus was perfectly willing to go through with God's plans and endure the crucifixion, because he ends his prayer in Matthew 26:39 with the words, "but not as I want, but as You want." Marks words are very much the same, "But not what I want, but what You want" (Mark 14:36). And Luke interprets Jesus' words, "But let not my desire be done, but Yours" (Luke 22:42). Again, we see two levels of desires within Jesus. On one level, an entirely appropriate and moral level of his humanity, Jesus did NOT want to be betrayed, arrested, tried, crucified, and die. On another level, an additional appropriate and moral level of his humanity, he did want to go through this whole ordeal and die. This is to say that it was not disobedient for him at the first level to desire NOT to go through with his death. And, of course, it was completely obedient for him at the second level to desire to go through with his death. In other words, Jesus was internally and emotionally conflicted, and he was being perfectly obedient to God in the midst of this dichotomy.

His words and actions, therefore, teach us sinners that our desiring something different from what God has planned (as long as our actions would not be immoral) fits perfectly well with our being willing to subordinate ourselves to God. We can have one desire within us at a very appropriate level for life to go a particular way, while we also have another desire within us at another appropriate level for life to occur differently *if God so desires*. Thus, we see that with these last words of his prayer, Jesus is telling his Abba (and our Abba) that he is perfectly ready to place himself under His sovereign rule and endure the pain and suffering that he knows is in store for him during the next eighteen hours. Even though in this age and realm we are never perfectly and continuously willing like Jesus to submit to God's plans, as authentic Christians we are nevertheless inwardly committed *in our hearts* to obeying Him, so that we can and should work as hard as possible to adopt the same perspective as Jesus every moment of our lives. Our goal should also be to imitate Jesus and say to God, "Not what I want, if it is different from what You want, but what You desire and have planned for my life to bring about Your eternal purposes—regardless of what I have to go through."

Jesus Returns to Peter, James, and John

The next part of Matthew's and Mark's accounts describe Jesus' return to the place where Peter, James, and John are supposed to be keeping watch for Judas Iscariot, but instead he finds them sleeping. In Luke's account, the parallel passage comes after two details that are not in Matthew and Mark, the visitation of Jesus by an "angel from heaven" and Jesus' sweat being "like drops of blood falling to the ground." We have learned that Luke is not as concerned about the chronology of events, so that the question once again is whether or not these two events in Luke actually take place before Jesus returns to the three disciples? But there is another aspect of Luke's presentation of this whole event that is different from Matthew's and Mark's and is important to consider in answering this question. While Matthew and Mark state explicitly that Jesus prays three times so that three times he also returns to the three disciples, Luke describes him as doing so only once. Therefore, again we can ask, is Luke wrong in saying that Jesus prayed only once, or are Matthew and Mark wrong by saying that he prayed three times? Perhaps someone would want to claim that Matthew and Mark are intentionally exaggerating Jesus' actions for dramatic effect. And someone else may want to claim that Luke got his information from an erroneous source. But a very reasonable explanation for the apparent discrepancy between the authors is that Luke is simply being economical in his description of the entire event. He knew that Jesus prayed three times, but he is reporting on the whole scene in such a way that he simply wants to say that Jesus prayed, returned to his disciples, commented to them that they should remain awake and pray, was visited by an "angel from heaven," and sweated profusely. I will assume this to be the case and will show how Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's accounts fit very well together.

Let us look first at Jesus' three returns to Peter, James, and John in Matthew and Mark, while also weaving in Luke's comments about his coming back to them. Then we will consider the angel and Jesus' sweating in Luke. Matthew 26:40 says, "And he came to his disciples, and he found them sleeping." Mark writes, "And he came and found them sleeping" (Mark 14:37). Luke's account states, "And when he stood up from his prayer he came to his disciples, and he found them sleeping from sorrow" (Luke 22:45). All three authors describe Jesus as finishing his prayer and walking back to his disciples, and we will find out that these are only Peter, James, and John. According to Luke, the remaining eight are still "about a

stone's throw away," even though he also never specifically mentions the other three disciples (cf. Luke 22:41). However, Luke does mention an interesting detail about the disciples, that they are all sleeping "from sorrow." The Greek word for sorrow, *lupay* (λύπη), refers to pain in the mind. What exactly is this pain for these men, especially when we have seen how slow they have been to catching on to the fact that Jesus is going to be betrayed, arrested, tried, and crucified—all within the next twelve hours? I think that at least Peter, James, and John are starting to worry that the situation is going to take a turn for the worse for all of them—socially and physically with respect to the Jewish leadership. We recall that, according to Mark, Jesus has told these three that his "soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." Thus, they have heard their leader say that his *lupay* (λύπη) is so great that he feels as though the very life is being squeezed out of him. Would this not create serious worry and concern in any follower, even if (and perhaps mainly because) he lacks clarity on exactly what is the danger? As a result, their own concern and sorrow is taking a toll on them psychologically and sapping them of the energy they need to stay awake. So this description by Luke pertains to the close group of the three disciples—Peter, James, and John. Nevertheless, the other eight are probably sleeping too. They just are not privy to the nearness of the danger.

Next, Matthew records,

> Matthew 26:40b "And he said to Peter, 'Were you not thus strong enough to watch with me for one hour? 41 Stay alert and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.'"

Mark's account is,

> Mark 14:37 "And he came and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Are you not strong enough to stay alert for one hour? 38 Stay alert and pray, lest you come into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.'"

Luke writes,

> Luke 22:46 "And he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray lest you enter into temptation.'"

Plus, before stating that Jesus separated himself from all the disciples, Luke had commented in v. 40, "When he arrived at the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you not enter into temptation.'" Luke is telling us that Jesus encouraged all eleven disciples to pray in this way. And Matthew and Mark are saying that he emphasizes this point to Peter, James, and John—in fact, three times! Why? We will see.

First, Matthew and Mark indicate that Jesus directly asks Peter a question. Mark identifies him by his new Greek name, "Peter," but then says that Jesus addresses him as "Simon," his original and more familiar Aramaic name (cf. Matthew 16:13-20). Nevertheless, Luke informs us that all three of these closest disciples, whom Jesus separated from the other eight, hear his question. Matthew and Mark both use the same Greek word (*iskuo*, ἰσχύω) for Jesus concern about Peter (and about the other two disciples, James and John). It means to have adequate strength to lift the heaviest of loads. Are these men not strong enough to remain awake, even "for one hour," and truly be Jesus' friends. Do they not have the inner emotional, psychological, and spiritual fortitude to stay on their guard in the light of the upcoming threat of his being arrested by the temple guard led by Judas Iscariot? I think that the strength to which Jesus is referring is that of both understanding and belief that should result in fighting the urge to sleep due to fatigue or fear. Do they not understand the gravity of the situation, and do they not have a healthy concern for their own belief, i.e., that the upcoming circumstances will be so disturbing to them that there is the risk of their giving up their faith and belief in him? Do they not understand that they will fear for their own lives, that they too may face execution and death because of their association with him as the Messiah? In other words, the "temptation" into which they might possibly enter is the pressure to abandon Jesus, not just physically, but in their own hearts, so that they are no longer committed to him as their Lord, Savior, King, and High Priest.

There are two other passages in the New Testament that speak of this same idea of "entering into temptation." One is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, and the other is Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encourages believers to pray, "Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). Normally we think of temptation, which is the Greek word *peirasmos* (πειρασμός), as a situation where we are being enticed to commit a single sin against God, such as lust, greed, harsh anger, or some other act of disobedience towards God. And there are instances in the New Testament where it has this meaning. For example, when Satan "tempts" Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1-4—

> Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But he answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD'" <Deuteronomy 8:3>.

In this situation, both Satan and Jesus know that God the Father is taking care of him. But if Satan can get him to take just one independent step away from the Father and care for himself, then he will succeed in deceiving Jesus into disobeying God. He, therefore, tries to use Jesus' hunger and desire for food as a means to entice him to sin only this once, and then God's plans for Jesus to be the morally perfect Messiah will be foiled. Thus, we see that the "temptation," *peirasmos*, here is with respect to one act of sin against God.

However, in the context of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is referring to a person's entire inner commitment and belief. He is talking about pressure from the lies and deceptions of Satan that would squeeze faith and belief in God right out of us and cause us completely to abandon our trust in Him. This is why I have translated *apo tou ponayrou* (ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ) "from the evil one" and not just "from evil." The archenemy of all human beings and Christians is the devil, whose goal is to persuade people to reject God completely. For example, when Christians are persecuted for their faith or endure any other kind of suffering, Satan's tactic is to influence them to think that God is cruel, so that they cease altogether to believe in His love, grace, and mercy. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is exhorting his followers to beseech God that, regardless the difficulty of their circumstances and the attractiveness of the devil's lies, they stay the course and believe God for His goodness with the goal in mind of obtaining the Kingdom of God and eternal life. This is why the prayer also contains the request, "Your kingdom come," because it is when God's kingdom arrives through Jesus' return that God will transform resurrected and living Christians into morally perfect persons who will exist in this condition for all eternity. This will also be the moment when all possibility of giving up one's belief disappears. And even though God faithfully causes authentic belief to persevere in those whom He has chosen from before He brought the creation into existence, Jesus is saying that it is entirely appropriate for Christians to pray that God will cause their belief to persevere.

The apostle Paul is of the same mindset when he sends Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica to find out about the Christians in this city as to whether or not they are still holding on to their faith in the midst of the persecutions they are experiencing. He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:5 "For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain." The tempter of the Thessalonian Christians is the same as the tempter of Jesus in Matthew 4. Paul is concerned that Satan "might have tempted" these Christians, who are going through intense persecution, to abandon their faith in God by injecting into their minds the thought that God either does not exist or does not care about them. Indeed, He may even be angry and cruel towards them. Again, if these people are authentic believers, their faith cannot be destroyed by Satan or anything else in this world. But Paul never takes for granted anyone's faith, even though he knows that God causes authentic Christians to endure all the difficulties of life with true faith and belief. Paul also states that his hard work of presenting the gospel to the Thessalonians would have been "in vain" if they were to give up their faith, meaning that they had never become genuine Christians in the first place. It is not unusual for people to claim they believe in Jesus but are doing so only because they like the religious environment Christianity provides them or the social dynamics of Christianity or for some other invalid reason. And if they experience persecution, it becomes too great a test of their faith, and more than likely they will give it up to avoid the persecution. Paul has been wondering if this were the case for the Thessalonians and sends Timothy to find out what effect their persecution has had on them. He expresses his delight in 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 when Timothy reports back—

> 1 Thessalonians 3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, **and has brought us good news of your faith and love**, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. [my emphasis]

So we see that the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 and Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians are parallel passages to Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to pray that God will prevent them from giving up their belief in him as the Messiah as they go through the next eighteen hours (and the rest of their lives!) of emotional, psychological, and spiritual darkness. Satan first tried to derail God's plans by tempting Jesus to disobey Him in the wilderness. Now he is trying to destroy His plans by killing the Messiah and frightening his apostles into completely giving up their faith in God. And just as Jesus is bringing his requests before the Father that he might finish his task of dying on the cross for people's salvation, he urges his closest disciples to request that they continue in their responsibility to become his authoritative apostles and proclaim the good news about him after their ordeal this night—and, by extrapolation, throughout the days, nights, and years that God will give them to fulfill their roles until they die.

We find an additional reason to interpret Jesus this way as Matthew and Mark go on to inform their readers that he then describes the spiritual condition of the three disciples, "The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41b; Mark 14:38b). By the "spirit" (*pneuma*, πνεῦμα), Jesus means the "heart," that level of our humanity where we become inwardly committed to biblical goodness and morality, to obeying God (just as Jesus did). By the "flesh" (*sarx*, σὰρξ), he means that level of our humanity where we are completely evil (in contrast to Jesus whose flesh was, is, and always will be morally perfect). And it is this second level that obstructs and undermines our hearts and our desire to do what is right. The apostle Paul best describes the conflict between the heart/spirit and the flesh in Romans 7:14-24. For example, he says in v. 18, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me [in my heart/spirit], but the doing of the good is not [on occasion when my flesh prevents me from doing what is good]."

Jesus' statement means that he at least is convinced that God has transformed these men's hearts so that they are authentic believers. Nevertheless, as he did in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is warning Peter, James and John that, while they may want to remain faithful to him, there is the theoretical possibility that they may choose to abandon him—both physically and spiritually. So a prayer to God by them in regard to their faith and its perseverance is the correlate to his own prayer in regard to his faith and obeying the Father all the way through his last breath on the cross.

We recall that two scenes ago, Jesus said that Satan is going to sift Peter like wheat so that he denies him three times later this night. Nevertheless, Jesus has prayed for Peter that he will not give up his faith in him completely. Therefore, if Peter is not going to abandon Jesus in his heart later, he knows that he is not going to do so now. Yet, he urges Peter (and the other two disciples) to remain alert and awake and pray that they may not give up their faith now during the entire episode that will end in Jesus' death. Does this surprise us? That Jesus encourages Peter to pray when he himself has prayed for him!? Why should Peter pray if the Son of God has prayed for him? And the answer I think is in the simple dynamics that exist between God and human beings—that He is the author of this story in which we are characters who are fulfilling our roles for His glory and honor. Hence, just as Jesus has honored God by praying for Peter, he is urging Peter to honor Him likewise and pray for the same thing—perseverance of faith in the midst of circumstances that are testing his faith.

This is always an appropriate encouragement to all Christians at all times—that, regardless of the current situation, that they continue to be prayerful in regard to the perseverance of their own faith and the faith of their fellow believers. It is certainly true that God will remain loyal to His promise to cause genuine Christians to maintain their faith. But the Bible consistently speaks of encouraging them to pray for the endurance of their own faith and that of other Christians. Such prayer is simply a part of what it means to be an authentic believer in a sovereign God who has created us to be existential human beings who willfully choose to believe in Him, even though our belief is an effect of His having changed our hearts through the inner work of His Spirit. As Christians we are thorough going existentialists who understand that we define ourselves by the choices we willfully and freely make within the creation. Our biology and chemistry do not determine our choices. We are free from the creation so that we willingly make our choices according to only God's sovereign rule. We cannot blame anything within the creation for our sin, even our physical makeup. In other words, the "flesh" to which the apostle Paul refers and

which is that aspect of us that is evil and remains evil this side of eternity is not anything physical about us. Ultimately, it is that which God is doing with us as His creatures to fulfill His purposes of saving sinners from His condemnation. On the one hand, God defines us by His sovereign control of who we are and what we do. On the other hand, we define ourselves by our existential and willful choices so that our prayers reveal our faith and hearts whereby we long for God's mercy, life in the Kingdom of God, and to do what He wants, not what we want—just like Jesus. And this makes sense as we acknowledge that the Bible presents God as the author of the story of creation in which we reside and live out our Christianity.

Jesus Leaves the Men to Pray Two More Times

While Luke says that Jesus prays once, Matthew and Mark mention two more times that he appeals to God. Thus Matthew continues, "And again he went away a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass from me except I drink it, let Your desire occur'" (Matthew 26:42), and Mark writes, "Again he went away and prayed, making the same statement" (Mark 14:39). We see that Jesus' basic desire is that he be permitted to avoid the ordeal of his betrayal, arrest, trial, and dying on the cross. And he expresses this to the Father a second time—referring to everything as the cup which he will have to drink. Yet, he also recognizes that the theology of this event is such that God will cause His predestined purposes to unfold exactly as He has planned. Later in :27-28, the apostles affirm this theology in their own prayer to God after Peter and John have been arrested and released by the Jewish leadership, "27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur**" [my emphasis].

If God has predestined and brought about by His "hand" the greatest evil in all cosmic history, the murder of the Son of God, then it is not too far a leap to conclude that He has predestined and brings about all other events. Yet, as Jesus himself is demonstrating, all human beings are persons who willfully, deliberately, and intentionally make their own choices under the umbrella of God's predestined causation. While this is not an easy concept to grasp, to the extent that we can understand it, it does give us all the more reason to pray to God according to our needs and desires and to inform Him that we want to choose to submit to His desires and plans for our lives instead of what we might want that is contrary to them. We are God's creatures, made in His image, and not the other way around.

Jesus Returns Again to Peter, James, and John

Then Matthew states, "Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy" (Matthew 26:43). Likewise, Mark writes, "And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy. And they did not know what to answer him" (Mark 14:40). The time is getting later in the night, and it has been a long day for Peter, James, and John (indeed, for Jesus and all the disciples). They are trying to grasp the seriousness of the situation for Jesus and themselves. And, as I suggested above, they are becoming weary just from their own anxiety, fear, and sorrow. Consequently, they simply are too tired to keep themselves awake and vigilant for whatever Jesus has encouraged them to be on the lookout. Then only Mark adds another detail, that "they did not know what to answer him." Jesus must have awakened them as he did the first time, asked them why they were sleeping under these circumstances, and probably urged them once again to pray that they might not give up their faith as they face into the evil that is about to be unleashed towards him.

After once again being confronted with their inability to follow his instructions, they have no good excuse for why this is the case. So they remain silent. Are they at least a little bit embarrassed? Probably, but both Matthew and Mark spare us these details. Matthew continues, "He left them again and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same statement one more time" (Matthew 26:44). Mark does not explicitly mention Jesus' going away to pray this third time. He will talk about only his third return to the disciples. We learn, though, that Jesus moves away from Peter, James, and John a total of three times and expresses the same prayer of his desire not to go through the unpleasant experiences of this night and the next day. We also find out that Jesus is very aware of God's plan and requirement that he do so. In a moment we will consider further the ramifications of Jesus' prayers.

But first, Matthew and Mark go on to Jesus' return and words to his disciples as he sees Judas Iscariot approaching with the temple guard,

Matthew 26:45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up. Let us go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near.'"

And,

Mark 14:41 he came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up. Let us go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near.'"

We might think that asking the disciples a third time, specifically Peter, James, and John, why they are sleeping instead of remaining awake and watchful would be superfluous and unnecessary. But Jesus is not letting up on his exhortation to them—to remain awake so as to be on the lookout for the danger of his enemies and to pray that God grant them the strength to withstand the temptation to give up their faith once the danger appears and persists. Consequently, he asks them when he returns, "Are you still sleeping and resting" (as both Matthew and Mark record). Then, Jesus uses a common expression of command and urgency, "Behold!" He is drawing their attention to something of which he exhorts them to take notice. Matthew places this word first after Jesus' question regarding their sleeping. Mark positions it in the middle of his statements to them. They both mean to say that Jesus' manner of speaking is one of excitement, alarm, and urgency.

Why is Jesus expressing such strong emotion? Matthew states that Jesus says next in v. 45, "The hour is near (ἤγγικεν)," while Mark writes his words, "It is enough (ἀπέχει). The hour has come (ἦλθεν)" (Mark 14:41). The word that Mark uses and that I have translated "It is enough" can mean to receive something in full or to meet the need of the moment. Thus, Jesus is saying that he has done everything that God has required of him to reach the final goal of his mortal existence as a human being. He has lived his whole life in anticipation of this end as he has learned from the Old Testament. He has taught the crowds and his disciples about the Kingdom of God and his being the Messiah. He has healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and miraculously fed thousands of people with little food. He has fully performed his task of revealing his identity as Israel's eternal king and the Son of God. Now it is finally time for his betrayal, arrest, trial, and ultimately the cross at the hands of both the Jews and the Romans. And, as we have seen by the three times that he has prayed, he is resolved in his heart and mind to endure this goal of his first earthly appearance. In fact, among all the copies of the gospel of Mark that exist today, there are eleven of them that include the words *to telos* (το τελος = the goal/end) after *apekay* (ἀπέχει = it is enough). This is definitely the sense of what Jesus means. God's goal for him is his goal for himself. Soon he will complete the mission of his first appearance as Israel's Messiah and be crucified in order to qualify to become the High Priest and intercessor before God for sinners—both Jews and Gentiles. He means the same thing when he says in Matthew that "the hour is near" and in Mark that the "hour has come." The hour is that time when Jesus finishes the task God the Father has given him and dies on the cross. Indeed, this "hour" is the next eighteen hours of cruel and brutal treatment by those who either outright oppose him or are willfully ignoring him—the Jews in the first case and the Romans in the second.

Jesus goes on to say in both Matthew and Mark, "and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let us go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near" (Matthew 26:45b-46; Mark 14:41b-42). Jesus' favorite title for himself throughout the gospels is "Son of Man," a reference to Psalm 8 where David as the king of Israel expresses his astonishment that God has picked him and his human descendants to be His "Son." David means that, as the kings of God's chosen people, the Jews, they are His authoritative representatives on earth. But they are also merely human beings. They are each the "Son of Man," which is to say that they are God's "Son" who are *bona fide* members of the human race. They are not angels or dogs or birds. They are pure human beings. Indeed, David and all his descendants who became kings of Israel were sinners who needed the mercy and forgiveness of God. But we know that Jesus is different. He is fully a human being who was and is living out the role of the final King of Israel, but he also is the morally perfect God within the creation. No other "Son of Man," whether David, Solomon, or any other legitimate kingly descendant of David could claim these last characteristics.

Therefore, we have in Jesus' words the juxtaposition of two radical ideas that sound mutually exclusive, but they are not. He is God within human history as Israel's legitimate and final king, who

should be worshiped by not only the Jews but also the Gentiles, AND he is in the process of being betrayed into the hands of the very ones for whom he has appeared in order to love and save from God's eternal wrath and condemnation. How can this be, that these two polar opposite ideas find expression in one man and in one event? Only by God's sovereign plan and grace. Such is the manner in which God has chosen to grant mercy to those who deserve His eternal condemnation but who will receive His eternal blessing of forgiveness and life in the Kingdom of God. Their king must die in order to rule over them.

Jesus also refers to Judas Iscariot and the temple guard with him as "sinners." He means that they are in no way committed to obeying God. As a result, they are at this moment choosing to do evil by betraying and arresting him—either for money in Judas' case, or in the case of the temple guard, to obey their Jewish leaders who have been conspiring for years to rid themselves of this pesky and annoying charlatan who is pretending to be the Messiah. The evil in their choices is in their refusal to embrace Jesus for who he has claimed to be by his words and who God the Father has clearly demonstrated that he is by the miracles He has performed through him. He is the long-expected Messiah and King of Israel. Therefore, is he someone they should arrest and crucify? Absolutely not. Indeed, Judas Iscariot and the temple guard are assisting in the greatest evil in all human history. Certainly, there have been events where multitudes of innocent people have been cruelly mistreated and even killed. And these events by their sheer magnitude appear to be examples of greater evil than falsely accusing and executing one man. But when we take into account who this man is—the loving and gracious God, Savior, and eternal ruler of people just like those who are condemning him to death—then we can appreciate just how heinous and reprehensible are the actions of Judas and the temple guard. Plus, they seem to be in no way struggling with the moral implications of following through on their intentions. So Jesus calls them "sinners."

Then he urges Peter, James, and John to get up off the ground where they have been sleeping, and he says to them, "Let us go." But where are they going? Certainly not away from Judas and the crowd, because, as Jesus has expressed in his threefold prayer to the Father, he knows that he has been destined for this moment just as he has for every moment of his human existence. For this reason, he must be moving towards Judas and the crowd that is following him. He is not going to make it more difficult for them to accomplish their goal by running away and hiding. He is going to make it easier for them by walking right to them. He is moving towards danger and not away from it. He is moving towards death and not away from it.

This is not to say that God always requires us, who are to imitate Jesus, to expose ourselves to the dangers of the world, especially persecution for our faith. Instead, we must recognize here that Jesus is entirely cognizant of the journey to the cross which is his divine earthly destiny. He knows exactly how the story of his first appearance ends. We do not know what God has sovereignly designed for our lives and how they end. Therefore, it is perfectly permissible for us to flee danger when we see it. Yet, there are difficult and perhaps even life-threatening situations that we know that we cannot or should not avoid. If my wife is in danger, and only I can rescue her, but it may cost me my life, then I surely will risk everything to save her. Or if my life is threatened by others, and the circumstances are completely out of my control, then I obviously cannot avoid what is coming. When these situations arise, we can use Jesus' example in Gethsemane to face into them and walk right into them with the same kind of faith, courage, and confidence that he had, knowing that we are fulfilling God's calling for us.

And because Jesus has been interacting with only Peter, James, and John, I think that we can assume that the other eight disciples are walking with the crowd who have come to arrest him, but probably at a safe distance—if there actually is such a thing in a crisis like this. And they are also probably just as confused and alarmed as the other three. What in the world is happening? They are about to find out as Jesus repeats to the group of three, "Behold the one who is betraying me is near." So not only does Jesus exclaim, "Behold, the hour is near (ἤγγικεν)," but then he speaks with the same emphasis, "Behold, the one who is betraying me is near (ἤγγικεν)." The time has come for him to fulfill his mission by dying on the cross, and Judas Iscariot, who starts this process in earnest by betraying him, has arrived. The nearness of time and the nearness of a specific person both are what God is sovereignly creating to accomplish His eternal plans and purposes. This is to say that God brings everything into existence, which includes the movement of time and the choices that human beings make that fill time. Jesus is acknowledging this theological reality and surrendering to it with authentic belief and the courage of someone who grasps this important characteristic of the reality in which he is living. And so should we.

The Angel From Heaven

Let us now go back and pick up the two details which only Luke provides—the angel and Jesus' sweat. Luke says, "Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, and he was strengthening him" (Luke 22:43). The first question we can ask is, did this angel appear only once or twice or three times? We remember that Luke speaks of Jesus' praying only once. But, taking into account his mentioning these other two details that Matthew and Mark omit and the brevity of his description of this whole event, it seems clear that Luke's intent is not to provide an accurate chronological account but to provide a few salient points—1) that Jesus and his disciples went to the Mt. of Olives, 2) that he urged them to pray that they might persevere in their faith, 3) that he prayed that he desired to avoid the awful circumstances of the next eighteen hours, but he was willing to submit to God's plan for him, 4) that an angel appeared to encourage Jesus, 5) that his sweat was unusual, and 6) that he rebuked his disciples for sleeping while they should be praying.

Therefore, we really do not know if the angel appears each of the three times that Jesus is praying. But we do know that he appears at least once and that his purpose is to encourage Jesus in his faith and willingness to obey God—even though he himself is God incarnate, is morally perfect, and has a heart that is fully committed to following God. If Jesus needs this encouragement in the face of danger, hardship, and death, how much more do we! And while God may not send an angel to urge us to remain faithful to Him, we do have the Bible and the truth it contains to remind us of His overall plans and purposes as well as His faithfulness to ensure that our faith perseveres. Thus, we lean on our knowledge and understanding of the inerrant and authoritative Bible just as Jesus is leaning on the same and this supernatural being for assistance as he begins his darkest hour.

And who or what is this angel in Gethsemane with Jesus? There are two options. It could a conventional angel such as Gabriel or Michael whom the Bible mentions in Luke 1:19,26 and Jude 9 respectively. Or it could be a manifestation of Yahweh Himself like the burning bush in Exodus 3. This is such a poignant and difficult moment for Jesus, the very icon of God within the creation, that I think that the second option makes more sense—that God the Father Himself appears to Jesus, His Son, who is about to be executed on a Roman cross, and encourages him to stay the course in order that His ultimate purpose of rescuing sinners through his intercession will succeed. I think that just as Jesus prays, "Abba, Father," his Abba reveals Himself to him in a bona fide theophany to assure him that he is doing exactly what He requires and that He will be with him every step of the way to the bitter end of his death. And then Jesus will rise from the dead and eventually usher in the eternal Kingdom of God when he returns. It is as the apostle Paul says of Jesus in Hebrews 12:2, "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, while thinking nothing of the humiliation, and he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." We too, for the joy of our salvation that is set before us, can endure whatever life throws at us, while we think nothing of the humiliation or pain, and then at our resurrection or rapture form the earth when Jesus returns, enter into the Kingdom of God to be with him forever.

Jesus' Sweating

Next Luke comments, "And being in agony, he was praying fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down on the ground" (Luke 22:44). I have heard people interpret this statement as referring to Jesus' sweating literal blood. But this does not make sense in the light of what Luke actually states. He uses the Greek word *hosei* (ὡσεὶ), which can mean either "like" or "about." In other contexts, it means "about" when a New Testament author is referencing time, such as "When he began his ministry, Jesus himself was about (*hosei* (ὡσεὶ)) thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). In this verse, Luke is saying that Jesus was in the range of probably 29 to 31 years old when he started publicly announcing that he is the Messiah. Differently, the word *hosei* (ὡσεὶ) means "like" when an author is making a comparison, such as "And fixing their gaze on [Stephen], all who were sitting in the Sanhedrin saw his face like (*hosei* (ὡσεὶ)) the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). In this case, Luke in the book of Acts is not saying that Stephen was an angel or that his face all of a sudden became an angel's face instead of a human being's face. He is saying that there was something about Stephen's appearance that, if you did not know any better, you might think that he was a supernatural being. Luke probably means that Stephen was exuding such a strong sense of genuine faith and confidence in God before these men, who clearly were hostile towards him, that one might think that he really was supernatural and bulletproof. Yet, he was only human, so that, after Stephen presented to these men such wonderful Old Testament evidence to substantiate that Jesus is the Messiah and because they were hardhearted in their rejection of him, they literally stoned him. And he died. But he truly died in faith and therefore not in vain—eternally speaking.

Therefore, by describing Jesus' sweat the way he does, Luke means that Jesus is sweating so profusely that it is flowing out of his pores as if someone took a knife, cut him open, and blood flowed out at the volume that it naturally would. And this correlates with Luke's saying that Jesus is "in agony." I have not personally experienced this level of agony and sweat, and I would like to avoid it as much as possible. But we can be grateful that not only did Jesus feel such inner turmoil and the physical symptom of such copious sweating, but also he did so for our sakes—that he might become our High Priest and intercede on our behalf for God's mercy. Notice also that Jesus is expressing complete and perfect faith in God the Father while also experiencing such inner turmoil and trauma that his body is reacting by sweating at a volume that it is similar to bleeding from a major knife wound. Again, if this is the case for the man who is God incarnate, then certainly it is permissible for us sinners to agonize over the tough things of life and find ourselves responding physically with such extremes as sweating, hyperventilating, shaking, weeping, or with whatever our bodies find themselves doing involuntarily as a result of our parasympathetic nervous system.

Because Jesus and we are fully human, God has designed us to react to various situations in certain ways. If there is danger, we feel fear and think seriously about fleeing the danger. We may even flee before we start consciously thinking. If there is present safety, we feel comfort and think seriously about relaxing and may even do so without even thinking. If there is guaranteed future safety (such as eternal life with Jesus!), we feel hope and think seriously about looking forward to better times, with the result that we may even find enjoyment in the midst of our current difficult circumstances when otherwise we would not. This is all to say that Jesus and we are called to believe God the Father regardless of whatever circumstances *and feelings* in which we find ourselves.

It is not unusual for Christians to understand the apostle Paul to be claiming that we can always feel boundless peace and calm in each and every difficult situation because of how our English Bibles translate Philippians 4:6-7. For example, these verses in the NAS95 read—

> Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
> let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all
> comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

However, I suggest that Paul is encouraging Christians to pray for things that they think they need in this life, thanking God for whatever He provides, while also and very, very importantly believing that the *eternal shalom* ("peace" in our Bibles) of life, forgiveness, and moral perfection that God has promised through Jesus is what we want more than anything on this earth. In this way, the future Kingdom of God, which is something that we have great difficulty imagining how magnificent it will be and thus "surpasses all comprehension," guards (or rather captures and holds) our hearts and minds so that we never take our eyes off this goal. We Christians are people of the present, like Jesus in Gethsemane, who may "grieve to the point of death" and be "in agony" to the extent that the sweat flows like blood out of us. But we are also people of the future, like Jesus in Gethsemane, who eventually come to grips mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually with the circumstances of our lives, and say to ourselves, "Behold! Get up! And let us walk into whatever God has in store for us now as we fix our hope on the goal He has promised us—life in the eternal Kingdom of God." So we remind ourselves that we are free to feel whatever God has designed us as human beings of genuine faith to feel—fear, agony, joy, and hope on the road even in this life to a more settled belief in God and a firmer hope in His future blessing of eternal mercy and life. This is also why it is so important for us to continue learning the message of the entire Bible so that we have access to these truths *in our minds* on a moment-by-moment basis.

Praying Three Times

We can also include in this discussion the fact that Jesus saw fit to pray three times for exactly the same thing. Did God not hear him the first time—or the second time—but only the third time? In other words, did Jesus think that praying multiple times increased his chances of being heard by God? Or was he weak in his faith by praying three times instead of acknowledging that of course the sovereign and transcendent Creator of all reality heard him the first time? Instead, I think that Jesus is demonstrating his genuine humanity in both the depth of his inner turmoil and the number of his prayers. There is nothing magic about praying three times (or a million times), and there is nothing wrong with praying as often as we want for whatever we want—especially, like Jesus, to express what we desire while also acknowledging that God's sovereign will is ultimately what we want and what will occur.

Also, because God is the sovereign ruler over this story that He is telling, we can recognize that prayer is not ultimately for Him. It is for us. As Soren Kierkegaard, the 19th century Danish theologian said, "Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays." The inference we draw from the Bible and Kierkegaard's insight is that the best thing that God can do for us now is to encourage us and strengthen us in the perseverance of our faith. Is not this what happened to Jesus as a result of his prayers? In this sense Jesus "changed" by God's bringing him through his inner turmoil and giving him the resolve to finish his messianic task of dying on the cross. We can say, too, that Jesus employed the same method of which the apostle Paul writes in Philippians as I quoted above. He had acquired the truth of the Bible during his childhood and earlier years through diligent and consistent study of the Bible. This is why he could confidently say to God the Father, "All things are possible for You." And this is why he could also say to Him, "Let not what I desire be done, but what You desire." And with these truths as Jesus speaks them, he makes it clear to himself what is actually taking place in his life. God the Father is working out His eternal plans and purposes, and Jesus is a part of them. Indeed, he is the most important part of them. Jesus is the very center of human history, and, knowing this, he existentially chooses to subordinate himself to God's plans and sovereign rule over the creation—even while grieving and anticipating the agony of the upcoming hours.

We are to do exactly the same as Jesus and always pray with the truth of the Bible in mind. Through our prayers we remind ourselves of all the biblical truth that we have learned in order that we persevere and place our hope in God and His ultimate gift of eternal life. Jesus' example and our awareness of our own prayers indicate to us how important is our careful and steady investigation of the Bible. As we fill our heads with as many ideas of the Bible as we can stuff into them, we arm ourselves to be able to pray in line with truth and not error, in line with God's desires and not our own, and to fend off the lies of Satan in our culture that would lead us away from God's goal of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God instead of towards it. And by expressing God's revealed truth to Him in our prayers, we are changing and strengthening ourselves (as Jesus changed and strengthened himself) in the midst of our struggling and working hard to obey God and fulfill our responsibility to be His people and glorify and honor Him right up to the last breath that we draw—if Jesus does not return within our lifetimes and we are lifted alive from this earth.

h. Judas Betrays Jesus and the Temple Guards Arrest Him

Tuesday about 11:30 p.m.

Matthew 26:47-56	Mark 14:43-52	Luke 22:47-53	John 18:2-11
26:47 And while he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and a large crowd from the chief priests and elders of the people with him with swords and clubs. 26:48 And he who was handing him over had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him." 26:49 Forthwith he approached Jesus and said, "Shalom, Rabbi." And he kissed him. 26:50 And Jesus said to him, "Friend, why!?"	14:43 And immediately while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, and a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests, scribes, and elders were with him. 14:44 And he who was betraying him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him, and lead him away under guard." 14:45 And after coming, forthwith Judas came to him and	22:47 And while he was still speaking, behold, a crowd approached. And the one from the twelve called Judas was going before them. And he came near Jesus to kiss him. 22:48 And Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you handing over the Son of Man with a kiss!?" 22:49 When those who were around saw what was about to happen, they said, "Lord, if we strike with the sword, is this ok?"	18:2 Now, Judas, who was betraying him, also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 18:3 As a result, Judas, after receiving the military unit and the assistants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lamps, torches, and weapons. 18:4 Consequently, Jesus, knowing everything that was coming upon him, went forth and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" 18:5 They

Then they approached and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. 26:51 But behold, one of those who was with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword, and he struck the high priest's slave and cut off his ear. 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its place, for all those who take up the sword will die by the sword. 26:53 Or do you think that I am not able to call to my Father, and He will immediately put at my disposal twelve legions of angels? 26:54 Then how will the scriptures be fulfilled, because it must happen this way <cf. Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 22:15-18>?" 26:55 In that hour, Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against an insurrectionist? Every day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. 26:56 But all this has happened in order that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled <cf. Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13:7>." Then all the disciples left him and fled.	said, "Rabbi," and kissed him. 14:46 And they laid hands on him and seized him. 14:47 But one of those who was standing there drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his ear. 14:48 And Jesus responded and said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me, as you would for an insurrectionist? 14:49 Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But this has happened so that the scriptures will be fulfilled <cf. Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 22:15-18>." 14:50 And they all left him and fled. 14:51 And a certain young man was following him, wearing only a linen sheet over his naked body, and they seized him. 14:52 But he pulled free from the linen sheet and fled naked.	22:50 And one of them struck the high priest's slave, and he cut off his right ear. 22:51 But Jesus responded and said, "Stop this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. 22:52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, officers of the temple, and elders who had come against him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against an insurrectionist? 22:53 While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this hour and the power of darkness belong to you."	answered him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am he." And Judas, who was betraying him, was also standing with them. 18:6 Therefore, when he said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. 18:7 So he asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." 18:8 Jesus responded, "I told you that I am he. Therefore, if you are seeking me, let these others go," 18:9 so that the statement that he made would be fulfilled, "I did not lose anyone of those whom You have given to me." 18:10 Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his right ear, and the slave's name was Malchus. 18:11 Then, Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword back into the sheath. Should I not drink the cup which the Father has given to me?" 18:12 Therefore, the military unit, the commander, and the assistants of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

Explanation of the Above Passages

If there are any parallel passages in this Passion Narrative where critics of the Bible could possibly claim that contradictions exist, these are strong candidates. For one thing, Matthew and Mark make it sound as though Jesus is arrested before Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave, while John

seems to indicate that the arrest takes place after the ear incident. In addition, Matthew and Mark intimate that the crowd with Judas is *from* the Jewish leaders and therefore does not include any of them, while Luke states that Jesus addresses the chief priests as part of the crowd. And if we were to read any one of the four accounts, it is very easy to get the impression that the events within this episode occurred in an orderly manner. However, lay all four accounts side by side, and it looks as though there are contradictions in their order of events as well as in other details that the authors provide. Nevertheless, I think that it is possible to explain these parallel passages in a reasonable manner without having to conclude that there are any errors or contradictions in them.

But we can imagine what this whole scene was like. It is late at night, when most people are asleep, and Jesus and his disciples are in a quiet garden outside the walls of Jerusalem at the foot of the Mt. of Olives. For three years he has been traveling mainly around the north of Israel near the Sea of Galilee and has visited Jerusalem twice during major Jewish festivals as required by God through the Mosaic Covenant. And all the time he has been claiming to be the people's Messiah who will free them from all their enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel with authority over the entire earth as predicted by the Old Testament. Not only has he taught about the kingdom and his role from the Old Testament as any good rabbi and teacher would do, but he has also proven that his claims are legitimate by performing at least hundreds of miracles of healing sicknesses and infirmities such as blindness and deafness, of casting out demonic presences from even children, of raising the dead, and of feeding thousands of people with very little food, e.g., with just five loaves of bread and two fish in one instance. After Jesus has for so long been creating such a high level of excitement and anticipation in Israel, the leading Jewish officials have categorically deemed him a fake and a charlatan and have eagerly been seeking a way to get rid of him so as to return the Jewish society to normal—as defined by following them exclusively and remaining focused on performing the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant at the center of Judaism, the temple in Jerusalem. And now, finally they have their chance to accomplish this goal.

Judas Iscariot, one of this supposed Messiah's closest disciples, has promised to help he Jewish leaders arrest him so that they may take him through the process necessary to get the Romans to crucify him as the blasphemous criminal whom they firmly believe him to be. As a result, this very night they have gathered a formidable group of men made up of a few of them, a Jewish military unit whose responsibility is to protect the temple and its leaders, and probably others who are good friends of theirs and who likewise have concluded that Jesus simply needs to disappear, and they have armed themselves with swords and clubs, grabbed as many torches and lamps as they can to light their way through the darkness outside the city and in the garden, and, with adrenalin flowing, marched from the house of the high priest with Judas as their guide and entered the Garden of Gethsemane where they have been told Jesus will be with his other eleven disciples. But they are not sure how Jesus and these men will react when they see this large group with weapons exposed come upon them suddenly in the quiet of the night. Will they do nothing? Or will they flee and try to escape? Or will they stand their ground and fight to the death in order to protect their beloved "Messiah"? It is very possible that the scene will turn into a battlefield, and chaos will ensue.

I suggest that the (apparent) disparities in the accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are because the scene does become rather chaotic. Even though Jesus and the disciples do not put up any more resistance than Peter's impetuous act of injuring one man in the crowd, there are enough men who will all be on edge (except for Jesus) that it will become impossible for any biographer to describe the events of this scene in perfect, chronological order. There is too much going on, and many things are happening all at once. How could this not be the case? Emotions are going to be running high on both sides. The men from the Sanhedrin have finally cornered their prey away from the adoring crowds of this "false" messiah, and Jesus' own disciples, still being rather clueless about his divine destiny of dying for the people, are going to be startled and probably frightened out of their minds by what is going to look like to them as a large armed mob who are bound and determined to kill them all. Therefore, to read any one gospel account and conclude that the details mentioned occur in a nice, orderly fashion would be to misunderstand all that is happening here. Therefore, I think that it is best to conclude that many of the events, e.g., Jesus' being seized and bound, Peter's cutting off the ear of the slave, and Jesus' responding to him and also addressing the mob, are actually happening simultaneously and not sequentially. And it is not until Jesus' disciples flee at the end of Matthew's and Mark's descriptions that the chaos subsides and the armed mob is left to lead Jesus away alone, which will be the beginning of the next subsection.

Before we look at the four authors' accounts of this episode, I want to outline each one as an aid to analyzing them, harmonizing them, and explaining them in detail. Using Roman numerals, I will list the parts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke so as to show their similarities in proper order as well as the gaps in their accounts. Plus, I will also mention the differences in the similar parts of their accounts. I will use Matthew as the basis and put in bold letters any differences within the individual parts of Mark and Luke. Then, I will list the parts of John's account with capital letters instead of Roman numerals. And I will list them as they occur with no gaps, because his account includes rather different details. The upshot of going through the exercise of creating these outlines is that I believe that the key to analyzing, harmonizing, and explaining these accounts correctly will be to understand the slight differences between the parts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and to determine what is the most reasonable way to harmonize John's story with the other three authors. In addition, when we get there, there will be one prepositional phrase in Matthew and one word in John that will both prove very useful in understanding how all four accounts can be put together into a coherent whole.

Here are the outlines of this subsection—

Matthew's Account

I. Judas and the crowd approach with clubs and swords
II. The signal from Judas to identify and arrest Jesus is a kiss
III. Judas addresses Jesus and kisses him
IV. Jesus responds to Judas and asks him, "Why?"
V. The crowd arrest Jesus
VI.
VII. One of Jesus' disciples cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave
VIII. Jesus tells him to put away his sword and that the Father can send twelve legions of angels to defend him. And he declares that what is happening is to fulfill the scriptures.
IX. Jesus asks the crowd why they are treating him like an insurrectionist and did not arrest him when he was teaching in the temple, but this is to fulfill the scriptures
X. All the disciples flee the scene
XI.

Mark's Account

I. Judas and the crowd approach with clubs and swords
II. The signal from Judas to identify and arrest Jesus is a kiss
III. Judas addresses Jesus and kisses him
IV.
V. The crowd arrest Jesus
VI.
VII. One of Jesus' disciples cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave
VIII.
IX. Jesus asks the crowd why they are treating him like an insurrectionist and did not arrest him when he was teaching in the temple, but this is to fulfill the scriptures
X. All the disciples flee the scene
XI. **The crowd seize an unknown young man, but he flees naked and without his clothing**

Luke's Account

I. Judas and the crowd approach _____ **(Luke leaves out the clubs and swords)**
II.
III. Judas **approaches Jesus to kiss him**
IV. Jesus responds to Judas and asks him, "Why?"
V.
VI. Jesus' disciples ask him if they have his permission to fight back with their swords

VII. One of Jesus' disciples cuts off the ear of the high priests' slave
VIII. Jesus tells **them to stop and heals the slaves' ear**
IX. Jesus asks the crowd why they are treating him like an insurrectionist and did not arrest him when he was teaching in the temple. **He tells them that they own this evil time**.
X.
XI.

John's Account

A. Judas, knowing Gethsemane, approaches with a crowd with torches and weapons
B. Jesus asks them whom they are seeking
C. They say, "Jesus the Nazarene"
D. Jesus tells them, Judas included, that he is the one whom they are seeking
E. The whole crowd fall to the ground
F. Jesus asks them again whom they are seeking and they respond as they had already
G. Jesus tells them again that he is the one whom they are seeking
H. Jesus urges the armed crowd to let his disciples go in order to fulfill the scriptures
I. Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave, Malchus
J. Jesus tells him to put away the sword and asks if he should not go through with what God the Father has required of him
K. The military unit arrest and bind Jesus

Matthew, Mark, and Luke I. and John A.

Assuming that, in the previous subsection, Jesus prays and intermittently interacts with his disciples for over an hour, the time now is around 11:30 p.m. We begin with the first verse in John's account of this episode. He writes, "2 Now, Judas, who was betraying him, also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples" (John 18:2). This is not the first time Jesus and his close disciples have gone to the Garden of Gethsemane. In fact, John tells us that they had "often met there." He probably means that during the three times that Jesus and his disciples have visited Jerusalem and stayed with their friends in Bethany east of the city (cf. John 2:13ff.; 5:1ff.; 7:1-10:21), they found this secluded garden to be an enjoyable place to sit and talk. This also means that Judas Iscariot not only is very familiar with Gethsemane, but also he correctly assumes that Jesus and the other eleven will go there after they have finished eating the Passover. Perhaps before Judas had left the Passover and proceeded to the Sanhedrin, Jesus had mentioned that they would.

John continues, "3 As a result, Judas, after receiving the military unit and the assistants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lamps, torches, and weapons" (John 18:3). In line with John, Matthew writes, "47 And while he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and a large crowd from the chief priests and elders of the people with him with swords and clubs" (Matthew 26:47). Mark's words are similar, "43 And immediately while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, and a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests, scribes, and elders were with him" (Mark 14:43). And Luke's account likewise reads, "47 While he was still speaking, behold, a crowd approached. And the one from the twelve called Judas was going before them" (Luke 22:47a). Here, Luke provides the fewest details, saying only that a "crowd" is accompanying Judas Iscariot, whom he names simply as Judas, but whom Matthew, Mark, and he make sure the reader knows is the Judas who left the Passover meal by identifying him as "one of the twelve." If we read only these three synoptic gospels, we get the impression that Judas is leading a group of Jewish citizens who have gathered at the request of their leaders, the Sanhedrin, who are "chief priests, scribes, and elders." But we also know that they have armed themselves with "swords and clubs," presumedly in case Jesus and his disciples put up a fight as they attempt to arrest him.

In contrast, John says that this "crowd" is comprised of a "military unit" and "assistants" to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes. The Greek word for military unit is *speira* (σπεῖρα), and Matthew and Mark will use it later to refer to Pontius Pilate's Roman soldiers who mock and whip Jesus and put a crown of thorns on his head. For some reason the NAS95 adds the word "Roman" to its translation. But it seems clear that this is a "detachment of [Jewish] soldiers" (cf. NIV, WEB), whom Judas has previously arranged to lead to Jesus' location (cf. Matthew 26:14-16) and who are subservient to the Jewish and not

the Roman leadership. In Acts 4:1 and 5:24, Luke refers literally to "the captain of the temple." (We get our word "strategy" from the word for "captain" (στρατηγός, *strataygos*), which is derived from the same Greek word for "army" and "soldier.") Therefore, I think that the "military unit" is Jewish and not Roman, and I belabor the point to make it clear that initially the Romans are not involved in Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and trial by the Jewish leadership. Eventually, the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, who is obviously a Gentile, along with the "king" of the northern region of Israel, Herod, a Gentile himself, will be drawn into the plot to condemn and execute Jesus. Therefore, they will be just as guilty of murdering God's Messiah. But the process begins with Jesus' own people, the Jews, for whom he must die in order for God to complete His plans to make of them the greatest nation in history and to rescue both Jews and Gentiles from His eternal condemnation as promised in Genesis 12:1-3 and clarified by the rest of the Bible.

The other word that John uses and that I translate "assistants" is *hupayretai* (ὑπηρέται), which refers to "officers" in John 7:32 whom the Pharisees and chief priests unsuccessfully send to seize and arrest Jesus during a previous event. These may be bodyguards for the Jewish leaders, or the word is another way to describe the military unit of temple guards. The result is that both *speira* (σπεῖρα = military unit) and *hupayretai* (ὑπηρέται = assistants) provide a picture of muscle, strength, and determination invading the garden in the middle of the night to take Jesus by force—come hell or high water so to speak. In other words, the Sanhedrin are not leaving anything to chance this time in their attempt to apprehend and get rid of Jesus once and for all. These men, whom Judas Iscariot is leading, are armed to the teeth and bringing their own sources of illumination, "lamps and torches," so that they can fully observe all that is going on and control the situation with the greatest of ease.

John B., C., D., E.

At this point in the narrative, there is the question of what happens next—Judas' kiss of Jesus with the subsequent arrest according to the synoptic gospels or Jesus' question to the crowd with their falling to the ground according to John? Interestingly enough, John says nothing of Judas' kiss and only adds at the end of this whole event that the temple guards arrest Jesus and bind him. Therefore, I think it makes more sense that, according to John's account, Jesus first speaks with his question to the whole crowd and then Judas provides them with the prearranged signal of the kiss to identify exactly which one of the twelve men the crowd should arrest. Consequently, we continue with John's account and will come back to Matthew, Mark, and Luke afterwards.

John writes in 18:4-6—

> "4 Consequently, Jesus, knowing everything that was coming upon him, went forth and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?' 5 They answered him, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I am he.' And Judas, who was betraying him, was also standing with them. 6 Therefore, when he said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground."

This is such an unusual scene. We can imagine the military unit of the temple guards, armed with clubs and swords and holding lamps and torches, entering into the garden and encountering twelve men, whom they are not sure exactly how they will react. They probably see first the eight disciples who are separated from Jesus, Peter, James, and John, and these eight draw back in the direction of Jesus while the armed mob follow them. And then they see Jesus and the other three, but, except for Judas Iscariot, they are not sure which one is Jesus, whom they have orders to arrest and escort to the Sanhedrin. And, according to John, Jesus himself is fully aware of what is transpiring, while his eleven disciples most likely are feeling not only fear because of this armed crowd, but also confusion as to what is the meaning of this step in God's role for their Messiah and how they should respond.

Then Jesus does the unexpected. Rather than gather together his disciples and quickly flee this crowd who clearly are prepared to do something violent and harmful, he moves toward the temple soldiers and boldly asks, "Whom are you seeking?" We notice that they do not answer, "You." Instead, they say, "Jesus the Nazarene," indicating that they do not recognize him as the man whom they have come to arrest. So Jesus, again surprisingly, helps them and says, "I am he." We can imagine what the disciples are thinking, "Are you kidding? Why are you exposing yourself so openly to them instead of ordering us either to run for our lives or to defend ourselves?" But Jesus knows what the Father has planned and required of him, and he literally walks right towards the danger instead of seeking some means of escape.

The next thing that happens is also bizarre, if we were not talking about God's Messiah and the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God. The entire crowd of soldiers take a step or two back from Jesus and fall to the ground. Because John, before Jesus identifies himself, states that Judas is with the soldiers, he, too, probably joins the temple guards on the ground. But why does this happen? What is it about this situation that causes a large group of trained, armed men, who are encountering a smaller group of untrained and (mostly) unarmed men and who have just heard from a man that he is the one whom they have come to arrest, to lose their ability to stand and suddenly fall to the ground? I think that the most reasonable answer simply is, "God." In other words, we are witnessing a signal from God the Father that, even though these soldiers neither understand nor appreciate the man whom they will bind and lead to their bosses, the Jewish leaders, they will definitely have something especially unusual about this experience to ponder in the future and possibly use to save themselves from God's eternal condemnation. Thus, I think that their falling to the ground was involuntary, while at the same time it was determined by God—to make a very important point. And the point is that this is the man before whom they *should* prostrate themselves and worship, and yet they have set their minds and hearts on participating in his execution. We can hear them later discussing among themselves how it was that they found themselves unable to stand so that they fell to the ground when they heard Jesus' words, "I am he." And, hopefully, if they think long and hard about the situation, especially once they hear that this man has risen from the dead three days after dying on the cross, they just might genuinely repent of their sin and find God's mercy through him. Only eternity will tell.

John F., G., H.

John goes on in 18:7-9,

> John 18:7-9 So he asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking?' And they said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.'
> 8 Jesus responded, 'I told you that I am he. Therefore, if you are seeking me, let these others go,'
> 9 so that the statement that he made would be fulfilled, 'I did not lose anyone of those whom You have given to me.'"

We can assume that, after Jesus' first question and they fall to the ground, the soldiers quickly stand up with swords, clubs, and torches in hand. They are also probably a little embarrassed by their unavoidable response, and then Jesus asks them again about their mission. They repeat that they are looking for "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus reminds them that he has already told them he is the one whom they intend to arrest. But then he requests that they let his disciples go. He is the only one they really want and who is worth taking to the Sanhedrin. In the end, the soldiers will comply with his request. And John states that this is in order for Jesus to be able to continue what he said in his prayer to the Father in John 17:12,

> John 17:12 "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished [was lost] but the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

Part of Jesus' responsibility during the three years of his publicly revealing himself as the Messiah through his teaching and miracles has been to keep his close disciples from harm. This must be why he avoided Jerusalem for the most part and stayed in the outlying regions of Galilee, Tyre, Sidon, and Caesarea Philippi. The Jewish leaders have been planning during the entire time to get rid of Jesus, but he has strategically kept a safe distance from the more radical ones in Jerusalem, which has also protected his disciples from harm. Obviously, Judas Iscariot's role in God's story has always been for Jesus to lose him as a loyal disciple and student. But this probably also means that he never was a genuine believer in Jesus as the Messiah—in spite of watching him perform all the various miracles. In addition, Judas had left the Upper Room where they ate the Passover by the time Jesus prays about him in John 17:12 and calls him "the son of destruction." Jesus goes on at the end of John 17:12 to refer most likely to Psalm 41, that the loss of Judas fills out v. 9 when David, the first Son of God according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, prays that his "close friend," who has "eaten my bread," has turned against him and is hoping for his death as he lies sick in bed. Consequently, David's words are not a direct prediction of Judas Iscariot, but Jesus can refer to them in his prayer in John 17:12 as he describes

a similar situation that he is experiencing. In this sense, Jesus and Judas are "fulfilling" what David wrote about himself.

Matthew and Mark II. & III. and Luke III.

Next there is the fatal kiss. As Matthew says,

Matthew 26:48 And he who was handing him over had given them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him.' 49 Forthwith, he approached Jesus and said, 'Shalom, Rabbi.' And he kissed him."

Mark's account is very similar,

Mark 14:44 And he who was betraying him had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him, and lead him away under guard.' 45 After coming, forthwith Judas came to him and said, 'Rabbi,' and kissed him."

And Luke writes,

Luke 22:47b And he came near Jesus to kiss him" (Luke 22:47b).

Usually, our English Bibles translate the Greek word in Matthew 26:49 and Mark 14:45, *eutheos* (εὐθέως), with "immediately," as though Judas wastes no time after the soldiers and he arrive in the garden in walking up to Jesus and kissing him. However, because I have suggested that the interaction between Jesus and the crowd, which includes Judas, along with their falling to the ground takes place before the kiss, I have translated it "forthwith." This is to say that Matthew and Mark mean that it takes a while, but as soon as Judas finds the right opportunity, he provides the soldiers with the prearranged signal. Therefore, Judas watches Jesus approach the soldiers and the crowd, hears him ask them whom they are seeking and respond that it is he, falls to the ground with the crowd, stands up, hears Jesus ask them again and respond again with his request to let his disciples go, and then he approaches close enough to Jesus to kiss him. So Judas does not give the soldiers this signal immediately when he sees him. But he still does so forthwith, i.e., as soon as he can, which is after Jesus questions the crowd twice as to whom they are seeking and they fall to the ground each time.

Matthew and Luke IV.

The obvious question now is what motivated Judas to use a kiss on Jesus' cheek as the signal for the military unit as to whom they should arrest. Why something so intimate that requires physical contact? Why not stand a few, if not more, feet away and just point to Jesus with his finger and say, "There is your man"? Perhaps rabbis and Jewish teachers were greeted by their disciples with a kiss, and Judas wants to make it absolutely clear which one of these twelve men is the guilty rabbi, Jesus. Even so, to our 21st century ears this sounds not only hypocritical but also cruel, especially when we add Judas' greeting to Jesus before he kisses him, "Shalom, Rabbi," which translated means "May God grant you His eternal blessing, Teacher." Nevertheless, by prior arrangement, Judas and the Jewish leaders have worked out a way to ensure that their guards arrest the correct man in the midst of the confusion that could arise from showing up in the middle of the night in a garden outside the walls of Jerusalem and confronting twelve men, one of whom is considered the archenemy of Israel. In addition, Judas' actions may not seem so strange when we take into account his desire for financial gain from this event—thirty pieces of silver! People will do the strangest and most immoral things for money, and Judas is demonstrating this fact during the darkest moment in human history.

Matthew and Luke then provide Jesus' response to Judas. Matthew states,

Matthew 26:50 Jesus said to him, 'Friend, why!?'"

Luke writes,

Luke 22:48 And Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you handing over the Son of Man [Messiah] with a kiss!?'"

In line with the KJV of the 17th century, the newer English Bibles translate Jesus' words at the end of Matthew 26:50 with more than just my one word "Why!?" The KJV reads, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And the NAS95 says, "Friend, do what you have come for." Certainly, part of what Jesus means is that he is not going to stop Judas from completing his mission of betraying him into the hands of his enemies. But the Greek phrase, *eph ho paray* (ἐφ' ὃ πάρει), is strange. It literally means "on the basis of which it is present." Is Jesus giving a command as the newer Bibles indicate, "Judas, do what you have to do to fulfill your own desires!"? Or is he asking a question in line with the KJV, "Why are you doing what you are doing?" We know from Jesus' prayers preceding the arrival of the soldiers that he is resolved to "drink the cup" which the Father has given him—to love sinners by dying on the cross. And we know that Judas is resolved to commit the greatest evil in human history by conspiring with the Jewish leadership to get rid of this annoying man who claims to be their Messiah, thus making it clear to any observer who understands the Bible that Judas himself desperately needs God's love to forgive him. In the light of both Jesus' resolve and his love for sinners, I think that Jesus is asking him a question. He knows that Judas is going to carry out his plan to betray him. So he could be telling him to finish what he has started in order to get it over with. But Jesus is the always loving Son of God, and I think instead he is encouraging Judas to face squarely into the seriousness of what he is doing. He is asking him to realize that he, of all people in human history, is going to need God's mercy to escape the final and eternal (!) consequences of his actions.

Even when Jesus was pronouncing condemnation on the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 with such statements as, "Woe to [Damn] you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all filthiness; for you, too, appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:27-28), he was encouraging them to repent and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. I think it is the same here with Judas. Jesus confronts him about his sin so that with the one word "Why?" he means, "Why do this, Judas, when it appears so good (to greet your rabbi with the characteristic kiss of respect and devotion) and yet is so evil and will result in only God's wrath and eternal condemnation if you do not repent?" Thus, Luke provides us not with the actual words of Jesus but with an interpretation and meaning of Jesus' brief statement, "Judas, are you handing over the Son of Man with a kiss!?" Jesus is asking him, "In the light of all that I have taught you about the gospel of the Kingdom of God, that I am the Messiah, and even proven it through all the miracles which I have performed and you have seen with your own eyes, does it really make sense to you that your betraying me is the right thing to do?"

As we understand more and more of the Bible, this is the question God is always asking us when we are in the midst of choosing to sin. And even if we sin, if we also move on to confess our sin and repent, seeking not only God's forgiveness but also the strength to resist it the next time it entices us, then we are demonstrating the change of heart that the Bible requires for those who do eventually obtain eternal life and mercy. This is what Jesus is urging Judas Iscariot to consider simply by asking him, "Why!?"

Matthew and Mark V. and John K.

Matthew continues his story of this scene,

Matthew 26:50b Then they approached and laid hands on Jesus and seized him."

Mark writes,

Mark 14:46 And they laid hands on him and seized him."

The potentially confusing element of this part of the scene is that John does not mention that Jesus is arrested until the end of his account. After he describes that Jesus speaks with the crowd and Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave and responds to him, which will come very soon in our explanation, he finishes his account with the statement,

John 18:12 Therefore, the military unit, the commander, and the assistants of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him."

As a result, we have here an apparent contradiction in the texts—that Matthew and Mark state that the soldiers arrest Jesus immediately after Judas kisses him, while John indicates that the arrest takes place only after everything else in this scene occurs. But, as I mentioned above, we also have one word in John which is helpful in our concluding that there is no contradiction. It is the Greek word *oun* (οὖν) at the beginning of John 18:12 and that I translate "Therefore." By this, John is not making a strictly chronological statement. He is saying that the arrest is a consequence of all that takes place in this scene—the kiss, the various interactions with the crowd, Peter's rash action, and Jesus' response to it. In other words, the result of this whole situation is that the soldiers arrest Jesus.

Certainly, the opposite could have happened. Jesus and his disciples could have fled the scene and thereby avoided arrest, or they could have fought the armed mob and prevented Jesus from being arrested. Instead, after all the chaos and confusion, after all the words and actions, after Peter's bold move and Jesus' healing the slave's ear, the outcome is that the temple guards achieve their purpose. They arrest and bind Jesus so that he cannot get away. This is John's meaning.

In contrast, Matthew and Mark are making somewhat of a chronological statement that sounds as though the arrest precedes the remaining events in their accounts. But I suggest that, from the moment Judas kisses Jesus and he asks him "Why?," several confusing and rather chaotic actions take place simultaneously. These actions include the soldiers' approaching Jesus and grabbing him, Peter's striking the high priest's slave (who is close to Jesus) with his sword, Jesus' still having the freedom at least to reach out and touch the slave's ear and heal it, and Jesus' rebuking Peter. Then, after this initial confusion, Jesus addresses the crowd with one more question concerning why they are treating him like an armed rebel leader.

Therefore, when Matthew writes, "50 Then they approached and laid hands on Jesus and seized him" (Matthew 26:50b), and Mark does likewise, "46 And they laid hands on him and seized him" (Mark 14:46), their intention is to make it clear before they describe the other parts of this scene that the temple guard definitely arrest Jesus so that that there is no escape. He now finds himself securely in the clutches of his enemies, the Jewish leadership, who have been looking forward to this moment for at least three years. Whatever happens in conjunction with this, according to Matthew and Mark, is incidental as far as the Jews are concerned. Yet the whole scene is certainly valuable to their readers because of Jesus' comments about how everything is fulfilling the Old Testament, which is a necessary part of proving that he is the Messiah and giving readers the confidence that they, as gospel authors, are bearing witness to the truth of God and His eternal plans and purposes.

Luke VI.

Before Peter does his damage to the high priest's slave, only Luke provides another detail. The disciples ask Jesus if they have permission to defend themselves and him with their swords, which is to say their two swords, because this is all they had made known to Jesus that they had during the Passover meal (cf. Luke 22:35-38). Luke writes,

> Luke 22:49 When those who were around saw what was about to happen, they said, 'Lord, if we strike with the sword, is this ok?'"

Therefore, Luke indicates that more of the disciples than just Peter are thinking of making a stand against the temple guards. Earlier, in Luke 22:38, they had told Jesus that they had two swords available when he said that they should "sell their garment and buy one" if they lacked this military tool. And Jesus had responded, "It is enough." But I suggested that he is not telling them to bring the swords to Gethsemane, even though this is what they did. He simply meant that, for the time being, two swords for the group of eleven was plenty, because they really did not need them now. His instructions about purchasing swords are for his Jewish disciples who will be loyal to him and present in Israel at his return and who will fight with him against his enemies led by the Beast of Revelation. I think that we will find out in Jesus' response to Peter's cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave that he did not expect these men to bring the swords with them.

However, as the disciples observe the crowd of armed men moving towards them and thereby sense that they all are in grave danger, they seek permission from Jesus to initiate the battle, "49 Lord, if we strike with the sword, is this ok?" (Luke 22:49b). At least they are asking him rather than acting independently (except for Peter as we now go on to learn!).

Matthew, Mark, Luke VII. and Matthew and Luke VIII. and John I. and J.

All four gospels describe Peter's impetuous move of cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave (**Matthew, Mark, Luke VII. and John I.**), while Matthew, Luke, and John also provide Jesus' response to him (**Matthew and Luke VIII. and John J.**). Here are the relevant verses from all four gospels—

Matthew describes these two parts this way:

> Matthew 26:51 But behold, one of those who was with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword, and he struck the high priest's slave and cut off his ear.
> 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its place, for all those who take up the sword will die by the sword. 26:53 Or do you think that I am not able to call to my Father, and He will immediately put at my disposal twelve legions of angels? 26:54 Then how will the scriptures be fulfilled, because it must happen this way <cf. Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 22:15-18>?"

Mark's statement of only the first part is:

> Mark 14:47 But one of those who was standing there drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his ear.

Luke's description of both parts is:

> Luke 22:50 And one of them struck the high priest's slave, and he cut off his right ear.
> 22:51 But Jesus responded and said, "Stop this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

John's account of the two parts is:

> John 18:10 Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his right ear, and the slave's name was Malchus.
> 18:11 Then, Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword back into the sheath. Should I not drink the cup which the Father has given to me?"

So we see that one of the disciples, and we should not be surprised who it is, does not wait for Jesus' answer as to whether or not they should fight and defend themselves against the armed mob. We can tell from the rest of the story that Jesus was going to say, "No!" But "Simon Peter" (not Simon the Zealot, a former armed rebel, whom we would expect to attack their enemies) as named in only John's account, happens to be carrying one of the two swords. He draws it as the soldiers approach and seize Jesus, and he takes a swing at the closest man. Did he intend to strike a fatal blow and just either badly missed his mark or the man tried to dodge Peter's aim? None of the authors tells us, but Peter injures the man significantly enough by cutting off his ear. All four accounts say that he is "the high priest's slave," while John adds his name, "Malchus." Since this man is within easy reach of Peter and Jesus, it probably indicates that he is more than a simple slave. He may be part of the leadership of these armed men who have been sent by his master, Caiaphas, to arrest Jesus. And the fact that he is a slave may also be because he is a Gentile. His name is common among Nabataeans who lived in the mostly Gentile area east of the land of Israel and in modern day Jordan. But he probably has fully converted to Judaism and is therefore not considered "unclean" in Caiaphas' household.

While Mark moves on to Jesus' addressing the mob (as if he is ignoring the ear lying on the ground), Luke gives us the shortest description of his verbal response to Peter's impulsive action, "Stop this!" (Luke 22:51). Jesus' reaction to Peter's using the sword clearly shows that he never expected any of them to do so. And, therefore, either he did not intend them to bring the two swords which they said they had, or he knew that they were bringing them for what is turning out to be a test of their understanding what he had been trying to tell them for a long time—that he was going to be arrested and eventually crucified. Would they calmly allow this to happen, or would they either fight the mob and/or flee from it because they have not yet grasped the necessity of his suffering and death in order to qualify to be their

Messiah? It does not seem that any one of them is calm, while it is clear that Peter initially intends to fight. But then, as we will see, they all quit the scene like frightened jackrabbits.

Both Matthew and John provide a longer description of Jesus' command to Peter, "52 Put your sword back in its place" (Matthew 26:52) and "11 Put the sword back into the sheath" (John 18:11). The idea is certainly the same, "Peter, stop fighting and sheathe your sword!" Then Matthew says that Jesus speaks directly to Peter ("to him") with the other disciples and the crowd in earshot and provides him with several reasons why he does not want them to fight. And John indicates that he speaks similarly. In Matthew the reason which Jesus gives is, "for all those who take up the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). How can we make sense of this statement when previously during the Passover meal Jesus urged his disciples to sell their clothing and buy a sword if they did not already have one? There are two possibilities for what Jesus means—1) that he is referring to only Peter and these disciples with him and that they will only end up getting killed by this armed mob if they try to fight them, or 2) that he is speaking generally, that anyone who seeks to defend the Kingdom of God before his return by fighting for it with military weapons will die needlessly (if this happens to be the outcome of their efforts).

The first option is a simple warning to these disciples in this specific situation in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knows that he must die within the next eighteen hours in order to fulfill his role as the Messiah. However, he also knows that his eleven remaining disciples will fulfill their roles as his apostles by living longer and proclaiming the good news of his being the King and Savior of both Jews and Gentiles after his death, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, he could be commanding these eleven not to fight against either the Jewish or Roman leaderships so as not to get killed and in order to be able to fulfill their important roles later by being his authoritative spokesmen after he leaves the earth.

I think that the second option makes more sense in that Jesus is establishing a general principle for any Christian between his first and second appearances until that time when his *future* disciples will fight with him *at his return* and destroy Israel's enemies. We touched on this point from Zechariah 12:6 in a couple of previous subsections, but now let us do a more thorough examination of the whole passage of Zechariah 12:1-9—

Zechariah 12:1 The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Thus declares Yahweh who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,
2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.
3 It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.
4 In that day," declares Yahweh, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.
5 Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Yahweh of hosts, their God.'
6 In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.
7 Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.
8 In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them.
9 And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

Speaking around 500 B.C., two hundred years after Assyria's destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel and a hundred years after Babylon's ruin of Jerusalem and the southern Kingdom of Judah, God through Zechariah declares that at some point in the distant future He is going to gather all the nations against Jerusalem and use the people of Israel to destroy them. Putting this together with other prophetic passages, when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel on this earth and to eliminate all the Jews' enemies who have invaded their land, there will be some Jews living on the land of Israel who will assist

Jesus in fighting against and defeating their enemies. Jesus obviously cannot be referring to these events when he says to Peter in Matthew 26:52 in this subsection, “All those who take up the sword will die by the sword,” because the Jews who have obtained their weapons, even by “selling their garments” (cf. Luke 22:36), will be victorious over their enemies and will live. Therefore, I am inclined to think that these words pertain to those who would try to defend or establish the **Kingdom of God** *specifically* before the appointed time of Jesus’ return. In other words, he is not prohibiting Christians from joining their country’s military and fighting to defend their nation from external and internal enemies. He is prohibiting Christians from thinking and acting in such a way that they believe that they can or should use military means to bring about the **Kingdom of God**, which is something only God will do when Jesus returns.

Therefore, if Jesus’ followers, first during these immediate events of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, and then by extrapolation, during the long period of history between his first and second appearances (as mentioned, for example, in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24), choose to *defend* or *establish* the Kingdom of God by taking up arms, they may find themselves losing their lives, and this will be for nothing, because they have misunderstood God’s purpose for Christians on this earth. It is God alone who brings about His kingdom when He chooses, which is at Jesus’ return. In the meantime, God wants Christians simply to wait for the kingdom as the apostle Paul indicated that the Thessalonian Christians were doing in the first century—

> 1 Thessalonians 1:6 You also became imitators of us [Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy] and of the Lord [Jesus], having received the message [of the gospel] in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 1:7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 1:8 For the message of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 1:9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 1:10 **and to wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, **who rescues us from the wrath to come** [emphasis mine].

And we can combine this with one verse from Paul’s important description to the Thessalonians of the appearance in the last days of the Man of Lawlessness and Jesus’ re-appearance and victorious battle against him—

> 2 Thessalonians 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His [1]coming.

God through Paul called the Thessalonian Christians, and now us, to believe the message of Jesus as the Messiah, to love one another who do believe it, and to love even unbelievers by modeling biblical morality and speaking of God and Jesus when we have the opportunity. God has not called us *to take up arms and fight to bring in the Kingdom of God*. He has called us *to love others and announce the future coming of the Kingdom of God*. In addition, Paul is saying that the person whom we sinful human beings must fear the most is not anyone here on earth, whether other nations, our own government, people at our places of employment, in our community, or of other religions, regardless of their hostility towards Christianity and us. Instead, we must be most afraid of God and His judging us with the eternal consequences of our sin. Fortunately, Jesus rescues Christians from God’s wrath and condemnation that He will exhibit at the end of the present realm towards those who remain opposed to Him in their hearts throughout their entire lives. For Christians, therefore, it is as the second stanza of the hymn “Amazing Grace” states, “‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.” God’s grace works within us to wake us up to our need to fear God’s judgment, and then it comforts us by moving us to believe in His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus as our crucified and resurrected high priest.

Sometimes Bible teachers interpret the words in the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 6:10, “Your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” as instructions for Christians to bring about the Kingdom of God for Him through whatever means available, whether political, military, or social actions. But I suggest that both statements to God in this prayer, for His kingdom to appear and for His will to be done on earth, are appeals for Him to make these things happen when Jesus returns. In the meantime, we, his disciples, wait. We wait for God to inaugurate His earthly

kingdom that will be centered in Jerusalem and Israel (the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20). Therefore, Jesus does not intend Peter and the others to defend either him or God's kingdom by taking up arms against the military mob from the Sanhedrin who have just entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

This is in line with Jesus' additional words in this subsection (Matthew 26:53,54), "53 Or do you think that I am not able to call to my Father, and He will immediately put at my disposal twelve legions of angels? 54 Then how will the scriptures be fulfilled, because it must happen this way?" Thus Jesus further explains his reasons for stopping Peter and the other disciples from attacking the temple guards. He himself is better equipped to do so (*if he wanted!*) by asking God the Father to send thousands of angels to destroy all his enemies, especially this group of men who have come to arrest him. God certainly has the capability at any moment (even as Jesus stands there before the armed mob who are intent on arresting him) of wiping out all the unbelievers throughout the world, restoring the Kingdom of Israel, and taking control of the governments of all other nations. But this would be to ignore the Old Testament and its predictions in, for example, Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 13 that the Messiah must die for sinners in order to rise from the dead and act as their advocate and intercessor before God at the final judgment.

To repeat, this reason applies to the long period of time between Jesus' first and second appearances. God's kingdom can be neither created nor defended militarily until Jesus returns. And indeed it will be created (as I explained in a previous subsection). Meanwhile, it can only be taught by Christians' words of truth and actions of love towards their fellow sinful human beings throughout history and the world. Thus Jesus commands his disciples in Matthew 5:44 in the Sermon on the Mount to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." When Jewish and Gentile Christians employ their words and actions to speak and act the truth of the gospel with public boldness and openness, and thereby express love, kindness, grace, and mercy even towards those who mistreat them for their faith and are hostile to God, they are "defending" the Kingdom of God and "fighting" against their enemies, who are more than likely going to be the ones who are sufficiently armed militarily to kill anyone who opposes them. Truth can allow lies to be expressed without becoming insecure and silencing the liars—because truth knows that, in the end, God will win and only He can change people's hearts and cause them to embrace truth. In contrast, falsehood is so insecure that it cannot allow truth to exist and uses whatever means available to crush and silence those who express it. But not only will truth prevail in the end, but those of truth need to be strong and courageous in the face of opposition to the truth.

A classic example of loving one's enemies is the story of Peter and John when they are arrested by the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:1-31 for proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah at the temple in Jerusalem—

> Acts 4:1 As they [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message [that Peter had preached to the people in Acts 3] believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.
> 5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"
> 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well [in Acts 3], 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."
> 13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. 15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17

But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to
any man in this name." 18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to
speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.
19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give
heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we
have seen and heard."
21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish
them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; 22
for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.
23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief
priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to
God with one accord and said,
"O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25
who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,
'Why do the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?
26 'The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers are gathered together
Against the Lord and against His Messiah.'
27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom
You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of
Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.
29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak
Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and
wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."
31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they
were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

We see that some of the leaders of the Jews are the same men we will encounter in the next subsection of the Passion Narrative, Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas. They all question Peter and John as to the what right they think they have to be proclaiming their message. We notice that these two do not mince any words in their response and speak boldly and candidly that it is Jesus the Nazarene, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth, who is the subject of their speech, and that he is not only the Savior of sinners like the Jewish leaders, but also the very man whom they wrongly executed on a cross. In spite of the bold and harsh accusation, I think that we can consider Peter's and John's response to be the height of love for one's enemies. Passive silence does not characterize this kind of biblical and Christian love. Instead, assertive and explicit verbal expression of the truth does. After all, graciously and humbly informing people of any specific sin in their lives helps to make them consciously aware of their need for God's mercy and forgiveness that can lead to genuine faith and their eternal salvation.

We also notice that Peter had John speak and then stand silently afterwards with an air of confidence and courage. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the story of Daniel 3 that we looked at in a subsection earlier and will examine more closely in a moment, they are in no way afraid of their "enemies" or the consequences of their telling the truth about Jesus and even accusing their audience of being criminals by having put to death God's Messiah. And then the Sanhedrin, completely hardened in their hearts to the truth, demand that Peter and John never again talk about Jesus publicly. But these two men once again boldly declare that they are not ultimately subject to sinful and evil leaders such as the Sanhedrin, but to God instead. And God has instructed them to live and speak the truth of the gospel of Jesus, so that they refuse to obey them. And they are implying that they will do so regardless of the earthly consequences and what these men do to them. Fortunately, for the sake of the continuation of the public proclamation of the gospel by these apostles, the Jewish leaders can find no good reason to hold them and punish them, so that they let them go, which obviously is the only right thing they do in this situation. What? These hardhearted men actually do something right? Yes. And why? It is as Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart [and mind and will] is like channels of water in the hand of Yahweh; He turns it wherever He wishes." Ultimately, God, who sovereignly rules over the hearts and minds of all leaders (political, religious, business, etc.), causes the Sanhedrin to do this one right thing.

But an appropriate question to ask here is, "Have Christians been called by God *always* to put their lives on the line and publicly declare their faith, come what may, or was this true for only the apostles?"

We will work on answering this question in a moment. But before we do so, Peter and John return to the other apostles, and together they pray. It is true that they do not pray *for* those who are persecuting them as Jesus commands his followers to do in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5:44). Instead, they pray *about* them. They clarify to God and for themselves that these are the same men who have been acting like those of whom David writes in Psalm 2, who stand opposed to His Messiah Jesus, just as God predestined before the creation of the cosmos that they would. And they end their prayer with the request that God grant them, the apostles, to continue fulfilling their divine role of publicly declaring by their words and their actions the all-important message of Jesus as the Messiah. We learn from the end of this passage that God answers their prayer with a resounding "Yes!" "[T]he place where they had gathered together was shaken" by a mini-earthquake, and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the message of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). And we infer from the rest of the book of Acts and the New Testament letters that they persevered in this historical task until their deaths.

Thus, we see that the apostles loved their enemies by defying them and confidently and courageously living and speaking the truth of God in the public settings in which they found themselves, which provides us with a good and clear example of how we can and should obey God also. The apostles never backed down in their presenting Jesus as the Messiah with their words and their actions. We will consider our own callings by God in a moment, but I suggest that neither should we back down from *publicly* declaring the gospel. And we notice, too, that the apostles never took up arms to defend themselves against their enemies who were trying to silence them. To the extent that and in the manner which we believe God has called us overtly and assertively to make it known to others what we have learned from the Bible about God, man, right and wrong, good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness, we should do so with love, grace, and mercy *for the sake of the Kingdom of God*.

But this is also why I think we do not see mentioned in the book of Acts or the rest of the New Testament instructions by the apostles for Christians to use military means to defend themselves *against those who oppose Christianity and persecute them for their faith in Jesus*. The defense of our faith is *mainly* by our words and moral actions of love, kindness, patience, forgiveness, etc. At this point in our discussion, it is appropriate to look at three more important New Testament passages that help us understand our relationship specifically to whatever government may be ruling over us, Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; and Matthew 22:15-22. Here is my translation of Romans 13:1-7 —

> Romans 13:1 Let everyone subordinate himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority
> except that which has been put there by God. And those which exist have been established by
> God, 2 so that he who opposes the authority has opposed God's directive. And those who have
> opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.
> 13:3 For rulers are not intended to be a cause of fear with respect to good behavior but instead with
> respect to evil behavior. However, do you want there to be no fear of authority? Do what is good
> and you will have praise from the same authority. 4 For it is a servant of God for you for the
> purpose of encouraging good behavior. Therefore, if you do evil, be afraid because it does not
> carry the sword for nothing. Indeed, it is a servant of God, an avenger for the purpose of wrath on
> the one who practices evil.
> 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to subordinate oneself to it, not only on account of wrath, but also on
> account of what we know we should do. 6 For on account of this you pay taxes, for they are
> servants of God who are continually devoted to this very thing. 7 Render to all the things that you
> owe them—tax to whom you owe tax, custom to whom you owe custom, fear to whom you owe
> fear, honor to whom you owe honor.

At first glance, Paul seems to be commanding Christians to obey their government, regardless of its moral quality, which is to say, regardless of whether or not it is promoting biblical goodness. But we must take into account both the *textual* and the *historical* contexts of Paul's instructions. The *textual* context is, in this letter to the Christians in the capital city of the Roman Empire, Paul has been answering the question, "How does a sinful human being become "holy" and acceptable before God in order to obtain His mercy and eternal life." His answer is, "Not by earning God's salvation through outward actions in line with the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, but by God's changing a person's heart so that he both believes all the truth about Jesus as the suffering Messiah and pursues choosing biblical goodness and morality as that which epitomizes his life." Beginning in chapter 12, Paul describes what a "holy" life looks like outwardly. For example, it contains love, rejoicing in God's grace and salvation, caring for the

needs of one's fellow Christians, and demonstrating kindness towards those who mistreat Christians. In chapter 13, Paul continues describing a "holy" life for Christians as subjects of human government. But as we will see, he is not providing a fully developed political theory in this passage even though there is much that is helpful in it.

The *historical* context of Romans 13 is that, in A.D. 48 the Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome for fighting amongst themselves regarding whether or not Jesus is the Messiah. However, eight years later, the emperor has died and his edict against the Jews has expired with him. Therefore, Jews who previously lived in Rome are returning to the capital city, and Gentile Christians will invariably interact with them. Paul is writing to mainly the Gentile Christians in the city who had never encountered either Jewish Christians or unbelieving Jews who had been brought up to believe that the only legitimate government is that of the Mosaic Covenant with eventually the Messiah's ruling over them on the land of Israel. And because the Jews grew up in households focused on the Mosaic Covenant, they have had to wrestle with the question, "How should we respond to pagan and secular governments who exercise authority over us in the light of God's requiring that we submit to Him only by our being under the Mosaic Covenant?" And different Jews answered this question differently. The Herodians, who obtained their name from their support of the Idumean king Herod to whom Rome had given a portion of Israel to rule, answered the question by supporting Herod unequivocally, probably because it brought them power, influence, and wealth.

The Zealots, known for their zeal and pursuit of being Jews who assiduously obeyed the Mosaic Covenant, answered the question by claiming that it was idolatrous to submit to Rome and even pay taxes. There were two subgroups of Zealots. The first, known as the Sicarii (from the Aramaic and Hebrew word for "short sword") took their fervor for God and His commandments to the extreme and were terrorists in Israel. Whenever they could, they assassinated Roman soldiers and officials, and they were quick to join up with anyone who claimed to be the Messiah and was raising an army to overthrow Rome. In other words, Jesus was not the only man at his time who declared himself Israel's Savior as predicted by the Old Testament. The second group of Zealots were the Pharisees, whom we meet often in the gospel accounts. They conveniently rationalized submitting to Rome and paying taxes, probably because of the power, influence, and wealth it brought them (like the Herodians), just as they rationalized a lot of things that were obviously or not so obviously in violation of the Mosaic Covenant. For example, in Matthew 23 Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their outward performance of the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant while ignoring its call to inward and outward kindness, mercy, and love.

Therefore, as both believing and unbelieving Jews return to Rome, Paul wants to prepare the Gentile Christians for their encounters with the various kinds of Jews, especially the Zealots who would encourage them to forsake obedience to the government in the light of the Mosaic Covenant and God's promise to restore the Kingdom of Israel with the Messiah ruling over it. As a result, we can infer that the question Paul is answering is not, "Are Christians ever permitted to <u>disobey</u> their government?" Even though this is what it sounds as though he is doing with the answer being, "No." The question he is answering is, "Are Christians ever permitted to <u>obey</u> a government that does not have as its head Jesus the Messiah along with the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of morality?" And the answer Paul is providing is, "Yes." But understanding exactly how Paul is answering this question in the affirmative is a little tricky. For example, if we look at only vs. 1 & 2 without considering the historical context, it certainly sounds as though Paul is saying that Christians should always obey their government. And the main reason is that God has sovereignly brought all governments into existence so that anyone who disobeys his government is also disobeying God. Plus, the penalty for disobeying God is condemnation and destruction.

However, Paul goes on in vs. 3 & 4 to give another reason why it is necessary to obey the government—because it is intended to strike fear into the heart of anyone who does what is evil, since it has the power and God-given right to punish criminals appropriately. The government is also intended to produce an effect of serenity and enjoyment in the heart of the person who does what is good, because, like God, it is supposed to praise him for his moral behavior. Because governments ultimately owe their existence to God and His sovereign plans (and yet very few have genuinely and humbly acknowledged this), they serve God for the purpose of promoting good and punishing evil on earth. Consequently, if a Christian were to disobey his present government (because, he claims, it is not the government with Jesus as its head, which is the <u>only</u> government he must obey), then the Christian can expect nothing but the justice, judgment, and punishment of and by the non-Jesus government. Indeed, just as God's wrath will be displayed at the final judgment towards those who are committed to evil, so also all governments

with their ultimate source in God display His wrath on earth in the temporary realm. By doing so, any government is the "servant of God," acting as His proxy on earth by executing His wrath, condemnation, and punishment when a citizen commits a crime and by expressing His praise and approval when anyone does what is moral and right. Through both punishment and praise of its citizens, a government appropriately administers divine justice. Obviously, Jesus' government over Israel and the world after his return will be the only government in history which performs this responsibility perfectly. Yet, theologically, every human government in history is from God and deserves its citizens' subordination. But the key here is to recognize the imperfect nature of all governments leading up to the perfect operation of Jesus' government—and to believe that his government is coming in the future, so that enduring all other imperfect governments will be worth it.

And then Paul finishes his instructions in vs. 5-7 by saying that obeying one's government is what we Christians understand is the right thing to do as we submit ourselves to God and His sovereign rule over our empire, nation, or country. Christians are therefore morally obligated to obey their government, just as they are morally obligated to obey God. Not only should they fear the wrath of God and of the human government which He has established on their land, but they should also sense the normal moral obligation which any human being should feel within himself, and these both should lead them to do the right thing so as to avoid the punishment of their government. And this is even though their government is flawed and not currently headed by Jesus who will rule the entire world with perfect, moral justice after his second coming. As a result, Paul says that paying taxes, granting respect, and honoring people who exercise authority by working within their government is a moral obligation for all Christians. By seeing the people who work in their government as God's servants, Christians are serving God while granting money, respect, deference, obedience, and honor to them.

In the fifth commandment of the Mosaic Covenant, God requires that Jewish children "honor" their father and mother as their social and civil duty. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God requires that the Jews submit to their king. As we will see in a moment, in Matthew 22, Jesus instructs the Jews of his day to show respect for Caesar by paying his required poll-tax. In Romans 13, Paul exhorts his readers to demonstrate social and civil reverence for their rulers, even the same Roman authorities to whom Jesus refers. In Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, Paul commands wives to respect their husbands. Thus, the Bible is clear that those in authority, whether parents, husbands, or public officials, deserve honor and respect.

However, the government which Paul describes in all these verses sounds too good to be true. Indeed, I have been saying that there never has been a human government which praises genuine biblical morality and goodness while punishing criminals who violate God's moral laws as expressed in the Bible. But the style and manner in which Paul writes vs. 1-7 makes me think that he intentionally is speaking in general terms. He certainly does not think that the Roman government is performing its God-given responsibility as well as he is describing it in these verses. Indeed, he must have in mind that the Roman government committed the greatest evil of all time, the execution by crucifixion of God's Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, we must not think that Paul is naïve enough to think that his instructions to the Gentile Christians in Rome fit each and every situation in a Christian's life. Furthermore, we can conclude that Paul is not describing the exact circumstances of the Christians in Rome under the rule of both Caesar and an aristocracy, the latter who inherit their places in the Roman Senate. Nor is he specifically describing any other kind of government—a monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, etc. Instead, his instructions are universal principles which all Christians should apply to their own unique political situations with as much wisdom, grace, and love towards all those among whom they live.

Then what is Paul saying that we should do in the meantime as Christians who all live under imperfect, immoral, and corrupt governments—at least to some degree or another? I think this is why he goes on in Romans 13:8-14 to exhort his readers to do two things—1) to love their neighbors, and 2) to fix their eyes on Jesus' return. Here are his words—

> Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the Covenant, 9 because "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet" <Exodus 20:13,14,15,17>. And if there is any other commandment, it is summed up by this statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" <Leviticus 19:18>.10 Love does no evil towards one's neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Covenant.
> 13:11 And do this, knowing the season, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we believed it was. 12 The night is almost gone,

and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the works of darkness, and let us put on the weapons of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day—not with carousing and drunkenness, not with sexual promiscuity and sensual abandonment, and not with strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans for the flesh in regard to its evil passions.

Paul is saying that, in the context of the New Covenant of Jesus, the neighbors of his readers are their fellow Christians. And loving them fulfills any obligation a person might have to the Mosaic Covenant, even the commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind. This means that it is impossible to love other Christians without first loving God. So it stands to reason that those who are loving their fellow believers are loving God. Yet, certainly expressing the grace and mercy of God to non-Christians cannot be eliminated from a person's list of moral obligations as prescribed by God. Therefore, a Christian's love starts within the community of believers and emanates from there to the rest of the world. But, secondly, Paul also encourages the Gentile Christians in Rome to fix their eyes on Jesus' return while avoiding all immorality. Thus, their love for others and their enthusiastic anticipation of the Kingdom of God, the perfect government of Jesus, are what grounds them in their ability to subordinate themselves to the (very imperfect!) government of the Roman Empire.

The apostle Peter says exactly the same thing to his readers who are Christians dispersed through the area of modern Turkey—

1 Peter 2:13 Subordinate yourselves to every human authority system on account of the Lord, whether to a king who is in authority, 14 or to governors as the ones sent by him for the purpose of meting out justice to evil doers and praise to those who do good. 15 For thus is the will of God defined—by your doing good to silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 As free men, but not holding your freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God, 17 honor all men, love the brothers, fear God, honor the king.

Plus, let us remind ourselves of the question which Paul (and I think Peter, too) is addressing, "Are Christians ever permitted to obey a government that does not have as its head Jesus the Messiah along with the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of morality?" And Paul's and Peter's answer is not only, "Yes," but they are saying that Christians have a moral obligation to obey their government just as they are morally obligated to obey God. Yet, as I have been saying, here is the catch. I think that Paul and Peter are describing an *ideal* government, which is to say a *morally perfect* one. However, this kind of government will exist only when Jesus returns, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and rules over the entire earth.

We should look at the other important passage, Matthew 22:15-22 —

Matthew 22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him in what he said. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying,
"Teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for you are not partial to any. 17 Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"
22:18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said,
"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax."
And they brought him a denarius. 20 And he said to them,
"Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21
They said to him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them,
"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."
22:22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

First, we see that two of the Jewish groups whom I mentioned above are involved in this episode. There are the Pharisees, a subgroup of the Zealots and who rationalized submitting to the Roman government and paying taxes because they enjoyed the power and influence this brought them. The other group are the Herodians, supporters of the Gentile king Herod, who also rationalized submitting to Rome. They both come to Jesus in order to test his belief in God and the Mosaic Covenant by asking him if paying taxes to the secular and pagan government which is ruling over them is biblical? His answer is, "Yes," but he qualifies it by referring to the image of Caesar on a coin that would be used to pay the poll-tax, a tax levied on an individual without reference to income or assets. Jesus' reasoning is that because

the coin contains the image of the leader of the human government, implying that he is the source of and the authority over the coin, that it is appropriate to give it to him when he demands it. On the other hand, God has stamped His "image" on human beings who are His direct creation. And He demands that we give him the "coins" on which is His image—ourselves! This is to say that God has demanded that we worship and ultimately obey *only* Him. The apparent paradox here is that Jesus is saying that it is possible to obey one's human government (by paying taxes) while also obeying God (by worshiping only Him). And we saw that this is exactly what Paul says in Romans 13:1-7 (and Peter in 1 Peter 2:13-17)–

> Romans 13:1 Let everyone subordinate himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which has been put there by God. And those which exist have been established by God, 2 so that he who opposes the authority has opposed God's directive… 6 For on account of this you pay taxes, for they are servants of God who are continually devoted to this very thing. 7 Render to all the things that you owe them—tax to whom you owe tax, custom to whom you owe custom, fear to whom you owe fear, honor to whom you owe honor.

So Jesus, Paul, and Peter are exhorting their audiences to obey God's established human government, and they are explicit that this is in the midst of their obeying God. In other words, it is good to support pagan and secular governments because even this is a morally obligatory way by which we obey God. But now the question is, "What are Jesus, Paul, and Peter saying that we should do when human governments promote evil and punish goodness?" And the problem is that Jesus, Paul, and Peter do not provide enough details in their instructions to answer to this question easily. But I think it only reasonable to conclude that Paul and Peter are implying what Jesus is hinting at, that we obey our government *up to the point where it explicitly or implicitly claims to be God and requires that human beings give it their very soul, worship, absolute loyalty, allegiance, and obedience*. Only God deserves to be worshiped, while His instrument of earthly justice, human government, deserves to be obeyed. But if the government starts acting as though it is God and demands that people see themselves as owing their entire existences (their minds, wills, and bodies) to it, then Christians must remind themselves that all that they are and have is *ultimately from God* and follow His *moral* directives and not the government's *immoral* ones.

Another very helpful example of people of authentic faith who chose to oppose a government which had demanded the complete loyalty of its citizens is in Daniel 3. It is a long chapter but worth quoting and considering in its entirety—

> Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.
> 3:2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.
> 3:3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
> 3:4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,
> 3:5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.
> 3:6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."
> 3:7 Therefore, at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.
> 3:8 For this reason, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.
> 3:9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, "O king, live forever!
> 3:10 "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre,

trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.
3:11 “But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.
3:12 “There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”
3:13 Then, in a rage and anger, Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Thus, these men were brought before the king.
3:14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?
3:15 “Thus, if you are willing, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. And what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”
3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.
3:17 “If this happens, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire. Thus, He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
3:18 “But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”
3:19 As a result, Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.
3:20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.
3:21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their other clothes and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.
3:22 Because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
3:23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.
3:24 Then, Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste. He said to his high officials, “Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?” They replied to the king, “Certainly, O king.”
3:25 He said, “Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!”
3:26 So, Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire, and he responded and said, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!” Therefore, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came out of the midst of the fire.
3:27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king’s high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men. Nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.
3:28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.
3:29 “Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

3:30 Afterwards, the king caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

The year is around 600 B.C. God has pronounced His judgment on the southern Kingdom of Judah for their disobeying the Mosaic Covenant so that the Babylonians have invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem the first of three times, resulting in taking many of the Jews into exile to the city of Babylon. More and worse will follow after the next two incursions by the Babylonians. Among the captives are Daniel, who is featured in the first two chapters of the book by his name, and these three men, who are his friends. At the end of chapter 2, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, having become so impressed with the leadership skills of the three men, appoints them to rule as administrators over the province of the capital city. Now, though, they are confronting a test of their faith in Yahweh, the God of the Jews and the only true God. The king has made a statue that is ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and he is requiring that the international crowd of the province fall down and worship this statue as the way to demonstrate their absolute and primary allegiance to the pagan gods of the Babylonian people.

The ancient peoples of the Middle East, except for the Jews of course, typically permitted foreigners (including captives) from other lands to worship their own god or gods. However, this would be only if they acknowledged the superior position of the gods of the land on which they were living. For the Jews in this situation during Nebuchadnezzar's mandate to worship his golden image, the king would not be opposed to their worshiping Yahweh, but they must show greater allegiance to the gods and religion of the Babylonians. They are not permitted to worship only Yahweh. They must "serve" Nebuchadnezzar's gods also.

If we define a "god" as that person, thing, or entity among everything else in existence which is the ultimate source of life and well-being for human beings, and if we define "religion" as the manner by which human beings demonstrate their complete trust in this person, thing or entity that is their "god," then Nebuchadnezzar, who is THE governing authority over the exiled Jews, is arrogantly acting like any government which claims the right to define what exactly is human existence. Governments do this by making laws and formally issuing directives and mandates to control its citizens' lives, right down to the level of what they should think and understand is the nature of reality and what they should do to demonstrate their absolute obedience to the government and its view of how reality works.

Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refuse to adopt Nebuchadnezzar's understanding. They retain their belief that Yahweh is the only true God, the author of all reality, and they refuse to bow in worship of the ninety-foot image which represents the Babylonian's pantheon of gods. Eventually, their opposition to the government becomes known to "certain Chaldeans," who expose their disobedience to the king. Like all arrogant, self-righteous, and ungodly rulers who believe they have the right to control every detail of the lives of those under them, Nebuchadnezzar becomes enraged that these men are not willing to give him their minds, hearts, and existences, and he questions them in this regard. In addition, he threatens to make them suffer if they continue to refuse to obey him, and their suffering will be the intense heat of a fiery furnace. In other words, the king will cancel them to the most extreme degree that he can as a fellow human being. He will swiftly end their physical lives. Plus, he arrogantly asks if there is any god who can thwart his plans, because he obviously believes that he is the most powerful being in existence, or at least the proxy of gods who are more powerful than Yahweh.

This, too, is like any government and its official or unofficial instruments of ruling. In our day, the multiple and complicit arms of the government are Big-Tech, mainstream media, social media, and academic institutions, which are so incensed when others do not agree with them completely on how to understand reality that they do all they can to reduce and even eliminate their existence and the effect they have on society. Death is obviously the most effective reduction of a person's existence and potential to persuade others to disagree with the government. But other means such as attacking a person's character, making up lies to ruin someone's reputation, blocking a person's ability to disseminate his opinions and participate in public discussion, etc. are all common practices of those who demand of all citizens absolute compliance and complete worship and obedience. In addition, like Nebuchadnezzar, they firmly believe that they are not subject to any "god" and not required to justify their beliefs, decisions, and actions before the one, true God. In other words, they are their own god, and, as the apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:32, "although they know the requirement of God, that those who [believe and promote such lies] are worthy of [eternal] death, they not only [believe and promote them], but they also give hearty approval to those who [do the same]." While thinking that they understand reality perfectly, they are, in Paul's opinion, "fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for" the lie that they know

better than He how to instruct people in what they should be doing. And their foolishness amplifies itself when they suppress voices of dissent and seek to eliminate dialogue among people. In other words, they prove that they are fools by refusing to listen to other sinful, imperfect, and finite human beings *like them.*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego do not consider the king's questions and threats to be worthy of response, because they are so obviously the rants of a foolish man who is simply spouting nonsense. He is just like all government officials who refuse to take God and His truth in the Bible into account. Nevertheless, the three men do respond and state categorically that not only can their God, the one, true God, rescue them from death in the furnace, but they are willing to submit to only Him even if He does not! This is how unwavering they are in their belief in Yahweh and, I would say, immovable in their hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God through His grace and mercy—just as we are now that we have the extra information that our salvation is through the death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus the Messiah. With their response, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are saying to Nebuchadnezzar, "Go ahead, make our day!"

And so the king does. He even orders that the fire in the furnace be increased, which results in its killing the soldiers who throw the Jews into it. Then a miracle occurs. Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace, and what does he see? All three men walking about with a fourth man, who, it would seem, is the "*angelos* [messenger] of Yahweh." God Himself appears within the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and is keeping them safe and alive in the midst of the intense heat. Obviously, the king is astounded, comments on the presence of the fourth man, and orders the three Jews to come out of the furnace. As soon as they do, everyone in the king's court looks carefully at them and realizes that not one hair of their heads is even the least bit singed by the fire. They do not even smell as though they have been immersed in the flames—flames that incinerated the soldiers!

Nebuchadnezzar's response is to acknowledge that the God of the Jews is greater than his gods and him. These men have clearly trusted in their God and violated his own mandate to worship the ninety-foot image. They have been willing to serve Yahweh, even if meant losing their lives. Another surprise is that this proud and arrogant king issues another decree, that anyone in his empire who speaks against the God of the Jews will "be torn limb from limb, and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap." The miracle of the three men in the furnace and Nebuchadnezzar's prohibition against anti-Semitism and opposition to Yahweh clearly worked to the advantage of the Jews who were in exile in Babylon, so that God preserved them and they returned to Jerusalem seventy years later as He predicted in the prophets. However, it is obvious that other followers of God, even Jews, in history cannot expect the same *physical* protection from God. Many Jews and many Christians have died for their association with God. Yet, the lesson is still clear—that when a government demands obedience and allegiance above and beyond what only God deserves, His people, both Jews and Gentiles who are submitting themselves in their hearts to Him, must follow their biblical understanding of the nature of reality and say, "No."

Another example was the Roman government of Jesus' and Paul's day. They were no group of saints. Often Caesar and his proxies, the local governors and the military, could be harsh, cruel, and capricious in their treatment of the populace regardless of their ethnic, political, or religious affiliation. Plus, they knowingly executed an innocent man, Jesus, who is God's Messiah. Roman citizens, of whom Paul interestingly enough was a member, did enjoy better and fairer treatment than non-citizens. But Paul in Romans 13 is certainly not implying that the Roman government always acted in line with biblical moral principles. His language seems to indicate that it did, but in the final analysis he is stating a general principle, that it is holy and right for followers of the ultimate King, God, and His proxy, Jesus of Nazareth, to obey and submit to sinful human governments as put in place by God. He is the transcendent source of all created reality and the author of this story which He is telling.

While the Roman Christians have submitted themselves to a new king, Jesus of Nazareth, who will usher in the eternal Kingdom of God when he returns, Paul feels it necessary to instruct these Christians in how they should live under the rule of Caesar and his deputies. In a few words, they should obey them as that which constitutes holiness for followers of Jesus, while they wait for him to establish his rule over the land of Israel and the earth as the first stage of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, Paul is saying that all governing authorities in the present age owe their existence to the sovereign and determinative will of God. Therefore, they are merely stepping stones in history towards the final Messianic government of Jesus. They exist because God wants them to exist, and if He wants to remove the current personnel from their positions and put others in their place, then He will. And if He does do want to remove them, then He will not. God thus grants governing officials the power and right to rule for a time, i.e., His sovereignly chosen amount of time. Consequently, people who are pursuing holiness as believers in

Jesus have the opportunity to reveal their obedience to God by obeying the *current* government officials. But Christians also can know that, while all governments contain immoral people, no corrupt and evil rulers and their underlings will ever thwart God's eternal plans and purposes. This means that Christians need never despair if the "right" people are not in power. Nevertheless, in our country, we have the privilege to work to remove government officials and put others in their place. Yet this, too, will be only according to God's sovereign will.

As I have said, Paul obviously would want his readers to understand that his commands in Romans 13:1-7 apply only when the existing government is promoting biblical morality and punishing biblical evil. But if a government defines good as evil and evil as good, then of course no genuine Christian can obey such a government completely. As we saw above, the Jewish government of the Sanhedrin ordered Peter and John to stop preaching the gospel when God had commanded them to do so. Peter told them that he had to defy their order and obey God instead, come what may—

> Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

And Nebuchadnezzar ordered the Jews to serve him by worshiping false gods, so that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego also told him that they had to reject his order and obey God instead, come what may—

> Daniel 3:16 "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 If this happens, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire. Thus, He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

And these two governments of the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Babylonian Empire ruled by Nebuchadnezzar are good examples of the general principle implied in Psalm 2:1-2—

> Psalm 2:1 Why are the nations in an uproar
> And the peoples devising a vain thing?
> 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand
> And the rulers take counsel together
> Against Yahweh and against His Messiah, saying,
> 2:3 "Let us tear their fetters apart
> And cast away their cords from us!"

The question here in Psalm 2 is merely rhetorical. David, the author, knows exactly why people and their leaders stand against God. It is because they are all fundamentally opposed to Him in their hearts. Therefore, all governments down through history will rebel against God at one level or another. And certainly we have seen some governments exhibit their rebellion more greatly than others by their cruel and inhumane treatment of their citizens and also other countries. Nevertheless, in Romans 13 Paul is also saying that, because governments exist by the will of God, to oppose any genuine goodness which a government prescribes is to oppose God. This a Christian (or anyone else for that matter) should not do, because the government will rightly condemn and punish such a person in the present realm. And Paul is implying that it is right for the government to do so as he explains in vs. 3 & 4 where he explicitly states what was implied in v. 1, that the laws of any government should encourage biblical goodness and punish biblical evil. If this is the situation, then Christians should obey this very human government, led by sinners, *even though it is not the direct government of the morally perfect icon of God, Jesus himself*.

And the result will be that the government approves of what Christians are doing. In other words, just because God and Jesus are not *directly* ruling over Christians does not mean that they should have no fear of their immediate, human authority. Because the government is an instrument of the sovereign God who has willed it into existence, to fear it is to fear God. But then we add Jesus' instructions to the Pharisees and the Herodians and implied by Paul and Peter—*only up to the point when the government chooses to think of itself as God and defines good as evil and evil as good*. Then we can and must say,

"No," to its unbiblical laws, directives, and mandates. This would obviously pertain mainly to a government which outlaws Christianity, as the Jewish leaders attempted to do in the book of Acts. And it pertains equally to when a government permits Christianity to exist but requires Christians to grant greater loyalty and allegiance to the government than to God, as Nebuchadnezzar did (albeit the "Christianity" of his day was the pre-Christian Jewish worship of Yahweh).

I think it is also fair to say that, because Jesus, Paul, and Peter provide only general principles, they are not offering any specific guidance on exactly how Christians should respond when their particular government raises taxes to an exorbitant level (and how to define "exorbitant"), when government officials abuse their power and authority and become tyrants (and how to define "abuse" and "tyrants"), when too many laws promote evil instead of goodness (and how to define "too many"), when a government encroaches on the God-given freedom and liberty of its people (and how to define "encroaches," "freedom," and "liberty"), or what kind of government is good vs. bad (except to imply as the rest of the Bible teaches that Jesus' monarchy will eventually be the best and only perfect government in all history). Therefore, Jesus, Paul, and Peter are simply saying that, in general, it is good and right for Christians to submit to and support human governments because of their God-given role to keep the peace and provide their citizens with a social, economic, and political context in which to live their lives and hopefully come to authentic faith and belief in God. In other words, these men and the rest of the Bible do not provide three easy steps to figuring out when it is appropriate to say, "No," to the government in each and every situation a Christian might find himself. Plus, the Bible seems to imply that not every Christian will or even should respond exactly the same as his fellow believers in each political, civil, economic, and social situation. Instead, the biblical authors are providing only the principles to make genuine followers of God foundationally wise with the freedom to think through for themselves what they think is the moral and godly way to act in their own specific situations and under the particular circumstances of their lives.

From this discussion, I suggest that the ideal government is the one which grants to each individual the right to choose his or her religion, business pursuits, social interactions, and recreational pursuits within the proper boundaries of God's biblical, moral commandments. And because the apostles Paul and Peter describe the government's responsibility as "bearing the sword" against those who do evil, any government and country has the right and even obligation to protect itself militarily from oppressive and evil forces, whether outside the country or within, so that *all its people* may live with as much freedom as possible. This may be somewhat different when Jesus restores the Kingdom of Israel and establishes his rule over the whole earth. But, in the meantime, sinful human beings need to give each other a lot of room to believe and live, knowing that eventually God will bring everyone to account and "render to each person according to his deeds" (cf. Romans 2:6).

God has created all human beings and therefore owns each person, man and woman, adult and child (even unborn child), Jew and Gentile, etc. It is theologically and biblically impossible to assert a distinction between human beings that requires concluding that God is some people's ultimate authority and not others'. It is also theologically and biblically impossible to insist on a distinction between human beings that requires concluding that some people are accountable ultimately to God and not to human beings while others are ultimately accountable to only human beings. These are the vital truths which kings, prime ministers, presidents, congressmen, senators, judges, members of parliaments, and all other civil servants who carry out their responsibilities within a people's government must recognize or risk opposing God and incurring His justice and condemnation. In Old Testament times, God held the Assyrians and the Babylonians accountable and condemned them for failing to recognize His sovereign and moral rule of the cosmos when they attacked and mistreated His chosen people, the Jews. And God will do the same to all other government officials in history who ignore and reject Him and the right He gives to each human being to live and choose his god, his family, his place of existence, his vocation, his recreation, his food, and his level of health, while, according to the apostle Paul in Romans 1, each individual knows that he will answer to the one true God for his <u>moral</u> choices, especially the choice of whether or not he appeals to God for eternal forgiveness and life.

Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that a country's government may become so evil, so corrupt, so ungodly, so tyrannical, and so oppressive that all (or at least most of) its people, *including Christians*, decide that they must rise up against it and overthrow it. Yet, Christians should never think that this is for the sake of the Kingdom of God, because Christians do not create the Kingdom of God. God does. Only God can and will bring His kingdom into existence when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. This means that any resistance or even rebellion against one's culture, society, and government is for the sake of all the country's citizens and their right to live as freely as possible, whether

or not they are Christians. And this resistance or rebellion can take the form of written or spoken words, good and moral actions that are different from what one's society and culture consider good and moral, or, in the extreme, armed and physical actions. But the decision as to how to resist one's government is a personal and individual one, including for each Christian who is living his life before God. I as a citizen of my country cannot tell someone else how to act in any given situation, and no other citizen can tell me how to do so. Only each individual can decide for himself what level of resistance he believes that he is called to use against the immorality and evil that he encounters in each specific situation in his life, including the evil of his government. In addition, arriving at this decision should include both prayer and wisdom that is derived from the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation. The Christian will obviously understand that prayer and biblical wisdom should be included. The non-Christian will not, which simply becomes another opportunity for the Christian to be loving, bold, and public about his faith for the sake of educating non-Christians with respect to the most important issue in their lives, their eternal salvation.

Moving on in the story of Gethsemane, John writes in his gospel of Jesus' reason for not wanting his disciples to fight the armed mob where he says,

> John 18:11 Should I not drink the cup which the Father has given me to drink?"

His reaction here also to Peter's using the sword clearly shows that he never expected any of them to do so. Once again, as he did in his prayers to the Father, he uses the analogy of a cup that is filled with an unpleasant liquid that someone is commanding him to drink. In this case, God the Father is requiring that Jesus go through the entire ordeal of betrayal, arrest, trials, and crucifixion. Hence, his question to Peter, and to the other disciples who are wondering if they should be defending themselves and him, is what they think of obeying God. Is it a good thing to subordinate oneself to the sovereign will of God? Obviously it is a rhetorical question, and the answer is a resounding, "Yes!!" But Peter and the other disciples have not yet grasped the path down which Jesus is walking in obedience to the Father that will lead to his death the next afternoon. But Jesus keeps trying to get them to understand all that his messianic role involves.

The final detail of this scene is one that only Luke provides, that Jesus reached out and "touched [Malchus'] ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Even under these extreme circumstances, with his enemies surrounding and seizing him in order to lead him away to his eventual death on the cross, Jesus is still the loving and merciful Son of God. And the Father confirms this by performing another miracle through him. In all the other stories of Jesus' miracles in the gospels, it is intimated that the recipients of healings, of release from demonic possession, of resurrection from the dead, and even of food are his friends. But here, just as God causes the sun to rise on the evil and sends rain on the unrighteous (cf. Matthew 4:45), Jesus performs one miraculous act of kindness—on an enemy! How fitting that the man who was accused of being "a gluttonous man and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners," because he is the greatest friend that sinners have ever had, as his final miraculous, outward act of love should heal a man whose intent is to kill him. And, therefore, what a wonderful example of our calling to love the enemies of Christianity because we are bold, courageous, and public followers of the gracious and merciful Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

And there is one more striking element in regard to Jesus' action. Why does not Malchus (so that all of Jerusalem can hear him!) immediately shout the exact same words that Jesus just used, "Stop this!"? And why does he not go on to say, "Look what this man just did. He healed my ear which his disciple cut off. Certainly, he is who he says he is—the Messiah whom we should worship and obey!" But, instead, Malchus either remains completely silent or resumes his noisy aggression with the rest of crowd, who are fixated on arresting Jesus in order to bring him to the high priest. The hardness and stubbornness of the human heart is astounding, but true. And only God can change a sinner's inward condition so that he can do what Malchus should have done.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke IX.

Jesus next turns to the whole crowd whose purpose is to arrest him. Luke describes them as

> Luke 22:52 the chief priests, officers of the temple, and elders who had come against him," and Jesus says to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against an insurrectionist? 22:53 While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this hour and the power of darkness belong to you."

Matthew describes this interaction with similar words,

> Matthew 26:55 In that hour, Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against an insurrectionist? Every day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. 26:56 But all this has happened in order that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled.'"

Mark likewise states,

> Mark 14:48 And Jesus responded and said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me, as you would for an insurrectionist? 14:49 Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But this has happened so that the scriptures will be fulfilled.'"

On the one hand, Matthew, Mark, and John have said that the crowd are coming "from the chief priests" (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43; John 18:3). On the other hand, Luke tells us that this crowd includes the "chief priests, officers of the temple, and elders who had come out against" Jesus (Luke 22:52). Putting the data together that avoids any contradictions or errors, this crowd consists of *some* of the chief priests and leaders of the Sanhedrin, while it also consists of men who are from the entire group of chief priests and leaders of the Jewish people. Thus, none of the descriptions of the crowd is complete, but they all are true in their own way.

Secondly, we have arrived at the place in Matthew's account with the one prepositional phrase that I mentioned above which helps us understand how to fit together the different parts of this scene. In v. 55, Matthew states literally, "In that hour (*en ekeinay tay hora*, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ), Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against an insurrectionist? Every day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me." In his gospel Matthew uses the same phrase "in that hour" twice before this verse. The first is in Matthew 10:18-19 when Jesus warns his disciples that the road ahead of them will be a rough one, because they will be persecuted and,

> Matthew 10:18 brought before governors and kings as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles; 10:19 but when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say, for it will be given you **in that hour** what you are to say" [emphasis mine].

The second is in Matthew 18:1,

> Matthew 18:1, **In that hour** the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" [emphasis mine]

The NAS95 translates the phrase "at that time" in both Matthew 18:1 and here in Matthew 26:55, which I think is a good interpretation of what Matthew means in these contexts. In this situation in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is saying that sometime during all these events that involve Jesus' arrest, Jesus asks the mob, "Do you really think that I am starting an armed rebellion against the Jewish leaders?" Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that none of the gospel accounts is claiming to present its details in exact chronological order, so that there are no contradictions between them, and none of them is in error. Instead, this scene comprises multiple elements that are going on simultaneously, and the point is that all these details are important for understanding this entire episode in Jesus' life. But it is literally impossible to describe the exact sequence of the details.

Thirdly, Jesus wonders out loud why this crowd has come out with swords and clubs to arrest him as if he were leading an armed revolt, especially when it was possible to seize him in the temple area as he often taught and walked openly and publicly in Jerusalem during the three years of his ministry and especially these last few days leading up to the Passover. In this way, he is denying both that he is violating the Old Testament by claiming to be the Messiah and that he is leading an insurrection against Israel. Instead, he is implying that he is the one who is fulfilling the predictions of the Messiah in the Old Testament, while it is the crowd who are the insurrectionists—against God! He is obeying God perfectly, and they are rebelling against Him. In addition, everything that he has been teaching and doing in their presence and the presence of the people of Israel has been both words and miracles of truth and love

from God. At no time did he encourage anyone to take up arms and revolt against the Sanhedrin or the Roman government. In fact, back in Matthew 23:3, he encouraged the Jewish people "to do and guard all that the scribes and Pharisees tell" them, because their words come from the Mosaic Covenant in their sacred scriptures. Therefore, Jesus has strongly affirmed that the Jewish leaders are teaching the Bible, while also pointing out that they do not correctly understand it. The words and ideas of the Bible, and therefore of the Mosaic Covenant, are good and right. Therefore, it is appropriate to hear them no matter who is speaking them and no matter what the context. However, it is just as important to understand correctly the words and the ideas that the biblical authors communicate, which is what Jesus has been seeking to help the Jewish people do as their Messiah, King, and Priest.

Who knows how many times in the last two thousand years "Christian" teachers (except of course the apostles) have spoken the words of the Bible while thinking that they have understood them correctly, and yet they have not. We have even heard politicians quote the Bible, but have they understood correctly what it is saying? I certainly doubt it. But I think that Jesus is instructing his listeners in Matthew 23:3 that it is possible for people to hear the words of the Bible and then God will cause them to understand it correctly, even if the teacher or speaker does not. And then God will cause them to obey the Bible by miraculously opening up their minds and hearts to the truth. Therefore, we should always encourage the public reading and speaking of the Bible, for God may use it for the eternal good of those listening.

But here in the Garden of Gethsemane, the unfortunate lack of understanding of the chief priests and Sanhedrin is revealing itself as they come out in the middle of the night, armed with swords and clubs, to arrest Jesus and to conspire to destroy him. He is the one whom they should worship as the very "icon of God" within the creation (as Paul calls Jesus in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15). He is the one from whom they should learn the Old Testament as the only morally perfect and intellectually perfect rabbi/teacher in all history. Yet, as Jesus says in Matthew's and Mark's accounts, he knows that the scriptures which these men need to understand better predict that they must come out with clubs and swords, arrest him, put him on trial, convict him of blasphemy because he claims to be the Messiah, and crucify him for this heinous "crime." Jesus is in a catch-22, a circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting conditions. These men should know better than to reject him as their Messiah, but they do not—in order that God may fulfill His predestined plans and eternal purposes through Jesus.

As a result, Jesus says that this is all "so that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled." Below are four examples of Old Testament passages to which Jesus is probably referring as needing fulfillment through his betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and his resurrection. And these are passages which Jesus himself would have learned as a child from his mother Mary and recognized as applying to him as the final descendant of David who is the eternal king of Israel and the Kingdom of God. I will not explain the connections between these passages and Jesus' life and death as much as they deserve, but they should still be obvious to the reader. First, over 700 years before these events, Isaiah 53:3-5 predicts the Messiah's death as brought about by men as well as ultimately caused by God—

> Isaiah 53:3 He was **despised and forsaken of men**, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
> and like one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we [Jews] did not esteem
> him. 4 Surely our griefs he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried. Yet we ourselves
> esteemed him stricken, **smitten of God**, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced through for our
> transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon
> him, and by his scourging we are healed [emphasis mine].

And in Zechariah 13:7 God says similarly approximately 500 years before Jesus death—

> Zechariah 13:7 "**Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd [the Messiah]**, and against the man,
> My Associate," declares Yahweh of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be
> scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones" [emphasis mine].

The apostle Peter, in his first sermon to his fellow Jews and Gentile proselytes in Jerusalem, uses Psalm 16:8-11 as a direct prediction by David around 1000 B.C. of Jesus' resurrection soon after his death—

Psalm 16:8 I [Jesus the Messiah] have set Yahweh continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.
10 **For You [Yahweh] will not abandon my existence to Sheol;**
Nor will You allow Your Holy One [me, the Messiah] to undergo decay.
11 You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever [emphasis mine].

And in Psalm 22:15-18 either David is speaking metaphorically of his own plight during a difficult circumstance in his life, and this becomes analogous to Jesus's suffering. Or, he is directly predicting both Jesus' ordeal of dying along with the Roman soldiers' casting lots for his clothing. I am inclined to think that it is the first option, because certainly David experienced several times of anguish and pain during his life. Therefore, the verses of the psalm read like this—

Psalm 22:15 My [David's as the first Messiah and king of Israel, and then Jesus' as the final Messiah and king of Israel] strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You [Yahweh] lay me in the dust of death.
16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
17 I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;
18 **They divide my garments among them,**
And for my clothing they cast lots [emphasis mine].

Later in this narrative, when the soldiers do not break Jesus' legs on the cross because he has already died, John will refer to this fact as a fulfillment of Psalm 34:19-20—

Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous man,
But Yahweh delivers him out of them all.
20 He keeps all his bones,
Not one of them is broken.

Because of what Jesus has learned from the Old Testament, he is well aware that all that is happening to him is ultimately from God, from Yahweh, from his Father, because he is the Son of God and His proxy among the people of Israel and among the rest of the world. Luke likewise indicates that Jesus tells the crowd that the Old Testament's predictions of his death mean that "this hour and the power of darkness belong" to them. What is far from a pleasant experience for Jesus is also a theologically and biblically necessary one. And it is not because at this very moment human goodness is winning the day. Indeed, this moment is filled with the core of the evil of mankind. Yet, also, the person within the creation who has the greatest power to perpetrate such evil is Satan. He has influenced these men to fulfill his plans and purposes—to end the life of the Messiah. Thus, Jesus says that it is as though the next eighteen hours and the ability to do what they desire with respect to him is fully in their grasp. They literally own the day. They existentially are in control of these evil, upcoming hours until Jesus dies on the cross. No one is going to stop them, because this is the will of God Himself for Jesus to perform his role on earth as the Jewish Messiah. And as a result, he is perfectly willing to allow them to arrest him and complete their goal of executing him.

Later in the New Testament, the apostle Paul makes it clear that Satan's and his followers' ownership of time in this world does not end with Jesus' death and will not end until he returns. Paul calls Satan "the god of this age" in 2 Corinthians 4:4, because the vast majority of human beings in the present realm choose to align themselves with him instead of with God. This means, also, that evil seems to reign victorious over good until the final ruler on earth, who will humanly embody evil to its maximum, the "Man of Lawlessness" as Paul calls him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, is destroyed when Jesus returns. Paul says in

2 Thessalonians 2:7 that "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" in the world, revealing itself through the lies and deceptions that Satan is able to inject into cultures around the globe and that oppose God's people, both Jews and Christians. And Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5:15-16 to Christians in the midst of the current situation this side of Jesus' second appearance and restoring the Kingdom of Israel is,

> Ephesians 5:15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

We consequently move confidently and courageously through time, just as Jesus did, because we know that Satan will not accomplish his goal of destroying God's plans and His people. Instead, God powerfully changes the hearts and inwardness of those whom He has chosen. And He sustains their faith, while also keeping in sight the preservation of a remnant of the Jews for their final, earthly destiny of becoming authentic believers themselves and being ruled by Jesus on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Matthew and Mark X.

Luke's and John's accounts of this scene have ended. But Matthew continues,

> Matthew 26:56 Then all the disciples left him and fled."

And Mark similarly says,

> Mark 14:50 And they all left him and fled."

Jesus previously told these eleven disciples that they were going to abandon him (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27). Now they fulfill his prediction. Probably from fear of being arrested and even put to death, these men find themselves unable to stay with their rabbi and the one whom they have confessed as the Messiah and King of Israel. And so they disappear into the night as quickly as they can run, including Peter who had so boldly declared that he would never leave Jesus' side and was willing to die with him if necessary (cf. Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; John 13:37-38).

And the lesson is, never say, "Never." We do not know exactly what God's story is for us in the future. But we can still be assured that He will faithfully cause our faith to persevere, as we will see He does for Peter and the other, remaining ten disciples. This is why Paul's words to the Philippians help and comfort us through every situation, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God is at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). And John's words in his first letter encourage us also, "You are from God, little children, and have overcome [those who oppose God]; because greater is He who is in you than he [Satan] who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Mark XI.

In conclusion, Mark provides one more detail,

> Mark 14:51 And a certain young man was following him, wearing only a linen sheet over his naked body, and they seized him. 52 But he pulled free from the linen sheet and fled naked."

Who is this young man, and why is he wearing only a linen sheet? John 19:23, which will come up later in the narrative helps us. John records, "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part for every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece." Typically, men wore both an undergarment called a *kiton* (χιτών) and an outer garment called an *himation* (ἱμάτιον). Here, this young man is described as wearing only a *sindon* (σινδών), a linen cloth and the same kind of covering as that which Joseph of Arimathea will use to wrap the body of Jesus after his crucifixion. But why would this young man wear only a linen cloth and not the traditional garb of both an undergarment and an outer garment? Maybe because he was afraid of being seized and wanted to be able to slip out of his covering and escape easily, and wearing either a *kiton* or an *himation* or both would have prevented this. And who is this young man? The most likely candidate is Mark himself, the author of this unique element of the story since he is the only one who includes it.

He had not been a participant in the Passover meal and probably was waiting outside the building, looking to see what Jesus was going to do. And, unbeknownst to Jesus and the eleven disciples, he probably followed them into the garden and hid himself in it. But now he has gotten close enough to the armed mob that they become aware of him and are as concerned about him as they are about Jesus and the disciples. So they grab him to arrest him, as they probably would have the eleven disciples if they had not fled into the night. Fortunately, this young man, somehow suspecting that these events would unfold as they have, has armed himself within only a linen sheet, so that he eludes their grasp and disappears naked into the night.

As a result, Jesus is left completely alone with his enemies. And this night of mistreatment and suffering, which will not end until death finally claims him the next afternoon, continues. Yet, Jesus will remain confident in God, loving towards his friends and his enemies, and resolved in his heart to complete his responsibility as the Messiah during this initial and temporary sojourn on the earth. May we follow his example while we wait for him to return and share the glory of his immortality and moral perfection with us in the eternal Kingdom of God.

i. Jesus Is Brought To Caiaphas' House and John and Peter Enter Into the Courtyard

Tuesday about midnight heading into Wednesday

Matthew 26:57-58	Mark 14:53-54	Luke 22:54-55	John 18:13-18
26:57 And those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. 26:58 But Peter was following him from a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and he entered in and sat down with the servants to see the outcome.	14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and scribes had gathered together. 14:54 And Peter followed him from a distance into the courtyard of the high priest, and he was sitting with the assistants and warming himself by the light of the fire.	22:54 After they arrested him, they led him away and brought him to the house of the high priest. And Peter was following at a distance. 22:55 And after they kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting in their midst.	18:13 And they led him first to Annas, because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 18:14 It was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was better for one man to die on behalf of the people. 18:15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, along with another disciple. That disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. 18:16 But Peter was standing outside near the door. Therefore, the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, spoke to the doorkeeper, and she led Peter inside. 18:17 Then the servant-girl, who was the doorkeeper, spoke to Peter, "Are you not also from the disciples of

			this man?" He said, "I am not (οὐκ εἰμί)."[84] 18:18 Now the slaves and the assistants were positioned there, having made a fire, because it was cold and they were warming themselves. So Peter was with them, having appeared and warming himself.

Explanation of the Above Passages

Assuming that it would not take too long to walk from the Garden of Gethsemane into the city of Jerusalem, the time is around midnight, meaning that it has been about five hours since Jesus and his disciples first sat down to eat the Passover. Now that the eleven disciples, for the most part, have fled into the night, afraid for their own lives, and the Jewish temple guards have arrested Jesus, they lead him to the house of the high priest, who is Caiaphas. However, there seems to be a discrepancy in the accounts, because John states that they take him first to Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law. Here are the first verses of this subsection of each of the gospel authors—

Matthew writes,
"26:57 And those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together."

Mark states,
"14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and scribes had gathered together."

Luke records,
"22:54 After they arrested him, they led him away and brought him to the house of the high priest."

John's account is clearly different in its wording,
"18:13 And they led him first to Annas, because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year."

But the question is, where is Annas? The answer that makes the most sense is, at Caiaphas' house, and there are two other passages that help with this conclusion—Luke 3:1-2, which provides the historical context for the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, and Acts 4:5-6, which provides a list of the personnel who comprise the Jewish leadership, i.e., the Sanhedrin, who question Peter and John after they have been arrested for publicly proclaiming the message of Jesus as the Messiah—

Here is Luke 3:1-2—

Luke 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

And here is Acts 4:5-6—

Acts 4:5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

Both passages describe Annas as a "high priest," meaning that he held this position before his son-in-law Caiaphas took over the responsibility from him. We have other written evidence to the effect that Annas had been high priest from A.D. 7 to 14 and was succeeded by three of his sons and finally by his son-in-law Caiaphas from A.D. 18 to 36. Therefore, Caiaphas is high priest while Jesus is conducting his public ministry, from A.D. 27-30, but his father-in-law Annas is obviously still heavily involved in the religious and civil leadership of the Jewish people in Israel. Additionally, John 18:13 above says that Caiaphas was "high priest that year." This would be the year not only of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, but also when John and Peter are arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4. In other words, their encounter with the Jewish leaders was probably fairly soon after Pentecost, which itself was fifty days after the Passover and the Feast or Unleavened Bread when Jesus died and rose from the dead.

So, again, where is Annas when the temple guard bring Jesus to him? The answer that best fits with all four accounts of the gospels is that he is at his son-in-law's house, the house of Caiaphas, which may even be his own house if the entire high priestly family are sharing the same dwelling. And, assuming that Annas still is a revered, respected, and older former high priest with significant clout in the Jewish community and among all their leaders in the Sanhedrin, John is saying that he is getting first crack at interrogating Jesus in a *private* meeting. Plus, this is probably the first time that any of these men "of high-priestly descent" (cf. Acts 4:6 above) are able to speak to Jesus up-close and in person apart from the crowds. Therefore, we have here a milestone in human history. Before now, Jesus has intentionally avoided all high government officials, within both the Roman government and the Jewish government. Certainly the latter have been waiting for an opportunity to arrest and confront him regarding his claim to be the predicted Messiah, and they have also been planning to get rid of him as quickly as possible in order to bring an end to his pesky movement which has attracted so much attention and distracted the Jewish populace from their allegiance to them.

John in his gospel mentions several times during the course of Jesus' three-year ministry when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem made up of chief priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and elders converse at least briefly with Jesus. The first may be in John 2:13-25 during the first occasion of his expelling the merchants and money-changers from the temple. John writes in vs. 18-21—

John 2:18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"
2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
2:20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"
2:21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

Because this event takes place in the temple, perhaps "the Jews" who are speaking to Jesus are members of the Sanhedrin. But we also notice that John does not mention any angry response from the them. Nevertheless, I think that we can assume that, even if these Jews are not chief priests and Pharisees, the news of this event must have reached their ears, and they began their inner and group deliberations about what to do with this man who is acting in such a brazen way that is contrary to settled protocol within the temple.

The second passage in John's gospel that possibly describes an interaction between the Jewish leaders and Jesus is in chapter 5 when Jesus visits Jerusalem again and heals a lame man on the Sabbath. As a result, "the Jews" (cf. John 5:10,16,18) seek to kill Jesus for violating the related commandment in the Mosaic Covenant that prohibits "work" on the Sabbath. John writes in vs. 10-18—

John 5:10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."
5:11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"
5:12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?"

5:13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.
5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."
5:15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.
5:16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.
5:17 But he answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."
5:18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Again, John mentions only "the Jews," but the fact that they "were seeking all the more to kill" Jesus probably indicates that he is referring to the leaders, to the Sanhedrin, because they alone would have the authority and primary motivation to eliminate this undesirable competition. In addition, John is revealing by his wording, "all the more," that the movement to do away with Jesus had begun before this particular incident in John 5. Perhaps it goes back as far as John 2 when Jesus cleared the temple of his merchants and money-changers, thus angering the Jewish leadership to the point that they believed they needed to pursue Jesus' demise. If so, then no wonder Nicodemus, a Pharisee, visited Jesus under the secrecy and protection of nighttime in John 3.

The third relevant passage is in John 7 when the leaders hear Jesus in the temple declare himself to be the Messiah. This is also Jesus' third visit to Jerusalem, and in v. 32 we read that "the chief priests and Pharisees [send] officers to seize him," which is after John has first written in v.1—

John 7:1 After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for he was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

Then in v. 10 we learn that Jesus goes to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast of the Mosaic Covenant, and after he arrives there and is teaching in the temple, John writes in v. 25—

John 7:25 So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?

Thus, twice John informs us that there is definitely a current of thought running through the minds of some of the Jews, and most likely the leaders especially, that Jesus needs to die. The only question is how to accomplish this. The fourth previous passage which speaks of a conspiracy to kill Jesus is in John 8 during the same visit to Jerusalem when "the scribes and the Pharisees" bring to him a woman caught in adultery, hoping to trap him in another violation with respect to the Mosaic Covenant. John writes in vs. 5-6—

John 8:5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 8:6 They were saying this, testing him, so that they might have grounds for accusing him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground.

If Jesus does not agree with these leaders' interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant, then he clearly is not the Messiah and, indeed, deserves to die, because they are both the self-declared and accepted experts in understanding the Old Testament. Plus, Jesus will be demonstrating that he is anti-Law and anti-God. Such a violation of the Mosaic Covenant deserves the death penalty, especially because they would blame him for making a false claim to be the Messiah. But Jesus disappoints them by responding that the one among them who is without sin should cast the first stone to execute the offending woman. Each of them at least has the wherewithal not to assert that he is sinless, and one by one they leave, starting with the older ones, which reveals the natural insolence of the youth and their presumption of absolute flawless thinking.

The fifth pertinent passage is in John 10 during Jesus' fourth and next to last visit to Jerusalem. it is the Feast of Dedication, i.e., Hanukkah, and "the Jews" in v,. 24 ask him to speak plainly that he is the Messiah. He does exactly this, and John writes in vs. 31 and 39—

John 10:31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him…
10:39 Therefore they were seeking again to seize him, and he eluded their grasp.

Again, Jesus' accusers in John 10 probably include members of the Jewish leadership. Similarly, in Matthew 21:12-46, Mark 11:15-12:12, and Luke 19:45-20:19, these synoptic gospels record two incidents where "the chief priests and the scribes" (cf. Matthew 21:15) and "the chief priests and elders of the people" (cf. Matthew 21:23) have a direct encounter with Jesus soon after he has arrived in Jerusalem for the last time, which is a week or so before this Passover. In the first case, Jesus has driven out the merchants and money-changers from the temple for at least the second time, and he is healing "the blind and the lame." I say for at least the second time, because it is entirely possible that each time Jesus visited Jerusalem, he performed this same temple cleansing action and made himself that much more loathsome and displeasing in the eyes of the Sanhedrin. Matthew in his account writes in vs. 15-16 regarding the first encounter in this chapter between Jesus and the Jews,

Matthew 21:15 When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant. 16 And they said to him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself'" <Psalm 8:2>?

In Psalm 8, David expresses his awe and wonder at God's willingness to make the Davidic Covenant with him whereby his descendants will rule over Israel as king and each be the Son of God, i.e., God's proxy and substitute on the earth. He begins the psalm by declaring the majesty of God and His activity within the creation, and then in v. 2 he uses hyperbole and says that His majesty is so great that even little children, indeed infants and nursing babies, who obviously cannot understand God, nevertheless extol Him. In this first event, Jesus is receiving from the Jews, including their children (!), a warm and celebratory welcome in the temple, and the Jewish leaders are reacting with anger, probably because they think that they deserve this more than he does. Jesus responds by borrowing David's figure of speech in Psalm 8 to instruct these leaders that God is doing something marvelous in line with the Davidic Covenant right in front of their eyes, and that they should change their attitude towards him. But we know that they never do.

In the second encounter with the leaders, Jesus is again in the temple the next day, and "the chief priests and the elders of the people" come to him and ask him by what authority he is teaching about the Kingdom of God? Jesus responds by asking them whether John the Baptist performed his baptisms as authorized by God or man? Matthew in his account writes in vs. 25-27,

Matthew 21:25 …And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet." 27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Thus, the Jewish leaders claim ignorance because they do not want to admit that God has granted John the authority to baptize individuals. Plus, they are afraid of the crowd and of further losing their loyalty, since they consider John to have been a genuine prophet. As a result, Jesus refuses to answer their question. He then tells several parables that indict the chief priests and elders for disobeying God. Matthew ends this story with vs. 45-46,

Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they understood that he was speaking about them. 46 When they sought to seize him, they feared the people, because they considered him to be a prophet.

When the leaders realize that Jesus is criticizing them, they try to arrest him on the spot. But they fail to do so because, again, they are afraid of the crowd who consider Jesus to be a genuine prophet. Thus, there have been several situations where the chief priests and other Jewish leaders in Jerusalem have spoken with Jesus. But the presence of the crowds and their fear of them have prevented the leaders

from pursuing their goal of getting rid of him. Mark is very explicit in his account of the above two events, that ultimately their desire is "to destroy him" (cf. Mark 11:18).

Therefore, the Sanhedrin have all been waiting anxiously for this moment when they finally are able to arrest Jesus and bring him to Caiaphas' home away from the prying eyes and ears of his adoring crowds. But Caiaphas and the other leaders defer to his father-in-law as the one who first has the opportunity to converse with this man who has been irritating and frustrating them with both his claim to be the Messiah and his miracles that have been making him so popular among the people of Israel. In the next subsection, we will look at Jesus' conversation with Annas as John records it in 18:19-24. This will be followed by his trial before the entire Jewish leadership and then the three times that Peter denies Jesus. Following Peter's denials and the Jewish leaders' taking Jesus to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, we will look at Judas' response to Jesus' being condemned by the Sanhedrin and determine more carefully what the Bible is saying about this man who is handing the Son of God over to his enemies.

In the meantime, John indicates, "18:14 It was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was better for one man to die on behalf of the people." He is referring to the story in John 11:47-53 of the Jewish leaders' response to Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead—

> John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
> 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,
> 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."
> 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that he might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.
> 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.
> 54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.

This is such a fascinating and surprising story. Jesus has been performing at least hundreds of miracles during the three-year period of his public ministry, and the Jewish leaders even acknowledge this fact. What should be their response? Belief in Jesus as their Messiah, their Lord and Savior, the King of Israel who will destroy their enemies and fulfill God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 to make of them the greatest nation in all human history. And their belief in Jesus should follow "naturally" because God the Father has intended the miracles to attest to and affirm that Jesus is the Anointed King of Israel as predicted by the Old Testament. This is what Moses meant when he told the Israelites 1,500 years earlier, "Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen; you shall listen to him" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

However, instead of "listening" to and obeying Jesus as God's Messiah and prophet, these Jews are reacting with irritation, frustration, hostility, and confusion. They are irritated with the effects of his miracles, because many of their fellow Israelites are believing in him and following him as their rabbi, thus abandoning or at least reducing their loyalty to these Jewish leaders. They are frustrated because they are afraid of losing their country completely to the Romans if they allow Jesus to go on performing miracles and proclaiming himself to be the Messiah so that all the Jews believe in him, which would most likely spark a violent reaction from the Roman government and dissolve the delicate relationship between the Sanhedrin and the Romans which is providing peace for the Jews on the land of Israel. They are hostile to Jesus, because they have been thinking for a while that they need to kill him in order to keep him from ruining their lives as Roman subjects. And they are confused because they do not quite know what to do to solve their problem and stop Jesus in the light of his great popularity.

But their high priest, Caiaphas, is thinking more clearly than they are, and he asserts that Jesus must die and be eliminated from the nation of Israel so that they all are not eliminated by the Romans and lose their country and land one way or another—either through complete genocide or through the Romans' exiling all the Jews. But Caiaphas' statement is a little confusing the way the NAS95 translates it, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish" (John 11:49-50). It sounds as though he is claiming that the

other leaders are ignorant, while God has personally spoken to him, the high priest, and told him that this one man, Jesus, has to die for the nation of Israel. However, I think that the more reasonable way to interpret his statement is that their confusion stems from the fact that they are simply not seeing the obvious. They want to kill Jesus, but they cannot quite bring themselves to embrace this solution to their problem. Caiaphas, therefore, is saying explicitly what everyone wants, that the best way to handle this situation is to kill the pest, Jesus of Nazareth, so as to remove him entirely and finally from their midst.

Nevertheless, John goes on to say that Caiaphas is not speaking "on his own initiative." In other words, on the one hand he knows what he saying, that Jesus has to die so that they can eliminate the possibility of losing their nation to the Romans. On the other hand, he does not realize that his words not only are true with respect to what he intends, but also are true for what God has required of Jesus in order for him to fulfill his role as the Messiah during his first appearance. Thus, John can state the theological importance of Caiaphas' words, that he "prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation" (cf. John 11:51)—even if the high priest does not himself realize this importance. While Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others knew that God was speaking through, Caiaphas is not aware that his thoughts and words actually match God's. As a result, he is an unaware prophet while Isaiah and others were aware prophets.

In addition, John says that Caiaphas' insistence that Jesus die for the nation of Israel to save them from the wrath of the Romans means that he will "also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." There are two options for who are these "children of God who are scattered abroad." John may mean the Jews who live outside the land of Israel, or he may mean Gentiles who also live outside the land of Israel and are not physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. But our interpreting John depends upon what he means by the word "nation" in vs. 50, 51, and 52. The Greek word is *ethnos* (ἔθνος), from which we get our word ethnic (meaning relating to a group that has a common ancestry, national origin, and cultural beliefs). We notice that Caiaphas says in v. 50 that his concern is that "the whole nation not perish." To whom is he referring as "the whole nation"? In this context, I do not think that he means all the Jews, wherever they live in the Roman Empire. Even if the Romans were to become so angry with Jesus and his popularity among the Jews there on the land of Israel, they would probably eliminate only this subordinate province of Israel and not kill every Jew who lives throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

In fact, in A.D. 135 after finally losing all patience with the Jews who had rebelled twice against Rome (once in A.D. 70 and now again starting in A.D. 132), Emperor Hadrian summoned his best general, Sextus Severus, from Britain, the western extreme of the Roman Empire, and he brought crack troops from as far away as Germany. Clearly, Hadrian was intent on complete military success, and his special forces proceeded to sweep the land of Israel of all Jews. General Severus and his army killed 580,000 Jews, destroyed 50 fortified cities and 985 villages, and exiled or sold into slavery any remaining Jews. Consequently, I think that that it is this limited "perishing of the whole nation" to which Caiaphas is referring. He and his fellow leaders are truly afraid of losing their land (*and* their power, their authority, and their luxurious lifestyles—just like most government leaders who become obsessed with these once they gain positions of leadership). Since this is what Caiaphas means by "the whole nation," it follows that John means the same thing. They both are talking about the Jewish people who are living on the land of Israel while also being under the authority of the Roman government. Caiaphas and the other Jewish leaders have found a way to co-rule with Rome, so that everyone is living in relative peace. He does not want to upset this delicate balance and see the Jews either exiled from their land or killed by the Romans. Therefore, I think "children of God who are scattered abroad" in v. 52 are also Jews who are living outside the land of Israel. In this way, John, the gospel author, is telling his readers that God's plan for Jesus to die is not only for the Jews living on the land of Israel, but also for the Jews who are currently living in other parts of the Roman Empire (and, by extrapolation, the rest of the world), so that eventually, as predicted by the Old Testament, God will gather all the Jews back into the land that He promised them through Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. And the key event that will allow this to happen is Jesus' crucifixion by which he qualifies to intercede for all these Jews and on the basis of which they become authentic believers in God when Jesus returns.[85]

Next, all four gospels mention that Peter has been following the crowd and entered into the courtyard of Caiaphas' house—

Matthew writes,

"26:58 But Peter was following him from a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and he entered in and sat down with the servants to see the outcome."

Mark's account says,
"14:54 And Peter followed him from a distance into the courtyard of the high priest, and he was sitting with the assistants and warming himself by the light of the fire."

Luke indicates,
"22:54b And Peter was following at a distance. 22:55 And after they kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting in their midst."

And John provides some additional details,
"18:15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, along with another disciple. That disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. 18:16 But Peter was standing outside near the door. Therefore, the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, spoke to the doorkeeper, and she led Peter inside."

At the end of the previous subsection, the last we heard of the eleven disciples was that "they all left [Jesus] and fled" into the night and out of the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mark 14:50; Matthew 26:56). Now we learn that two of them did not run very far and, in fact, came back and followed the temple guard and the rest of the crowd as they led Jesus away. And they stayed close enough behind them that they, too, arrived at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Curiously, Matthew, Mark, and Luke speak of only Peter who enters the "courtyard of the high priest." This is probably because they want to feature Peter in this part of their story because of his fulfilling Jesus' prediction that he will deny him three times before morning breaks.

On the other hand, John tells us that Peter did not just saunter into Caiaphas' house. Instead, he had to receive permission to enter the courtyard. And how did he get permission? Fortunately, there was "another disciple" with him, and this "disciple was known to the high priest." And it will be this disciple who convinces the female "doorkeeper" to allow Peter to come in. So, first, we can ask two questions, "Who is this other disciple?" And, "How had the high priest come to know him and not Peter?" I think that the answer to the first question is, John. At the end of his gospel, he tells the story of Jesus' asking Peter if he loves him and then encourages him to shepherd his fellow Christians well and explains to him how Peter is going to die (cf. John 21:15-24). Peter responds by asking Jesus about another disciple standing close by, "the one who also had leaned back on [Jesus'] chest at the dinner," i.e., during the Passover meal (cf. John 21:20). But Jesus tells him not to concern himself with this other disciple, and then John writes,

John 21:24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things and who has written these things.

What is striking about both the account in John 13 of this disciple's leaning back on Jesus' chest during the Passover and this other incident in John 21 of Peter's asking Jesus about this other man is that the disciple in question is never named. We are told only that it is he who is writing this gospel, i.e., the apostle John. Because the "disciple who was known to the high priest" is also not named in John 18:15-16, I think that we can assume that he, too, is John. Then what about the second question, "How had the high priest and John become acquainted?" John is from the Galilean region of Israel, so that it certainly seems unlikely that their paths would have crossed since they lived far away from one another. In addition, John is a fisherman, a member of the working class of Israel, while both Annas and Caiaphas are of the ruling elite of the Jews. Therefore, their different social and occupational positions makes it unlikely that they would know each other. However, there are some other clues that can help us conclude that John had previously met Annas and/or Caiaphas. The first is that Matthew will later refer to certain women who are present when Jesus is crucified—

Matthew 27:56 Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Mark also mentions these women near the cross—

Mark 15:40 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joseph, and Salome.

The main difference between Matthew's and Mark's list of the women is that Matthew identifies the third woman as "the mother of the sons of Zebedee," while I would suggest that Mark provides her name—Salome, which is probably a Hellenized version of the feminine form of the Hebrew *Shalom*. But who is Salome? Luke does not include these women in his description of Jesus' crucifixion, but I think we find out Salome's identity in John's list of the women who have come to be with Jesus during his suffering on the cross—

John 19:25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

We notice that John is the only author who mentions that Jesus' mother is present at his death. But then he lists, I think, the same three women in Matthew's and Mark's account—Mary Magdalene (listed first in Matthew and Mark), Mary the wife of Clopas (probably the same as the "mother of James and Joseph), and Jesus' "mother's sister." Therefore, Salome is probably Jesus' aunt, the sister of Mary, his mother. She is also the mother of the sons of Zebedee and, consequently, the mother of James and John, which is what we learned two subsections ago in Matthew 26:37 and Mark 14:33. We are also told by Luke, early in his gospel, that Jesus' mother Mary is a "relative" of Elizabeth, the wife of the priest Zacharias and the mother of John the Baptist (cf. Luke 1:36). This also makes Salome and her sons, James and John, relatives of Elizabeth and Zacharias. Because Zacharias is a priest, it would have been through this connection that John became known not only to Annas and Caiaphas as high priests but probably also to many other priests and leaders of the Jewish people. As a result, without any hesitation or anyone questioning him as to what he is doing, John enters into Caiaphas' house and courtyard while the temple guard are bringing Jesus first to Annas.

Peter, on the other hand, is "left standing outside near the door" (cf. John 18:16 above). And John knows this because the two of them probably discovered each other turning around to follow the armed mob and walked together to Caiaphas' house. Maybe John even tells Peter to wait outside while he goes into the courtyard to see if it will be safe for the two of them to be there. Once he reconnoiters the scene, he approaches the servant girl who has the responsibility of being the "doorkeeper" and requests that Peter be allowed to come inside. Being familiar with John, she complies and leads Peter into the courtyard area, where "he was sitting with the assistants and warming himself by the light of the fire" (Mark 14:54). Luke writes, "They kindled a fire and sat down, and Peter was sitting in their midst" (Luke 22:55). Luke does not specify who the "They" are, but we can assume this group to be the crowd of servants and assistants who accompanied the temple guard to the Garden of Gethsemane. It must be a chilly night, because they have made a fire, and all are enjoying its light and warmth in the open air of the courtyard. John does not mention himself again until he says that he is standing with the women at the foot of the cross in chapter 19. But, as in the synoptic gospels, the scene is now set for Peter three times to deny any personal knowledge of Jesus.

Matthew provides one more detail in this episode, that Peter sits with this group who are part of Caiaphas' household in order "to see the outcome." This informs us that Peter probably still has not grasped what Jesus told all the disciples multiple times, that he will be arrested and tried by the Jewish leaders, who will hand him over to the Romans to crucify him. Yet, he will rise from the dead on the third day. Such will be the "outcome," the *telos* (τέλος) in the Greek text of Matthew 26:58, of Jesus' current circumstances. And why is it that Peter is so interested in what is going to happen to him? And why has John also decided to follow the temple guard and the crowd to Caiaphas' home?

We are not explicitly told by the gospel authors, but I think that we can make an educated guess what is going on in the heads of Peter and John on the basis of other data which has been provided by these authors. First, there is the fact that when Jesus twice told his disciples (both during the Passover meal and after they left to walk towards the Mt. of Olives) that all of them would abandon him this night, Peter twice (!) boldly declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not," and "Even if I die with you, I will not deny you" (Mark 14:29 & 31 respectively). He also says, "I will lay down my life for you" in John 13:37. Therefore, when Peter runs for his life with the rest of the disciples as the temple guard are arresting Jesus, his conscience probably starts to get the better of him, and he thinks, "I did tell Jesus that I will not abandon

him, and that I am willing to die with him." Consequently, he begins slowing down and falling behind the rest of the disciples (except John obviously). Then he stops and decides that he wants to remain faithful to what he told Jesus. He turns around and carefully finds his way back to the armed mob and follows them at a safe distance until they reach Caiaphas' house. As he maybe is congratulating himself for his boldness in placing himself so close to danger, he is also not thinking about Jesus' prediction of his denying him three times before the morning. Or if he is thinking about it, he is somehow convincing himself that Jesus is wrong, so that he will muster the fortitude to withstand the temptation of denying him. Nevertheless, God, the transcendent author of all reality, has His plans for Peter, and no one, not even Peter, will prevent them from being fulfilled. Thus, Peter has arrived at Caiaphas' gate, but now there is the question of how he is going to gain entrance into the courtyard in order to see what will be the "outcome" of these current circumstances?

This is where John's presence is also important as the drama of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion continues to unfold. Similar to Peter, John initially panics, thinks only of saving his own life from the armed mob, and begins running away from the Garden of Gethsemane. But then he too slows his pace, stops, turns around, and begins finding his way back to the temple guard as they are leading Jesus away. In the process, he most likely discovers that Peter is doing the same thing, and the two walk together at a safe distance behind the crowd.

But I also think that we can assume that John's reasons for changing his mind are radically different from Peter's. Peter is hoping to save face. He does not want to be accused of lying about his willingness to die for Jesus. John, on the other hand, is operating out of love for his Messiah and rabbi. We remember that, above, we were able to identify the author of John's gospel as "the one who also had leaned back on [Jesus'] chest at the dinner" (cf. John 21:20). However, there is another very important detail about John that he mentions five times in his gospel—in John 13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2; 21:7, and 21:20-24 as listed below—

> John 13:23 There was reclining on Jesus' chest one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.
>
> John 19:26 When Jesus then saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.
>
> John 20:2 So [Mary Magdalene] ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."
>
> John 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.
>
> John 21:20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back on His chest at the dinner and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays you?" 21 So Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Rather than explaining the contexts of each of these verses, I only point out that they refer to the disciple "whom Jesus loved," whom we have identified in the explanation above as John, the author of this gospel. But now the question is, "Why is only John called the disciple 'whom Jesus loved?'" And Jesus himself encourages his apostles, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (cf. John 13:34) This sounds as though there should be an equality of love among the apostles. But was Jesus different, so that he had his favorite among them? And what do we think of this, when the apostle Paul also says in Romans 2:11, "For there is no partiality with God"? However, Paul is talking about God's judgment of individuals at the end of

history—that all individuals who have hearts that have been changed and are obedient to God will equally obtain eternal life (whether Jews or Gentiles), while all individuals who have hearts that remain disobedient to God will equally experience God's eternal condemnation (whether Jews or Gentiles). And speaking of Jews and Gentiles, has not God chosen the former to use them and "love" them as a special and unique ethnic group in human history? And will He not make them the greatest nation in all human history, so that they rule over the Gentiles and the rest of the world when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel? And does this not mean that, in an important and substantial way, God loves the Jews more than He loves any nation of Gentiles (including the United States of America!)? Therefore, it should neither surprise us nor offend us if Jesus, as God's Messiah and the icon of God within human history, loves John more than any other disciple, or even more than us. And perhaps this means that, at this point in the story of Jesus' apostles, John himself has a greater love for and commitment to Jesus than his fellow disciples, even greater than Peter.

I think that this is why John turns back to follow the temple guard as they lead Jesus to Caiaphas' house. It is for a completely different reason from Peter. Peter is acting out of fear of embarrassment (and yet he will be embarrassed, as we will see). John is acting of out of love. Indeed, he additionally will be the only disciple who has the level of commitment, love, and courage to stand with Jesus' mother and the other women at the foot of the cross in order to do what he can to support his Messiah and these women in their grief (cf. John 19:26-27). And as the story goes, Peter would not have been able to enter into Caiaphas courtyard and fulfill Jesus' prediction of denying him three times if it were not for John's love for his rabbi. Therefore, we see that Peter's motives are not entirely pure while John's most likely are. Yet, both men are living out their different roles as two very important disciples of Jesus and who will nevertheless eventually end up in the same place emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. The book of Acts reveals that they both become bold apostles and spokesmen for Jesus who are willing to risk their lives for him as they obey God rather than man (as we will explore later in this Passion Narrative).

The important lesson for us is that, if, before He brought the creation into existence, God chose and predestined us to become Christians, then He will change our hearts and make us authentic believers who will eventually acquire eternal salvation and life by means of His constant faithfulness and Jesus' advocacy. This means, also, that the path by which we reach our eternal goal may be a little up and down spiritually like Peter's or a little up without as much downness like John's. And either path will be God's choice for us, within which it will be our existential responsibility to embrace and work through both our pleasant and unpleasant circumstances. And we must do so with as much genuine faith, belief, love, obedience, and hope in our eternal destinies as we can muster within us.

And we should not forget that the other nine apostles are probably in hiding by this time and will not come back into the story in a significant way for four more days when Jesus appears to the entire group on Sunday after his resurrection. Yet, they too will perform their duties as bona fide apostles who boldly proclaim Jesus as the Messiah and risk their lives doing so. Indeed, James, John's brother, will become the second Christian martyr (after Stephen in Acts 7) and the first apostle to lose his life for his faith when King Herod decides to use James' death as a way to ingratiate himself to unbelieving Jews (cf. Acts 12).

But, as always, to God be the glory for whatever He has planned for our lives.

j. John's Account of Jesus Before Only Annas and His Assistants

Wednesday between midnight and 1 a.m.

John 18:19-24
18:19 Then, the high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. 18:20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews gather, and I have said nothing in secret. 18:21 Why are you asking? Ask those who have listened to what I have said to them. Behold, they know what I have said." 18:22 After he said these things, one of the assistants standing nearby slapped Jesus and said, "Do you answer the high priest in this manner?" 18:23 Jesus responded to him, "If I have spoken improperly, bear witness to the impropriety. But if I have spoken properly, why did you strike me?" 18:24 Subsequently, Annas passed him on bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Explanation of the Above Passage

We now arrive at Jesus' trial before the Jewish leaders who have reached the end of their ropes and are committed to finding a way to get rid of this man who, in their minds, is falsely claiming to be the Messiah, the descendant of David and king of Israel who will restore their kingdom while destroying their enemies, the Romans. We begin with a private meeting (or at least, semi-private meeting with a few assistants present) between Jesus and Annas. Only John in his gospel provides us with a description of this event. There is no parallel passage in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Instead, in Matthew 26:59-68, Mark 14:55-65, and Luke 22:66-70, these authors will jump ahead to Jesus' trial before the entire Sanhedrin, which follows his conversation with Annas. Then, afterwards, we will hear about Peter and his denying Jesus three times.

We continue now with John's account, starting with,

John 18:19 Then, the high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his teaching."

The time is probably after midnight and before 1 a.m., and the temple guard have led Jesus into Caiaphas' house where his father-in-law Annas, the former and still very influential high priest, is waiting. Annas must have requested to speak with Jesus before he is put on trial in front of the entire Jewish leadership, and of course the dutiful son-in-law Caiaphas has complied, granting this privilege to Annas.

John tells us that he asks Jesus "about his disciples and his teaching." Jesus' reply seems to indicate that Annas was never present during the last three years when Jesus taught publicly in Jerusalem and the temple. He most certainly has heard about his teaching, but he has not been present himself (for fear of appearing as though he is actually interested in what Jesus has to say?). So we can imagine that, as Annas understands that Jesus' death and crucifixion is imminent when he is condemned by the Sanhedrin, he wants to hear straight from Jesus' mouth what he has to say about his claim to be the Messiah and thus leads the conversation in this direction.

But why is Annas asking him about his disciples in addition to his teaching? Surely his intelligence services have been able to inform him of who these men are. There is even the fact in the subsection above that he may know both John and James because they are relatives of Zacharias, the priest and John the Baptist's father. I think the correct way to interpret Annas' question is that he really wants to know two things. The first is, since Jesus asserts that he is the Messiah, why did he not choose Annas and other obvious leaders among the Pharisees, scribes, and priests, who not only have been properly educated in the Hebrew scriptures, but also are the accepted leaders and teachers of the Jewish people? Why did he choose four Galilean fishermen, a hated tax-collector, a former insurrectionist and terrorist, and other men who have no elevated social, governmental, or intellectual standing in the nation of Israel?

Certainly, the Messiah, who has been predicted by the Old Testament, should consider Annas and the rest of the Sanhedrin to be key to his achieving his ultimate goal of restoring the Kingdom of Israel and ruling the world, because he is going to need help, and the current Jewish leaders are the most qualified (at least in their minds) to provide him with assistance. Instead, Jesus has chosen the dredges of Jewish society to be his disciples, while also hanging out with only the people of the lowest class in Jewish society—prostitutes, drunkards, and those of whom God obviously disapproves because He has afflicted them with either diseases or the inner turmoil of demons. The Sanhedrin must be clearly aware that the Mosaic Covenant itself states that God blesses those Jews who obey Him and will curse those who disobey Him. And, as far as Annas is probably concerned, no one among the people of Israel is more blessed and deserving of ruling Israel and the world alongside the Messiah than him and his fellow leaders of the Sanhedrin, because God has made them wealthy, healthy, and powerful. Unfortunately, sinful human beings, when they become powerful and in authority over others, are inclined to think that they deserve all the power and respect that they can acquire, regardless of how corrupt and evil they are. And they may be so blind to how unscrupulous and dishonorable they are that they will even attribute their position and status to God's blessing them.

The second thing Annas probably wants to know is the exact content of Jesus' teaching to his disciples, in order to understand better why an eclectic group that includes fishermen, a tax-collector, and a former insurrectionist have become so captivated by his words. Clearly, these men are ignorant of the Bible because they have bought into Jesus' teaching and have not been loyal to Annas, his fellow priests, and the scribes and Pharisees, who are the best students and teachers of the Old Testament. Even worse, Jesus is leading astray entire crowds, indeed almost the entire population of northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has become so popular in the north that many Jews have periodically

left their homes and businesses and traveled long distances for many days to be in the presence of this special (but false) rabbi. Annas wants to know what kind of message has captured the minds of the Jewish throngs, who normally attend synagogue every Sabbath and hear the Bible taught by respectable teachers, but who now have been so badly misled by Jesus.

Not surprisingly, Jesus does not answer Annas' question directly. Instead, he makes three statements, then asks Annas a question, and finally provides an instruction and reason for the instruction. Jesus says,

> John 18:20 I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews gather, and I have said nothing in secret. 18:21 Why are you asking? Ask those who have listened to what I have said to them. Behold, they know what I have said."

Jesus' response may sound to certain ears somewhat disrespectful and impertinent. Who does he think he is not to answer Annas' question plainly and, thereby, to instruct in a polite manner the most important and powerful man in Israel? Does he think that he is the Messiah? Well, yes. For example, at the very beginning of his public ministry, Luke informs us that Jesus attended synagogue in his hometown Nazareth and read from the scroll of Isaiah,

> Luke 4:16 He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and according to his custom he entered the synagogue on the day of the Sabbath, and he stood up to read.
> 4:17 And the book of Isaiah the prophet was given to him. When he unrolled it, he found the place where it had been written,
> 4:18 The Spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to announce release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to accomplish release for those who have been oppressed, 4:19 to announce the acceptable year of Yahweh <Isaiah 61:1,2a>.
> 4:20 After closing the book and giving it back to the attendant, he sat down.
> 4:21 And he went on to say, "Today, this writing has been fulfilled with your hearing it."

During this earlier event in Luke 4, Jesus is declaring that he has been "anointed" by God "to announce the acceptable year of Yahweh," which God says in Isaiah 61 is the time when He will fulfill His promise to Abraham and make his descendants through Isaac and Jacob the most powerful nation in the human history. Even though this will not actually happen until Jesus' return, which is obviously still future to us, nevertheless his first appearance has started the clock ticking towards the last days of the present realm to which "the acceptable year" of God refers. Thus, in Nazareth in northern Israel, Jesus has begun his three-year long ministry "to proclaim" the "good news" and "to announce" to the Jews that God is truly in the process of fulfilling His promises—implying that his future, second appearance will result in the completion of this fulfillment. However, as the rest of the story of Jesus' life in the four gospel accounts bears out, first he must die for the sins of the world in order to qualify as the Jews' final king and high priest who will intercede before God on behalf of their sins.

Also, in Luke 4:18, the word "anointed" in Greek is the verb from which we get our English noun "Christ," which is the translation of the Hebrew *masheeaḥ* (מָשִׁיחַ), from which we get our word "Messiah" and which means, in this case, the most special person in Israel with the most important role for the Jews and the rest of mankind. Therefore, Jesus, in the synagogue of Nazareth, is claiming to be God's promised Messiah, who, as the final Davidic king, will someday restore the Kingdom of Israel and rule over it and the rest of the world. Plus, by the time he speaks with Annas, Jesus has been traveling around the land of Israel and even outside it to Gentile cities such as Tyre and Sidon, proclaiming this truth, while also performing hundreds of miracles by which God has constantly been affirming his identity as the predicted and permanent king of Israel. Then, there is the additional fact that his disciples, and not just the twelve in Luke 9:1-6, but also seventy others in Luke 10:1-24, went from village to village and proclaimed the same message while also performing miracles to substantiate its truth. This allows us to realize that Jesus is not responding to Annas out of arrogance, impudence, sarcasm, or disrespect. Instead, he is properly and honestly asserting the plain and obvious truth about himself, while also politely rebuking Annas—even if Annas is unwilling to receive any constructive criticism from God's Messiah.

Consequently, in John 18:20, Jesus reminds Annas (who must know already) that he has "spoken openly to the world." In other words, he has "always taught in the synagogue [wherever he has traveled among the Jews in the land of Israel] and in the temple [right there under Annas' nose in the capital city of Jerusalem]." And it is the temple "where all the Jews gather," almost daily for those who live in Jerusalem and at least three times a year for others throughout the Roman Empire, according to God's requirements for the nation of Israel in the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Leviticus 23 regarding the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of Weeks or Harvest, i.e., Pentecost, the Feast of Booths, and the Day of Atonement).

He further tells Annas, "I have said nothing in secret." This obviously means that Jesus never intended his activities to be clandestine and certainly not illicit. Everything he has taught his disciples and others, as well as all his miracles and activities, have been public, right out in the open for all to hear and see. He is not like other men of his day who had falsely claimed to be the Messiah, made plans in secret to overthrow the Roman and Jewish governments, and carried out covert assassinations of Roman soldiers and officials. He has been, is, and always will be (even when he returns!) a public teacher and leader, who hides nothing of who he is and what his role and purposes are.

What is Jesus implying by these three statements? That Annas, currently the most powerful man in Jewish society, should have accompanied all the crowds who have been following him the last few years, thus listening to him and learning about the Kingdom of God as it is in the process of coming into existence according to the predictions in the Old Testament. In other words, Jesus is presenting Annas with a cordial and loving rebuke, which is why he next poses the question to him, "Why are you asking?" This is also to say, "Why in the world would a bright, educated leader of Israel like yourself be so ignorant of me and the most important event so far in human history, the first appearance of God's Messiah? If there is anything or anyone whom you should know like the back of your hand, I am this thing and this person! Read the Hebrew scriptures and see if my activities and I line up with what they say. For example, I am performing miracles as a prophet as Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 18 of future prophets—that they like him would arise within Israel, perform miracles for the Jewish people, and deserve to be respected and obeyed. And guess what! I am the final and most important prophet of Jewish and human history."

Jesus had made the same loving rebuke to another member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, in John 3 after he had explained to him that a sinful Jew must be "born again" by being inwardly changed by the Spirit of God in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus' response was, "How can these things be?" John then writes,

> John 3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, "You are a teacher of Israel, and do you not know these things? 3:11 Truly, truly I say to you that what we know, we speak, and what we have seen, we bear witness, and you do not embrace our witness."

Like Annas, Nicodemus is one of the most educated men in Israel, and yet he is having trouble grasping that God must change sinful people in their hearts and minds in order for them to become qualified for the Kingdom of God that the Messiah will bring about through his death, resurrection, ascension, and return. Jesus assures Nicodemus that God the Father and he ("we") "know" and "speak" the truth, while they have also have grasped the truth about God and himself and are presenting this truth of his being the long-expected Jewish Messiah who will free Israel from their earthly enemies and provide the people with eternal forgiveness. Yet, most of the Jewish people ("you," which is plural in the Greek text) are not currently embracing and will not "embrace" the truth and believe in Jesus—because he must be rejected and executed by his own people in order to fulfill his role *during his first appearance* as the crucified Messiah. Therefore, just because someone like Annas or Nicodemus has chosen to become a biblical leader does not mean that he understands the truth of the Bible and his presenting it correctly. Both Peter and Jude make this clear in their letters regarding "false teachers" who insinuate themselves into Christian communities and distort the Bible for their own selfish purposes (cf. 2 Peter and Jude). We do not know how Annas ended his days on this earth, but he may have remained stubborn and unbelieving in his heart and mind, while it will be clear later in this Passion Week narrative that God has changed Nicodemus' heart and causes him to demonstrate authentic belief and obedience to Him and Jesus as the Messiah.

Next, Jesus proceeds in a manner that again may seem impudent and disrespectful to others, but I think we can take it as another polite and loving rebuke of Annas by the man whom God has sent to be

his very own eternal Savior and the final Davidic king, the Son of God and Messiah in accordance with the covenant which God made with David a thousand years earlier. Thus, Jesus actually instructs (or we can even say, commands) the man who is supposed to be the most learned and capable teacher of the Hebrew scriptures in the contemporary Jewish nation, “Ask those who have listened to what I have said to them. Behold, they know what I have said.”

Do we see what Jesus is implying here? That mere, illiterate, relatively uneducated peasants, farmers, fishermen, and even prostitutes and others who make up the most outcast of Jewish society throughout the land of Israel are better educated in the Bible than this high priest. The least likely Jews, those who daily work their fields by the sweat of their brows, those who toil on the Sea of Galilee and are at the mercy of winds and the fish, and those who have made their livings in immoral and unbiblical ways understand God and the biblical authors better than this renowned high priest and leader of the Jews, because they have not only heard Jesus’ teaching, but most of them have embraced it as that which resonates with what they have heard and learned every week in their synagogues. So if Annas wants to become a well-educated and learned scholar of the truth, all he has to do is ask the supposed ignorant crowds. These are people whom Annas obviously thinks should be following him and not this backwoods carpenter from Galilee and hickville Nazareth.

John then tells us,

> John 18:22 After he said these things, one of the assistants standing nearby slapped Jesus and said, ‘Do you answer the high priest in this manner?’”

Obviously, this man considers Jesus’ response to be inappropriate. However, if he continues believing this way and ignores not only the previous signs of Jesus’ miracles but also the upcoming sign when God raises him from the dead after his crucifixion, where, in both cases, He affirms that Jesus is the Messiah, then he is in for a rude awakening at the final judgment. We can hear God ask him, “Can you give me a good reason why you slapped your Messiah, the final and permanent king of Israel?” And all God will hear from this man is silence, because by then he will know that he was wrong. Granted, a slap on the face is not as serious an infraction against Jesus as crucifying him. But the assistant’s response is what people do when they come under the spell of ungodly and evil leaders who may even be claiming to know and worship God. However, they are disregarding God and His truth while self-righteously justifying their actions. And we can only wonder if this man ever grasps the significance of how offensive towards God and Jesus this small act was. And after the slap he asks Jesus if his response to Annas is an appropriate way to speak to the high priest?

Jesus’ answer is,

> John 18:23 If I have spoken improperly, bear witness to the impropriety. But if I have spoken properly, why did you strike me?”

Another way to state what Jesus says to the assistant is, “Of course this is how I should speak to all living, breathing Jews and Gentiles, because their eternal destiny is on the line; but if they cannot hear the truth from even the lowliest member of Jewish society, who has heard it from me, then they cannot hear it from me, the Messiah” (cf. v. 22). If Annas is so proud that he is unwilling to ask the man on the street, “What has Jesus said? What has he taught? And what has he done?”, then Jesus is saying to this assistant, “What is wrong with pointing out the truth to him?”

This is always the embarrassing nature of truth for those who are unwilling to believe it, that it will not go away, and it can come from the weakest and most powerless member of society. Truth is not a respecter of persons. It does not first examine a person’s bank account, or his status in society, or his political position with its power and authority, or his success in business and his respect among other wealthy business owners, or his accomplishments that have brought him popularity and fame in the world. Just as 2+3=5 is true for both the rich and the poor, for both the famous and obscure, and for both those who succeed in life and who fail in life, so also Jesus as God’s Messiah is true for everyone. This means that the lowliest person in the world, who believes Jesus for what he says, is greater in the eyes of God than the most powerful person in the world, who lacks this same belief. Greatness is in what a person understands and believes, not in his worldly successes. In addition, all those of genuine belief in Jesus and God enjoy equal status and love from God. Certainly, they have different roles within the

community of believers and in world history, but they are equally valued and loved by God because they will all equally obtain eternal salvation and life in the Kingdom of God.

Afterwards, Jesus adds, "But if I have spoken properly, why did you strike me?" Thus, he is asking this assistant, "Oh by the way, why are you treating me the way you are? Does slapping my face really make sense in the light of all the miracles which I have performed, which confirm that my claim is true that I am the Messiah? Perhaps you may want to reconsider your action and actually apologize to me. You may even want to repent of all your sins before God and me, your Savior—if you are willing to believe me to be such."

There was probably more to Jesus' brief conversation with Annas, but this is all that John tells us. Now it is time for the entire Sanhedrin to put Jesus on trial, "18:24 Subsequently, Annas passed him on bound to Caiaphas, the high priest" and, therefore, to the rest of the Jewish leadership.

k. Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's Accounts of Jesus Before the Entire Sanhedrin

Wednesday about 5 a.m.

Matthew 26:59-68	Mark 14:55-65	Luke 22:63-71	John
26:59 Now, the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking to obtain false witness against Jesus, so that they could put him to death. 26:60 But they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. However, later, two did come forward, 26:61 and they said, "This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it after three days." 26:62 And the high priest stood up and said to him, "Are you not going to answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?" 26:63 However, Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, "I solemnly command you by the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God?" 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You said it. Nevertheless, I tell you, after this you will see	14:55 Now, the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, and they were not finding any. 14:56 For many were giving false testimony against him, but their testimony was not consistent. 14:57 And some stood up and were giving false testimony, saying, 14:58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" 14:59 And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. 14:60 And the high priest stood up in their midst and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do you not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?" 14:61 But he remained silent and did not answer. Again the high priest questioned him and said to him, "Are you the Messiah, the	22:63 Now, the men who were holding him were mocking him and beating him. 22:64 And they blindfolded him and were asking him, saying, "Prophesy. Who is the one who hit you?" 22:65 And they were saying many other things to him as they spoke rebelliously. 22:66 When the day arrived, the council of elders of the people, both the chief priests and the scribes, came together. And they led him away to their Sanhedrin. 22:67 And they said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." And he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe. 22:68 And if I ask you a question, you will not answer. 22:69 From now on, the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> will be seated at the right hand of the power of God <Psalm 110:1>."	John provides no parallel passage of Jesus' trial before the entire Sanhedrin. He describes only his meeting with Annas in John 18:19-24 above.

the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> sitting at the right hand of the Power <Psalm 110:1> and coming on the clouds of heaven <Daniel 7:13>." 26:65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed. What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard his blasphemy. 26:66 What does it seem to you?" And they answered, "He is guilty of death." 26:67 Then they spat in his face, and they beat him with their fists. And others slapped him. 26:68 And they said, "Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who is the one who hit you?"	Son of the Blessed One?" 14:62 And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> sitting at the right hand of the Power <Psalm 110:1> and coming with the clouds of heaven <Daniel 7:13>." 14:63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 14:64 You have heard the blasphemy. How does it seem to you?" And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 14:65 And some began to spit on him, to cover his face, and to beat him with their fists. And they said to him, "Prophesy." And the assistants received him with slaps.	22:70 And they all said, "So are you the Son of God?" And he said to them, "You are saying it. I am." 22:71 Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own mouth."	

Explanation of the Above Passages

While only John has provided an account of Jesus' conversation with the former high priest Annas, he also excludes Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, the entire group of Jewish political and religious leaders. Therefore, we turn to Matthew, Mark, and Luke for learning about his trial. However, we notice that Luke's account places the story of Jesus' being mocked, beaten, slapped, blindfolded, and questioned before the description of his trial while Matthew and Luke place this story after the trial.

I assume that any time either those who are guarding Jesus or the Jewish leaders themselves have the opportunity to mistreat Jesus individually and physically, they take it. Therefore, Luke's account is not wrong. Being the storyteller that he is (like Matthew, Mark, and John), he simply records this detail where he does for his own purposes, so that he can move immediately from Caiaphas' words in 22:71 at the end of the trial to the Sanhedrin's taking Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, in 23:1. But, again, I think that Jesus is being beaten, spat upon, mocked, and derided from the moment he is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane to his death on the cross. There is a lot of contempt, anger, and hostility towards him among the Jewish leaders and their assistants and slaves. And now they have the freedom to lash out at him in anger short of crucifying him, and they do not waste a minute doing so.

In this subsection, Luke provides the reader with a clue as to the time when this segment of Jesus' ordeal is taking place. He writes,

> Luke 22:66 When the day arrived, the council of elders of the people, both the chief priests and the scribes, came together. And they led him away to their Sanhedrin.

I suggested in the previous subsection that Annas met with Jesus around midnight. But Luke is now indicating that after "Annas passed him on bound to Caiaphas, the high priest" (cf. John 18:24), it was several hours before Caiaphas could collect all the Jewish leaders for their meeting with Jesus. This is why I have placed this event at about 5 a.m. (as indicated by the red letters above the table of verses).

It could be confusing that Luke uses the clause, "When the day arrived," because the Jewish day starts at sunset and not at sunrise like ours. Does Luke mean that it was not until the next evening that the Sanhedrin came together and put Jesus on trial? I do not think that this is his intent, because the next subsection reveals that Peter denies Jesus three times before the rooster crows twice, where the third denial and second crow must naturally be as the sun is in the process of rising. Therefore, Luke is probably employing another conventional use of the Hebrew *yom* (יוֹם) and Greek *haymera* (ἡμέρα), so that he is referring to "when the day[light]" is arriving, that is the time when the sun begins to shine, not to the time when the Jewish day begins according to their custom.

Luke, in 22:66, then calls this group "the council of elders, both the chief priests and the scribes," by which he most likely means all the Levitical priests and Bible scholars and teachers who have reached a level of leadership among the Jewish people that they serve as their supreme religious authority and their supreme political and judicial authority—but, in the latter case, just under the authority of their overlords, the Romans. For example, the Jews are not allowed to crucify a criminal, which is why they will take Jesus to Pilate in order to accomplish their ultimate goal regarding him.

Luke also provides the same name which Matthew and Mark use for the entire group, the "Sanhedrin," literally the "sitting down with" (συνέδριον (*soonedrion*)) from συν (*soon*) meaning "with" and ἕδρα (*hedra*) meaning "seat"). These men sit down with one another and rule the nation of Israel—with at least as much authority as the Roman government permits them. Therefore, the Romans only have the ultimate responsibility to determine both the propriety and the consequences of people's actions, if their actions fall outside what the Sanhedrin consider to be the requirements of the biblical message. As I said, this will be the case with Jesus, who is claiming to be the Messiah as predicted by the Old Testament. While the Sanhedrin apparently have the authority to stone people to death, as they do to Stephen in Acts 7, they do not have the right to put anyone to death by crucifixion. Instead, they will have to recommend this extreme penalty to Pontius Pilate, their Roman governor, who then can carry out the sentence on their behalf, which is what happens to Jesus.

Matthew and Mark respectively inform their readers that the Jewish leaders "were seeking to obtain false witness against Jesus, so that they could put him to death" (Matthew 26:59) and "were seeking testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death" (Mark 15:55). The Sanhedrin are so desperate to be free of Jesus that they are willing to use even lies to do so—as long as the witnesses are consistent in their false testimony, a strategy that powerful and evil authorities have employed throughout history in order to get their way. Mark adds in the same verse, "And they were not finding any." As hard as they are trying, the Jewish leaders are failing in their goal of finding people who can provide clear, consistent, and irrefutable evidence to the effect that Jesus is not who he says he is—the Messiah.

Mark goes on so say,

> Mark 14:56 For many were giving false testimony against him, but their testimony was not consistent."

Matthew similarly states,

> Matthew 26:60 But they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward."

Certainly, Israel's leaders can solicit the help of plenty of people who are willing to collaborate with them, even by lying about Jesus, in order to do away with him. But the only problem is, no two witnesses can agree on the details of their lies, and the Mosaic Covenant is clear when it says in Deuteronomy 19:15,

> Deuteronomy 19:15, "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

Interestingly enough, as desperate as the leaders are to do away with Jesus, they feel bound by the biblical injunction not to condemn him merely on the basis of what only one witness testifies. In other words, on the one hand, these men are so corrupt that they are willing to put Jesus to death on the basis of false statements by "witnesses." On the other hand, they somehow conceive of the idea that obeying the biblical instructions of using multiple witnesses in the midst of false testimony is the "right" thing to do. All we can say is, "Wow. Such is the sinful heart of man!"

However, a little later and probably rather unexpectantly,

> Matthew 26:60b …two did come forward, 26:61 and they said, 'This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it after three days.'"

Mark writes,

> Mark 14:57 And some stood up and were giving false testimony, saying, 14:58 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands."'"

It finally appears that the high priests and Pharisees have found what they need—two people who agree on something Jesus said he would do that is clearly heinous and condemnable in its nature, i.e., destroying the very dwelling place of God in Jerusalem, the temple, and even claiming that he would rebuild it in three days.

Obviously, Jesus is delusional, and his statement clearly demonstrates that he is opposed to God. Would the true Messiah predict that he is going to do away with the very center of worship of the one and only God and then bring it back into existence three days later? Absurd and slander against God! Therefore, if Jesus really said this, he is not just a criminal and a liar, worthy of death. He is also insane. Who in the first century A.D. could destroy the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and then, by himself, rebuild it in three days—and even do so, according to Mark's account, without touching any building materials? Obviously, Jesus is mentally ill. And his statements, according to the witnesses, are blasphemous besides, because Jesus is saying that he will destroy the very building which God has required the Jews to construct and possess among them—the temple, i.e., His dwelling place on the Temple Mount in the city which He has chosen for Himself, Jerusalem.

To be fair to these witnesses, it has probably been three years since they heard Jesus make a similar claim during his first visit to Jerusalem. John provides the story in his gospel,

> John 2:13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
> 2:14 And he found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.
> 2:15 And he made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;
> 2:16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making my Father's house a place of business."
> 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me" <Psalm 69:9>.
> 2:18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign do you show us as your authority for doing these things?"
> 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
> 2:20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"
> 2:21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body.
> 2:22 So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this; and they believed the Scripture and the statement which Jesus had spoken.

Unless the witnesses, who are giving false testimony, had asked Jesus directly what he meant when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," they are most likely going to get it wrong as they try to quote him at his trial before the Sanhedrin. All those who heard Jesus three years earlier

certainly thought he was talking about the actual temple in which he was standing, which Herod the Great had built, and which took *forty-six* years to construct. However, as John's editorial comment in v. 21 makes clear, Jesus was referring to his physical body. "Destroy me by crucifying my body, itself a temple of God where He dwells because I am the very icon of the invisible God in the creation," he was saying, "and I will raise it up by means of God's bringing me back to life."

We recall, too, that Paul expresses these ideas that Jesus is applying to himself in the following verses,

> 1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you [pl.] not know that you [pl.] are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you [pl.]?

> Colossians 1:15 [Jesus] is the image/icon of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Metaphorically, authentic believers in God and in Jesus constitute a building where God dwells within it, that is, in them, and they indicate by their lives that they humbly submit to God and rely upon Him for all that they need for their human existences, including mercy and forgiveness in order to gain life in the eternal Kingdom of God. Plus, Jesus is the one human being who manifests all the rational and moral characteristics of God as the person of God within the story which He is telling. To see, watch, and listen to Jesus is to see, watch, and listen to the uncreated, transcendent author of all the created reality. This is the role which God has assigned to Jesus in the history of the creation.

As a result, in answer to the Jews' question in John 2:18, "What sign do you show us as your authority for overturning the tables and driving the money changers and animal merchants out of the temple," Jesus is saying to them, "Just wait. The sign is coming. When you either see me or hear of my being resurrected from the dead after you crucify me, this will be the ultimate sign that God has granted me authority as His Messiah, the King of Israel, and you will know that I am interpreting the Hebrew scriptures accurately, while you have been woefully inadequate in how you have understood them."

But alas, the two witnesses mentioned in Matthew and Mark are not agreeing completely with one another either, because Mark adds,

> Mark 14:59 And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent."

What a frustrating situation for Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and we can feel the tension mounting in the courtyard of the high priest's house as this group of men keep searching and hoping for a proper, legal reason to condemn Jesus and put him to death. They are convinced that he is not the Messiah, but nothing they hear about him from the witnesses can absolutely confirm this. And to make matters worse, he is saying nothing in response to all the false testimony which is being brought against him. Matthew writes,

> Matthew 26:62 And the high priest stood up and said to him, 'Are you not going to answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?' 26:63a However, Jesus kept silent."

Mark says the same thing,

> Mark 14:60 And the high priest stood up in their midst and questioned Jesus, saying, 'Do you not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?' 14:61a But he remained silent and did not answer."

Clearly, Caiaphas is goading Jesus to get him to say something (anything!) where he would incriminate himself and give them reason to denounce him and accuse him of the most heinous crime possible—claiming to be the most important human being in all history, the Messiah! But Jesus is not taking the bait. Finally, Caiaphas loses his patience. And, outside the appropriate boundaries of the Mosaic Covenant, which God had given the people of Israel for their self-governance, he confronts Jesus directly on the main issue which concerns these leaders—whether or not he is claiming to be the long-expected Messiah who will free the Jews from their earthly enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel according to God's first promise in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Matthew's account reads,

26:63b And the high priest said to him, “I solemnly command you by the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God?”

Mark writes,

14:61b Again the high priest questioned him and said to him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

Luke describes the same thing this way,

22:67 And they said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.”

Here is another instance where it may appear as though the gospel authors are contradicting one another. Matthew and Mark state that it is the high priest Caiaphas who asks Jesus this question, while Luke indicates in v. 67, “they said,” referring to “the council of elders of the people, both the chief priests and the scribes.” Was it Caiaphas only who asked the question, or was it the whole group? An obvious, plausible answer is that it was Caiaphas first and then the whole group. They are all reaching the limit of their patience and simply want to move on to hauling Jesus off to Pilate so that he can condemn and crucify him. Probably, Caiaphas blurts out the question, demanding that Jesus state directly what he is claiming, without relying on witnesses who may or may not have heard that he has said that he is the Messiah. And the rest of the Sanhedrin are on the same page, so that after Caiaphas blurts out the question, they chime in and start yelling and demanding the same thing. Therefore, we can easily demonstrate that Matthew and Mark are not contradicting Luke.

Then there is the question itself. Which of the gospel authors is providing the reader with Jesus’ actual words? I suggest that it is a combination of Matthew and Mark, and Luke is merely shortening the question while meaning the same thing. I think that Matthew indicates that Caiaphas really did say, “I solemnly command you by the living God.” In other words, he is trying to use his position as the highest authority in the Jewish nation to strong-arm Jesus into answering him. Jesus could have said, “According to the Mosaic Covenant, I am not required to answer direct questions whereby I would incriminate myself; if two or more witnesses cannot bring consistent testimony against me, then you must let me go.” However, in order to avoid Jesus’ using this legitimate rationale, Caiaphas in effect says to him, “I am the highest Jewish authority in the land in line with God’s requirements in the Mosaic Covenant; therefore, I demand that you tell us plainly what you are claiming!”

The next part of the question is similar. Matthew says, “Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” Mark’s account states, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One,” and all Luke records is, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” What does Caiaphas actually say? In this case, I think it is Mark who provides us with his words. All three indicate that he used the title Messiah, which makes sense in that this is what the Old Testament reveals, that God will eventually send to the Jewish people His “Anointed One,” the literal meaning of Messiah, in order to free them from their earthly enemies, restore the Kingdom of Israel, and, thereby, rule over both them and the world. But Mark tells us that Caiaphas adds the title, “the Son of the Blessed One,” which is to say, the Son of the One whom the Old Testament says the Jewish people should constantly bless, praise, and honor with their words and obedient actions, which is to say, the Son of Yahweh, who is the transcendent God and author of all created reality.

For example, in 1 Chronicles 15 and 16, around 1000 B.C., after King David has brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and placed it in a tent he had set up for it (for it was his son Solomon who later built the first actual temple), he ordered one the Levitical priests to express everyone’s appreciation to God and say,

1 Chronicles 16:8 Oh give thanks to Yahweh, call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples.
16:9 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonders…
16:35 Then say, “Save us, O God of our salvation,
And gather us and deliver us from the nations,
To give thanks to Your holy name,

And glory in Your praise."
16:36 Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
Then all the people said, "Amen," and praised Yahweh.

The complete prayer to God extends from v. 8 to v. 36, but, for our purposes, I have included only the first two and the last two verses. David wants the priests and the rest of the people of Israel to thank and extol God for all His actions within the world, to sing praises to Him, to seek His salvation from their enemies, and finally to say, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." Thus, he makes it clear that God is "the Blessed One" as Caiaphas calls Him in Mark 16:61 above. Consequently, I think that Matthew simply interprets for his readers the title "the Son of the Blessed One," which Mark provides in his account, and says "the Son of God," while Luke leaves it out completely while implying it with the title "Messiah."

In other words, the titles Messiah, Son of God, and Son of the Blessed One mean exactly the same thing. They refer to God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16,

2 Samuel 7:12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.
7:13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (עַד־עוֹלָֽם) (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).
7:14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,
7:15 "but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.
7:16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever (עַד־עוֹלָֽם) (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)."

In this passage, God presents the Davidic Covenant and declares to David that He will establish a dynasty of kings for the nation of Israel for as long as the Jews exist as an ethnic group on this earth, which we know from the rest of the Bible will culminate in His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make them the most powerful, successful, and prosperous people in human history and who will live on the land of Israel in complete safety and security. In addition, God states to David that each descendant of his who is king will be the "Son of God," which we know from both the Bible and other historical texts was the title that Ancient Near Eastern empires gave to their kings, whom they considered the proxies for their chief gods. For example, the Pharaoh of Egypt was the proxy for their chief god, Ra (or Re), the sun-god. The king of Babylon was the proxy for the chief god of the Babylonians, Marduk. Thus, in 2 Samuel 7, God, who is the only God, is telling David that he and the other kings of Israel who follow him (from Solomon through Zedekiah (and finally Jesus)) are God's human proxies, representatives, and substitutes. They will each rule in place of God, which is to say as if God Himself were sitting on their throne in Jerusalem. And the rest of the Old Testament identifies the final Davidic king, who destroys Israel's earthly enemies and sets up a permanent and unassailable Kingdom of God in Israel, as the Messiah (capital "M" while each of the other kings was a messiah, small "m", since the title simply means "anointed one"). Then, the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus is this very person who will complete his role as the king of Israel when he returns. Thus, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin are demanding of Jesus that he either confirm or deny that he is God's Messiah, the Son of God like David, and the final and permanent king of Israel who should be there to destroy their earthly enemies, the Romans, and to restore the Kingdom of Israel so as to rule over the entire earth.

At last, Jesus speaks! Matthew records his words as,

Matthew 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You said it. Nevertheless, I tell you, after this you will see the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> sitting at the right hand of the Power <Psalm 110:1>, and coming on the clouds of heaven <Daniel 7:13>."

Mark's account reads,

Mark 14:62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> sitting at the right hand of the Power <Psalm 110:1> and coming with the clouds of heaven <Daniel 7:13>.”

Luke writes,

Luke 22:67b And he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe. 22:68 And if I ask you a question, you will not answer. 22:69 From now on, the Son of Man <Psalm 8:4> will be seated at the right hand of the power of God <Psalm 110:1>.”

The greatest collision in human history has just occurred. But before we look at the impact that Jesus’ response has on the Jewish leaders, we should first consider which author is providing his actual words. At the beginning of his response, I think that it is Luke, while at the end, it is Matthew. Luke tells us that Jesus answers with words that we might construe as somewhat disrespectful towards these leaders, “If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you a question, you will not answer.” Thus, I think that Jesus boldly and clearly informs Caiaphas and the others, similar to what he has already said to Annas alone, that they really are not interested in the truth, because, if they were, they would not be putting him through the mockery of such a kangaroo court by accusing him unjustly with the intent to find him deserving of death regardless of the lack of evidence.

Another way to say this is that their hearts and minds are so stubborn and hard that they cannot take the clear and incontrovertible evidence of all the miracles which he has performed and come to the rational and correct conclusion that he is the Messiah in line with all the predictions found in their own scriptures, the Hebrew Bible. Thus, Jesus is implying that his answer is a definite, “Yes, I am the Messiah.” But rather than provide Jesus’ longer way of saying this, Matthew interprets it and means the same thing with simply three words, “You said it.” Mark likewise does the same with only two words, “I am.” Therefore, all three gospels are in agreement in meaning with respect to the first part of Jesus’ response.

They also do not contradict one another in regard to the last part of his response, but I think that Matthew’s wording is the most complete, “After this you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (v. 64). Mark leaves out the phrase “after this,” but he means the same thing with only the word “and” (v. 62). Luke omits the statement about “coming on the clouds of heaven,” but he implies it because all three parts of Jesus’ response—his being the “Son of Man,” his sitting at the right hand of God, and his coming on the clouds of heaven—refer to the same person, the Messiah and final king of Israel (v. 69). Let us consider each one of these references.

First, Jesus speaks of himself as the “Son of Man.” In Psalm 8, its author David has just heard God’s statement of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7, that He is going to produce a permanent line of kings of Israel, who will descend from David and who will each have the title “Son of God,” meaning that they will be God’s human proxies and representatives on the earth. David is so overwhelmed and humbled by the grandeur of this gift from God that he writes Psalm 8. Some students of the Bible interpret David as speaking in this psalm of the responsibility that God gave to all human beings in Genesis 1 to rule over the earth after He brought the creation into existence. But I think it makes more sense to understand David to be referring to the kings of Israel in line with his prayer to God in 2 Samuel 7:18-29 and 1 Chronicles 17:16-27 after He has made the Davidic Covenant with him.

Psalm 8:1 O Yahweh, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
You who has displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
8:2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
8:4 What is man that You take thought of him,
And the Son of Man that You care for him?
8:5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;

You put all things under his feet,
8:7 All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
8:8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.
8:9 O Yahweh, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

David first praises God for manifesting His majesty by creating all the universe, so that, speaking in hyperbole, even "infants and nursing" babies declare God's strength and victory over His enemies. When David thinks of how vast the universe is, he can only wonder who he is and who his human descendants are as kings of Israel that God would want to pay attention to them. He asks in v. 4, "What is man that You take thought of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him?" Within the context of the covenant which God has just made with David and His promise to cause each of his ruling descendants to be the "Son of God," which means His proxy and substitute in Jerusalem ruling over Israel and the world (as David goes on to indicate in vs. 5-8), the similar title "Son of Man" refers to the Son of God who is a bona fide human being. In other words, the title Son of Man means the Son of God of Man, or the Son of God from Man, or the Son of God who is human, which is to say the earthly proxy and representative of God who is a real human being.

David is saying in this psalm that his descendants and he, who rule over the nation of Israel, have the authority to represent God ***in His entirety*** in the midst of their responsibility as kings of His people. And David, as a mere man himself, a human being, is very much surprised, honored, and humbled that the transcendent creator of the universe is willing to grant David's descendants and him the right and authority to rule His people and the rest of the creation ***as if they were God Himself***.

Jesus often (approximately eighty times) calls himself the "Son of Man" in the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Some Bible students interpret him to be referring to Daniel 7 where the prophet sees a vision in which "one like the Son of Man" was approaching the throne of God. However, I suggest that Jesus is referring to Psalm 8 and to the fact that he is the king of Israel as a real human being whom God has designated as His substitute in Israel. Therefore, when the high priest, Caiaphas, demands that Jesus tell the Sanhedrin if he is the Messiah, Jesus answers in Matthew 26:64 (as I quoted just above), "You said it. Nevertheless, I tell you, after this you will see the **Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (emphasis mine). Jesus freely admits that he is the Son of God of Man of the Davidic Covenant of Psalm 8. He is the predicted final king of Israel who will rule over all God's creation, and he goes on to say that "after this" event, when they will condemn him and crucify him, these men, whether at the first resurrection when he returns (because they become authentic followers of him) or at the second resurrection of the Great White Throne Judgment (because they remain committed in their rebellion against God), will eventually see him "sitting at the right hand of the Power" which is to say, sitting at God's right hand.

These last words are the second point that Jesus is making and form a phrase that comes from Psalm 110,

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord:
"Sit at My right hand
Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."
110:2 Yahweh will stretch forth your strong scepter from Zion, saying,
"Rule (רְדֵ֥ה) in the midst of your enemies."
110:3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of your power;
In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,
Your youth are to you as the dew.
110:4 Yahweh has sworn (נִשְׁבַּ֤ע) and will not change His mind,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."
110:5 Yahweh is at your right hand;
He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.
110:6 He will judge (יָדִ֣ין) among the nations,

He will fill them with corpses,
He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.
110:7 He will drink from the brook by the wayside;
Therefore, He will lift up his head.

In this psalm, David, who is the current king of Israel around 1000 B.C, acknowledges that there will eventually come a human being who is of higher status than he is. He calls this person "my Lord" and says that God is going to speak to him and order him to "sit at [His] right hand until [He] makes his enemies a footstool for his feet." In the Ancient Near East, for example in Egypt, kings were pictured as sitting on their thrones with their feet on a footstool made up of all their enemies squeezed together and with horrified looks on their faces.[86] David is using this imagery in Psalm 110 to describe the situation of his "Lord," and Jesus is declaring to the Jewish leaders, who are intent on getting rid of him, that he is David's "Lord." In other words, he is David's Messiah, who, by eventually sitting at God's right hand, exercises the same authority as God in His transcendence. Thus, by means of the metaphor of "sitting at God's right hand," we have another statement of someone (Jesus) being God's representative on earth who rules with His authority over David and is his "Lord." And if he is David's "Lord" and rules over him, then he must be "Lord" of the Jews and rule over them, because David is king of the Jews. In other words, David is looking into the future and seeing one of his own descendants who will be the king of Israel and of David, obviously implying that David himself will rise from the dead to be ruled by this man. And Jesus is saying to Caiaphas and the other Jewish leaders, "I am this man."

We should notice, too, in Psalm 110:4 that God has added another responsibility to David's (and all other Jews') "Lord," so that he is also their "priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." What does he mean by this? The book of Hebrews in the New Testament spells this out for us. David means that his "Lord," and therefore Jesus, will not be a Levitical priest as required by the Mosaic Covenant. Instead of being of the tribe of Levi, David's "Lord" will come from a different tribe of Israel, from the tribe of Judah, because the one who sits at God's right hand as the king of Israel also must be a member of the tribe of Judah like David. In other words, David is not saying that God will take a man from the priestly tribe of Levi and make him a king like his descendants from the tribe of Judah. He is saying that God will take a man from the kingly tribe of Judah and make him a priest—even though he is not of the tribe of Levi.

In addition, this king's priesthood continues "forever," which is the Hebrew word *le'olam* (לְעוֹלָם), meaning into perpetuity, or for as long as God wants this person to remain the people's priest. Thus, David's "Lord," king, and "priest" will go on existing and carrying out his responsibility of intervening on behalf of Jewish sinners before God in contrast to the priests of the Levitical order of the Mosaic Covenant, who die and cease to be able to be their own and others' advocate. Plus, as the author of Hebrews points out, their advocacy is limited and does not provide for complete and eternal forgiveness from God. David ends the psalm in vs. 6-7 by stating that God will crush the enemies, even the rulers of other countries, of his "Lord" and "priest," while sustaining him with all that he needs to carry out his role for the people of Israel.

By Jesus' quoting from the first verse of Psalm 110 to the effect that he will be "sitting at the right hand of the Power," i.e., of God, he is telling the Sanhedrin that he is David's Lord, king, and priest. Therefore, he is implying that, if they continue down the path they are pursuing of condemning him and executing him because he claims to be the Messiah and then remaining in opposition to God for the rest of their lives, at some point in the future, they will have to deal with God and him as their enemies. And God and he will crush them in their anger.

Thirdly, Jesus says that the Jewish leaders will see him "coming on the clouds of heaven." Here he is connecting himself to the man in the vision of Daniel 7,

Daniel 7:13 "I [Daniel] kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a son of man was coming,
And he came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
7:14 "And to him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language

Might serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And his kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.

In his mind's eye and a vision, around 600 B.C., Daniel sees God, the "Ancient of Days, sitting on His throne, and "one like a son of man…was presented before Him." Here, in contrast to Psalm 8, I think that the phrase "son of man" means only a human being. It does not mean "Son of God" who comes from the human race, because notice that Daniel says "one **like** a son of man" (emphasis mine; and notice I have not capitalized any letters of "son of man" in the translation). This someone or something is similar to a man, is in fact a man, is indeed an actual human being, but Daniel's point is not to use this phrase to indicate that this person is the Messiah. In describing his vision, Daniel wants to make it clear that he does not see a wolf, or a cow, or an angel, or some other spiritual being. He sees a man, who in his dream approaches the throne of God. And what happens to this human being? God grants him "dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him." (Parenthetically, now we know that this human being, one who is "like a son of man," is the Son of God and God's proxy because he receives from the transcendent creator authority and dominion over all peoples and the entire earth; according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 (and as explained in Psalm 8), only the king of Israel fits this description.) Therefore, because of the word "like" in Daniel 7:13, it makes more sense that, when Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man" in the four gospel accounts, he does not have in mind Daniel 7. Instead, he is pointing to Psalm 8, in which David is humbled by the fact that God has chosen a mere man to be His Son, the created human being, the Son of Man, who rules Israel with basically the same authority as God's.

Nevertheless, as I say above in the parenthesis, does not what Daniel describe in chapter 7 sound like the descendant of David whom the Old Testament prophets, including David, declare will destroy Israel's enemies and rule over not only them but also the world "with a rod of iron" (cf. Psalm 2:9)? Consequently, this thing, so to speak, who is "like" a man, must be none other than the final and permanent king of Israel, the one predicted by the Old Testament to be their Messiah, who will rule the entire world. So Jesus is also saying, "I am the one like a man of Daniel 7:13-14; indeed, I am the man!" And by referring to his "coming on the clouds of heaven," he is also saying that the significance of this passage in Daniel is that one of these days he is going to return to the earth by descending out of the sky on clouds to establish and take possession of his rightful property, the land of Israel, the Kingdom of Israel, and indeed the rest of the world. Therefore, Jesus uses three Old Testament passages, Psalm 8, Psalm 110, and Daniel 7, to answer Caiaphas' question as to his identity. With a resounding, "Yes!", he is saying, "I am the Messiah."

But he is also very explicit in Luke 22:67, "I know that you will not believe me." And Luke provides an interim question from the whole group of leaders and a shorter answer from Jesus before Matthew's and Mark's description of Caiaphas' reaction to Jesus' lengthy answer,

Luke 22:70 And they all said, "So are you the Son of God?"
And he said to them, "You are saying it. I am."

Obviously, the Sanhedrin understand exactly what Jesus means. They know their Hebrew scriptures, including Psalm 8, Psalm 110, and Daniel 7, and they ask Jesus one more time, "So are you the Son of God?" They know that Son of Man means the Son of God who comes from humanity. They know that sitting at the right hand of God is to be David's "Lord" and God's proxy and substitute on the throne of Israel. They know that the human being who appears before God in Daniel's vision and who receives a permanent world-wide kingdom on this earth is the final Davidic king, the Messiah. But they want to make sure that he really is making the claim to be this exact person and, therefore, they want him to incriminate himself. And Jesus responds, "Yes!!! I am who I am declaring myself to be."

This is where the next details of Matthew's and Mark's accounts fit,

Matthew 26:65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed. What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard his blasphemy. 26:66a What does it seem to you?"

Mark 14:63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses?
14:64a You have heard the blasphemy. How does it seem to you?”

The tradition of tearing one’s clothes when catastrophe strikes goes all the way back to Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn son, who wanted to rescue his brother Joseph from the pit in which his brothers had placed him out of their envy of Joseph’s being their father’s favorite son. But unbeknownst to Reuben, the others had already sold him into slavery. So when Reuben discovered that Joseph was long gone, “he tore his garments” (cf. Genesis 37:29). It appears that, eventually, blaspheming God by intentionally speaking falsely about Him became a garment tearing catastrophe also. This is what Caiaphas as the head of the Sanhedrin is demonstrating. Jesus has finally made it crystal clear that he is claiming to be the Messiah. But Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders believe that he is intentionally lying. He is taking the lie of his identity as the Messiah and claiming that it is true. Therefore, he has to be a false Messiah. Plus, in no way has he been willing to acknowledge their authority and enlist their assistance in throwing off the yoke of Rome and ushering in the final age of the present realm, the restored Kingdom of Israel. And this in their minds is such an egregious affront to the God of Israel (and to them!) that the high priest rends his garments and declares that Jesus has willfully denounced himself, thus making it unnecessary for any other witnesses to come forward and accuse him. And then he asks his fellow leaders what they think.

Matthew and Mark provide their response to Caiaphas’ question,

Matthew 26:66b And they answered, “He is guilty of death.”

Mark 14:64b And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

I think that Luke implies the same response by recording their additional words,

Luke 22:71 Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own mouth.”

But what is the biblical basis for these leaders’ concluding that Jesus is worthy of the death penalty for falsely claiming to be the Messiah? It is probably Leviticus 24:16,

Leviticus 24:16 “Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of Yahweh shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.”

In the Mosaic Covenant, whose 613 commandments and explanations for the nation of Israel are listed in Exodus through Deuteronomy, God specifies the death penalty for several violations of these commandments, one of them being the above, when a person “blasphemes the name of Yahweh.” The context of Leviticus makes it clear that the crime here is to speak against God by making false statements to the Jews about Him regarding His plans and purposes. In other words, lying about God and how He will keep His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation,” for example, by claiming that He does not exist, is worthy of the death penalty (cf. Genesis 12:1-2).

Additionally, there is the flip side to this coin. If a person declares something false about himself in relation to God, for example, that he is the Messiah when, obviously, he is not, then, he is likewise “blaspheming” God’s “name.” In the Bible, the “name” of a person is his *moral character*, *responsibilities*, *actions*, and *role in the story which God is telling*. In God’s case—

1) His *character* is morally perfect, and to say otherwise is to blaspheme and lie about and slander Him by making a false statement about Him which damages His reputation.
2) God’s *responsibilities* include being the creator of all reality and carrying out His eternal plans and purposes which, in the present realm, involve His eventually shaping the nation of Israel into the most powerful and prosperous people in human history when God gathers the Jews back into the land of Israel, destroys their enemies by means of the Messiah and His armies, and then rules over them and all the Gentiles through the Messiah with the restored Kingdom of Israel.

3) God's *actions* include His judging and disciplining the people of Israel for their pagan idolatry by destroying their kingdoms and dispersing them from the land into Gentile nations. Therefore, to claim, perhaps, that God is wrong for having treated His chosen people the way that He has throughout their history is to "blaspheme the name of Yahweh" and to lie about Him.
4) Finally, God's "*role in the story which He is telling*" is to tell it exactly as He chooses in order to demonstrate His power, glory, moral perfection, justice, and mercy.

Any of the above infractions regarding Leviticus 24:16 renders a Jew guilty of violating the Mosaic Covenant and deserving of death. Therefore, to say something about God or oneself in relationship to God and His plans that is false and misleading about who God is and the Jews' responsibilities towards Him is to blaspheme and slander God, thereby violating the commandment of Leviticus 24:16. This is what the chief priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes believe Jesus is doing. He is falsely claiming that he is God's instrument of restoring all the Jews to their land and granting them their final glory as a "great nation." He is also lying that God has sent him for such a role, because what world leader would choose his closest associates to be Galilean fishermen, a despised tax-collector, a former insurrectionist, and other men who do not have nearly the biblical training, clout, authority, and admiration of the Jewish people that these leaders have, especially Annas and Caiaphas, who are high priests? And he must be doing all this with strictly selfish and malicious intentions that are overriding common sense. No one would be this stupid to try to perpetrate such lies on the Sanhedrin unless he is just plain crazy and cares nothing for his life.

Consequently, Jesus must be a liar, and his false statements about his relationship with God cause him to be not only guilty of blasphemy, but also, according to Leviticus 24:16, deserving of death. Interestingly enough, the verse in Leviticus stipulates execution by stoning, not by crucifixion, for Jesus' supposed crime. Where did these men get the idea that they should take Jesus to the Romans in order that he may die on a cross, especially when, later in Acts 7, they will stone Stephen to death? We will explore this question in more detail as we continue our study of the rest of the narrative.

Next, Matthew and Mark indicate what further actions some of the leaders (and probably others in the audience) take against Jesus. I include Luke's description even though we saw that his came before he reported on Jesus' trial,

Matthew 26:67 Then they spat in his face, and they beat him with their fists. And others slapped him. 26:68 And they said, "Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who is the one who hit you?"

Mark 14:65 And some began to spit on him, to cover his face, and to beat him with their fists. And they said to him, "Prophesy." And the assistants received him with slaps.

Luke 22:63 Now, the men who were holding him were mocking him and beating him. 22:64 And they blindfolded him and were asking him, saying, "Prophesy. Who is the one who hit you?" 22:65 And they were saying many other things to him as they spoke rebelliously.

Because the Jewish leaders have come to two conclusions, 1) that Jesus admits that he is the Messiah and 2) that he is lying and worthy of being executed for his blasphemy, "some" of them, along with "the assistants" who are present in the audience, continue to express their anger and disapproval by spitting "in his face" and beating him "with their fists." Such is their sheer hatred towards another human being. And not towards a genuine criminal, who deserves the disapproval and condemnation of the governing authorities, but towards the most important person in human history, the Jewish Messiah and icon of the invisible God, whom God has affirmed by presenting hundreds of miracles through him and whom he himself has affirmed by his teachings and care for both Jews and Gentiles. And the Sanhedrin's assistants mock him, beat him, blindfold him, and ask him a stupid question, "Who is the one who hit you?" in the midst of "saying many other things to him as they spoke rebelliously."

My guess is that most of the people present know that the goal is to hand Jesus over to the Romans to crucify him, and, at some level of their understanding of justice, they also know that this will certainly be punishment enough—judging by the number of crucifixions historians tell us that took place in the first century Roman Empire and even on the land of Israel? The question then is, from where within these men does such animalistic derision, mocking, contempt, disrespect, and violence come? In addition, these *Jewish*, religious leaders are completely unwilling to believe God for the miracles which He has

performed through Jesus to confirm his messianic identity, when their own Bible, the Old Testament, provides a multitude of examples of God's doing the same during the lives of Moses, Elijah, and others. Thus, the Bible indicates that when someone is unwilling to believe God and he encounters an authentic believer, including the Messiah, his response may be as extreme as this—hatred, violence, and even death. The apostle John says as much in his first letter,

1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;
3:12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.
3:13 Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you.
3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.
3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John's purpose in 1 John is to contrast the belief and actions of a heart that has been changed by God with those of a heart that is unchanged. A prime example in the Old Testament of this difference is Cain and his brother Abel. Abel was a man of authentic belief who presented a satisfactory offering to God because he had a changed heart, which, according to the teaching of the rest of the Bible, caused him to be appropriately repentant of his sin, fundamentally desirous of being moral in line with God's own moral character, and kind and gracious towards primarily anyone else who had been changed by God as he had been changed. In contrast, Cain had no changed heart, mind, and inwardness, no authentic belief in God, no appropriate repentance, no fundamental desire for biblical morality, and no foundational desire to be kind and gracious to God's people. Therefore, when he became aware that God accepted Abel and rejected him, after he had similarly presented an offering to God, he became furious and acted in the most extreme manner for a human being. He murdered his brother and thus permanently and physically eliminated him from the existential reality in which he lived. John indicates that, even if the rest of the world do not kill authentic believers, their inner moral and spiritual condition is such that they "hate" those who have changed hearts and are, therefore, each one a "murderer."

Our conclusion is that, just as Cain, someone who had resolved in his heart to reject God, "hated" and literally "murdered" his brother Abel, someone who had resolved in his heart to believe and obey God, members of the Sanhedrin and their followers and helpers are expressing their hatred and intent to murder Jesus. They are "spitting in his face" and "beating him with their fists." They also "cover his face" and "blindfold him," and they "slap him." Then, they ask him to point out the person who hit him, saying, "Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who is the one who hit you?" Their intent is clearly to mock and humiliate Jesus. He claims to be God's special Old Testament messenger and the king of Israel. Therefore, he should have such a close relationship with God that he can merely ask Him and He will describe things that he cannot see—such as who hit him on his face. Mark records only the word, "Prophesy," but his meaning is the same as Matthew's, that the Jewish leaders want Jesus to speak on behalf of God and tell them what he cannot naturally know, because his eyes are covered, while God supernaturally knows as He, at every moment, observes all things that are happening within the creation.

Only Mark then finishes his account of this subsection with the sentence at the end of v. 65, "And the assistants received him with slaps." The word which I have translated assistants is the same word in John 18:3 & 12 for the men who arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. It probably refers to the Jewish temple guard, who are assisting the members of the Sanhedrin in subjecting Jesus to this trial for the purpose of putting him to death. As a result, they are responsible for making sure Jesus remains in their custody until they hand him over to Pontius Pilate's Roman soldiers. But before we move to Pilate's residence, we will look at the three times when Peter denies being one of Jesus' disciples and also consider the death of Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

l. Peter Denies Jesus Three Times

Wednesday from about midnight until 5 a.m.

Matthew 26:69-75	Mark 14:66-72	Luke 22:56-62	John 18:17-18; 25-27

26:69 Now, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a female slave approached him and said, “Indeed, you were with Jesus of Galilee.” 26:70 But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, “I don’t know what you are talking about.” 26:71 When he had gone out to the gate, another female slave saw him and said to those who were near, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 26:72 Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man!” 26:73 A little while later, those who had been standing approached Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them, for indeed your manner of speaking gives you away.” 26:74 Then he began to curse and declare emphatically, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. 26:75 And Peter remembered the statement when Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.	14:66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, 14:67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she gazed at his face and said, “You also were with the Nazarene Jesus.” 14:68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out into the front courtyard and a rooster crowed. 14:69 And again a servant-girl saw him and began to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them.” 14:70 But he denied it again. And after a little while, the bystanders again were saying to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.” 14:71 But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about.” 14:72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered the statement Jesus said to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And thinking of this, he began to weep.	22:56 And a female slave, when she saw him sitting in the light, looked at him intently and said, “This man was with him, too.” 22:57 But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” 22:58 A little later, another person saw him and said, “You, too, are one of them. But Peter said, “Man, I am not.” 22:59 After about an hour had passed, another person began insisting, saying, “Certainly this man was with him, for he is a Galilean too.” 22:60 And Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. 22:61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the Lord’s statement, how he told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” 22:62 And he went out and wept bitterly.	18:17 Then the servant-girl, who was the doorkeeper, spoke to Peter, “Are you not also from the disciples of this man?” He said, “I am not.” 18:18 Now the slaves and the assistants were standing there, having made a fire, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves. So Peter was with them, standing and warming himself… 18:25 During this time, Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. Then they said to him, “Are you not one of his disciples?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” 18:26 One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” 18:27 Again, Peter denied it, and, immediately, a rooster crowed.

Explanation of the Above Passages

We know from a previous subsection that when Jesus was brought to Caiaphas’ house, both John and Peter entered into the courtyard. Now, we hear about Peter’s three denials of his relationship with Jesus, which take place over the course of probably four or five hours, from about midnight when the

entire entourage from the Garden of Gethsemane returns with Jesus to the high priest's house and the morning when a rooster crows for the second time. First, we find out that the doorkeeper recognizes Peter, and she asks him if he is an associate of Jesus. The four gospel accounts describe her question this way,

> Matthew 26:69 Now, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a female slave approached him and said, "Indeed, you were with Jesus of Galilee."
>
> Mark 14:66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, 14:67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she gazed at his face and said, "You also were with the Nazarene Jesus."
>
> Luke 22:56 And a female slave, when she saw him sitting in the light, looked at him intently and said, "This man was with him, too."
>
> John 18:17a Then the servant-girl, who was the doorkeeper, spoke to Peter, "Are you not also from the disciples of this man?"

First, we should note that while Matthew and Mark present their explanation of Peter's denials after Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leadership, Luke describes it before the trial. In both cases, the three authors are lumping together this combination of events that take place during several hours and while Jesus' trial is unfolding. In other words, they are not presenting these events of both Jesus' trial and Peter's conversations with various people *chronologically*. They are telling the story of the trial completely separately from Peter's denials. In contrast, John breaks the story of Peter's denials into two parts. He describes Peter's first denial before Jesus' interview with the high priest Annas (and therefore before his trial by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin), and then he provides the account of the second and third denials after Annas questions Jesus (and, therefore, after the trial by all the Jewish leaders), which all makes sense as we will see. Once again, this demonstrates that the exact order of all these events is not as important to the authors of the gospels as communicating to their readers what in their minds are the salient points for their own purposes.

We also notice from the verses above that, according to John, the doorkeeper, who obviously is the first to encounter Peter when she permits him to come through the gate and enter the courtyard, is both a woman and a slave. Clearly, she has the responsibility for allowing people to enter and exit the high priest's home. And, from a previous subsection, the apostle John has convinced her to permit Peter to come in and watch the trial with the others and him. However, the woman does not question Peter immediately about his association with Jesus.

The other three gospel accounts indicate that Peter enters the courtyard and sits down with the others who are warming themselves by a fire. They are no doubt a fairly large group of servants, the temple guard, and other onlookers who have recently brought Jesus to Caiaphas' house from the Garden of Gethsemane. Once Peter sits down with the group and is "warming himself" while "sitting in the light," the doorkeeper must have joined the group and "gazed at his face." Then she poses the question to him, claiming that he had been with Jesus. John puts it, "Are you not also from the disciples of this man?" Thus, she too was with the crowd that went to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, so that she recognizes Peter as having been there also. Peter's response in the four gospels is,

> Matthew 26:70 But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, "I don't know what you are talking about."
>
> Mark 14:68a But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about."
>
> Luke 22:57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."
>
> John 18:17b He said, "I am not." 18:18 Now the slaves and the assistants were positioned there, having made a fire, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves. So Peter was with them, having appeared and warming himself…

Peter immediately denies being a disciple of Jesus and declares that he knows nothing of what she is talking about. The gospel of John also tells us that Peter had reached the place in the courtyard where "the slaves and assistants were positioned," and that they had "made a fire, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves." Therefore, it makes sense that "Peter was with them, having appeared and warming himself." We can assume that the apostle John is there also, because it was he who persuaded the doorkeeper to allow Peter to enter (cf. John 18:15,16). But the question is, what did John think of Peter's denying any relationship with Jesus? And why do we not hear of his confronting Peter about his lie? Was John afraid of indicating to the group that he, too, was as disciple of Jesus? Or was he remembering Jesus' words that Peter would deny him three times before the morning, so that he was simply willing to let the story play out the way Jesus had said that it would?

Obviously, we do not have the answers to these questions in any of the gospels, but my guess is that the group already knew that John was a disciple of Jesus, because we have concluded above from John 18:15-16 that he is there and was known to the high priest. In other words, John has had no problem being recognized by the assistants of the Jewish leaders as a follower of Jesus, and they have accepted this fact and allowed him to wait with them while his rabbi is on trial before the Sanhedrin in the same courtyard. It is only Peter who wants to hide his relationship with Jesus from them. I would also assume that John remembers Jesus' words to Peter as they were all headed out from their Passover meal to the Garden of Gethsemane, that not only would Peter deny him three times, but also he had prayed for him that his belief would not fail, so that he would become stronger from this test of his belief and help his fellow apostles in their faith (cf. Luke 22:31-32).

While John's account initially seems out of order, because he writes that Peter's first denial took place before Jesus' trial, he obviously wants to mention Peter's first denial ahead of Jesus' meeting with Annas, who then sends him on to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, and to the rest of the Jewish leaders. In fact, Peter's denial and Jesus' conversation with Annas are probably occurring simultaneously. Plus, it is reasonable to assume that Peter's first denial takes place fairly soon after he enters the courtyard around midnight, while the next two denials occur several hours later during Jesus' meeting with the entire Sanhedrin and as the sun rises with the dawning of the new morning.

After Peter's encounter with the doorkeeper, he naturally becomes uncomfortable and moves away from this particular group that is in the courtyard, but he does not go far enough to prevent his being questioned again,

> Matthew 26:71 When he had gone out to the gate, another female slave saw him and said to those who were near, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." 26:72 Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!"
>
> Mark 14:68b And he went out into the front courtyard and a rooster crowed. 14:69 And again a servant-girl saw him and began to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them." 14:70a But he denied it again.
>
> Luke 22:58 A little later, another person saw him and said, "You, too, are one of them. But Peter said, "Man, I am not."
>
> John 18:25 During this time, Simon Peter had appeared and was warming himself. Then they said to him, "Are you not one of his disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

Mark is the most explicit about Peter's movement. He "went out into the front courtyard." Matthew calls this new area "the gate," and both must be speaking of a kind of passageway, which extends from the actual gate and provides access from the outside street into the inner courtyard of Caiaphas' house. John tells us that "Simon Peter had appeared and was warming himself." He probably means that Peter has rejoined the same group around the fire because he is feeling the chill again out near the gate. But he hopes that he can avoid any prying and embarrassing questions. Nevertheless, Matthew informs us that "another female slave saw him and said to those who were near, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.'" In other words, this additional woman, who is a slave of Caiaphas, the high priest, was also part of the crowd at the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested Jesus. Therefore, she, like the doorkeeper, recognizes Peter as having been with him. Luke says that she was just "another person" who sees him and asks this question. John puts it in the plural, "they said to him, 'Are you not one of his disciples?'"

This means that there were others who were at the garden and who are now recognizing Peter, so that when the other "servant-girl" challenges him about his association with Jesus, the group around them join in and do the same.

Matthew then states that, in order to convince his accusers more aggressively, Peter "denied it with an oath." Taking all four gospels into account, he must have said something like, "I am not! I do not know the man!" along with a few choice Aramaic swear words, which our authors appropriately omit. Thus, for the second time within a few hours, Peter lies about his past and present association with Jesus, the man whom he formerly and explicitly claimed to be the long-expected Messiah of the Jews as predicted by the Old Testament (cf. Matthew 16:16). Cursing and swearing, he now asserts that his last three years and involvement in the events of the Garden of Gethsemane an hour or so ago never happened. Luke's account of Peter's words, "Man, I am not," are not an indication that his questioner is male, but that Peter uses colloquial and informal language that is common in our own speaking. "Man" is like our "Bro" or "Dude" and simply means "I'm telling you emphatically…!" Plus, we know from John's account that several people, not just the additional servant-girl, are wondering out loud if Peter is a disciple of Jesus.

We realize, too, that Peter is lying also about his future, thus publicly declaring that he wants nothing to do with God's promise of the Kingdom of God and eternal life through Jesus the Messiah. As a result, Peter is not helping the existential condition of his sinful heart and mind. By denying any belief in Jesus, he seems to be hardening and damaging his heart beyond repair, so that abject and hopeless unbelief will be the permanent condition of his inwardness until he dies. But fortunately the sovereign and omnipotent author of all created reality, God, can overcome his shortcomings (and anyone else's too—if He so chooses!).

By the way, Mark is the only writer who mentions the first of two loud cries of a rooster which Jesus predicted. Mark tells us that this first one occurs about the time or somewhat after Peter left his initial location in the main yard and moved to the gateway and "front courtyard." We might think that the rooster crow will so strongly remind Peter of what Jesus had said that it serves as an appropriate warning sign and that he is well on this way to fulfilling Jesus' words of denying him three times. Consequently, the rooster crow would stop Peter dead in his tracks, and he would flee from even the possibility of denying Jesus a third time! However, Peter is either so clueless or stubbornly committed to staying in the courtyard to see the outcome of Jesus' trial that he forges ahead towards demonstrating his lack of courage in the face of danger—when he had so boldly and confidently told Jesus that, if necessary, he was willing to die for him (cf. Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:33-34; John 13:37)!

Next, Peter's third and final denial takes place as follows,

> Matthew 26:73 A little while later, those who had been standing approached Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for indeed your manner of speaking gives you away." 26:74a Then he began to curse and declare emphatically, "I do not know the man!"
>
> Mark 14:70b And after a little while, the bystanders again were saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." 14:71 But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about."
>
> Luke 22:59 After about an hour had passed, another person began insisting, saying, "Certainly this man was with him, for he is a Galilean too." 22:60a And Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about."
>
> John 18:26 One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" 18:27a Again, Peter denied it.

Previously, Peter probably thought that his cursing and aggressive denial of knowing Jesus had settled the issue and would squash any further questions about his identity. However, about an hour after his second denial (according to Luke), he is still near those sitting and standing around the fire to warm themselves, and another person, who is "one of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off," begins insisting that he was with Jesus. This person says, "Did I not see you in the garden with him."

Others of the "bystanders" join in, and the reason they give for thinking Peter is one of Jesus disciples is that they can tell by his "manner of speaking"—that he is from the northern area of Israel called Galilee,

around the Sea of Galilee. They say explicitly to him, “You are a Galilean too” and to one another, “he is a Galilean too.” Jews from this northern area must have spoken Aramaic with a distinctive accent similar to the way people from Dallas, Texas would recognize a native of Boston, Massachusetts—and vice versa.

Peter once more declares emphatically that he has no idea what they are talking about. In fact, Peter gets so worked up with defending himself that again he curses and swears an oath, stating that he does not know Jesus. Finally, the fateful cock-a-doodle-doo rings out into the morning sky,

> Matthew 26:74b And immediately a rooster crowed. 26:75 And Peter remembered the statement when Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.
>
> Mark 14:72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered the statement Jesus said to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And thinking of this, he began to weep.
>
> Luke 22:60b And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. 22:61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the Lord’s statement, how he told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” 22:62 And he went out and wept bitterly.
>
> John 18:27b And immediately a rooster crowed.

This is a great example of how various storytellers of the same event have different intentions and emphases in their accounts. Mark is the only author who had mentioned the first crowing of a rooster, and here he says explicitly that “immediately a rooster crowed a second time.” He also comments that “Peter remembered the statement Jesus said to him, ‘Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’” Matthew is not concerned about providing the detail that there would be two separate loud cries of a rooster and says simply, “And immediately a rooster crowed.” He even indicates that Peter recollects that Jesus said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”

By stating that the rooster only “crows” once, is Matthew’s account erroneous? No. Certainly, it is true that Peter denied Jesus three times before a rooster crowed (even if this crowing was a second time), which is all that Matthew wants to communicate to his readers. Luke and John are similar by stating only that “a rooster crowed” on the occasion of Peter’s denying Jesus for the third time. Luke, however, is careful enough to make it clear that the rooster starting crowing “while [Peter] was still speaking”—a detail that gives us all that much more the impression that Peter was experiencing exactly what Jesus had predicted, even as he aggressively denied him. This probably had a markedly greater effect on Peter, when he heard the rooster crow while he was cursing and swearing his third and last denial.

And finally, at this same moment, Jesus, who probably had been visible to Peter ever since he entered the main courtyard with John, turns and looks at his wayward and obstinate disciple. As Peter internally processes Jesus’ look, it finally dawns on him what he has been doing by refusing to acknowledge Jesus as his teacher. And he remembers that just a few hours ago not only had he boldly declared that he was willing to die with Jesus, but also Jesus had predicted that, before a rooster crows twice, he would deny him three times. Consequently, Peter feels such tremendous remorse and guilt that he “went out” from the house and courtyard while weeping bitter tears. Interestingly, John does not mention the tears; Mark mentions only that he wept; and Matthew and Luke provide the extra detail that Peter’s weeping was bitter and painful—as it should be for anyone who publicly and aggressively declares no association with Jesus, when his heart and mind have seemed to indicate that he actually does have authentic belief and faith. In other words, only one whose heart God has authentically changed can engage in genuine repentance as Peter is doing here in the very presence of both his Lord and Savior and his accusers and enemies.

Luke does not tell us exactly what kind of look Jesus gave Peter when he turned from the Sanhedrin to his beloved disciple, but Soren Kierkegaard in his book Works of Love and the chapter entitled “Our Duty to Love the People We See” offers a compelling analysis of this part of Jesus’ and Peter’s relationship,[87]

If your life had been brought to the most crucial decision and you had a friend who, on his own initiative, loudly and solemnly swore loyalty to you, yes, that he was willing to risk his life for you, and then in the moment of danger he did not stay away (that would have been almost more forgivable). No, he came, and he was present, but he did not lift a finger. In fact, he calmly stood there and looked on. Yet, no, he did not stand calmly. His one and only thought was to save himself on any condition. But he did not even take flight (that, too, would have been almost more forgivable). No, he remained standing there as a spectator, which he made sure he could be—by denying you! What then? We shall not even trace the consequences. Let us only describe the situation rather vividly and speak quite humanly and existentially about it.

So, then, you stood there accused by your enemies, indeed, condemned by your enemies. It was literally true that you stood surrounded on every side by enemies. The mighty, who perhaps could have understood you, had hardened themselves in their hearts and minds against you. They, in fact, hated you. Therefore, you now stood accused and condemned, while a blinded, raging crowd howled insults at you, even rejoicing insanely at the thought that your blood would be upon them and upon their children. And this pleased the mighty, who themselves usually held the uneducated and ignorant crowd in deep contempt. It pleased them because it confirmed their hatred of you—even though it was brute savagery and the lowest meanness that had found in you its quarry and its prey. You had reconciled yourself to your fate, were conscious of the impossibility of saying one single word in your defense, since loathing for you was merely seeking an opportunity. Thus, a kind word about your innocence from anyone, as if it were a bold but true act of opposition to their limitless hatred, would give their loathing and contempt for you a new occasion. Thus, the clearest proof of your integrity [your hundreds of miracles!] would make their hatred even more indignant and furious. Thus, even a cry of pain from you, as it if were cowardliness, would give their loathing a new occasion.

In this way you stood cast out of human society and yet not cast out. After all, you stood there surrounded by human beings, but not one of them saw in you a human being, although in another sense they did see in you a human being, because they would not have treated an animal as inhumanly. What horror, more terrible than if you had fallen among wild beasts. For I wonder if even the wild, nocturnal howling of bloodthirsty beasts of prey is as horrible as the inhumanity of a raging crowd. I wonder if one beast of prey in a pack can incite another one to greater savagery than is natural for each one separately in the way that each individual human being in this impenitent crowd was inciting the others to even more animal bloodthirstiness and savagery. I wonder if the spiteful or flashing eyes of the most bloodthirsty beast of prey have the fire of evil that it is ignited in the individual's eyes when he, incited and inciting, rages with the wild crowd!

In this way you stood—accused, condemned, insulted. You sought in vain to discover a form that still resembled a human being, to say nothing of a kind face upon which your eyes could rest. And then you saw him, your friend. But he denied you! And the contempt and hatred, which had been strident enough, now sounded as if echo had amplified it a hundred times.

If this had happened to you, is it not true that you would already have perceived it as being too forgiving of you if, instead of thinking of revenge, you looked away from him and said to yourself, "I would rather not see that traitor before my eyes!" How differently the Messiah acted! He did not look away from Peter in order to become seemingly unaware of his existence. He did not say, "I do not want to see that traitor!" He did not leave him to take care of himself. No, he "looked at him." He immediately caught him a look. If it had been possible, he surely would have spoken directly to him.

And how did the Messiah look at Peter? Was this look repelling? Was it a look of dismissal? Ah, no, it was as when a mother sees the child in danger through its own carelessness, and now, since she cannot manage to grasp the child, she catches it with her admittedly reproachful but also saving look. Was Peter then in danger? Ah, who is unable to perceive it? How hard and dangerous it is for a person to have denied his friend! But, typically, in the passion of anger, the wronged friend cannot see that the one who is doing the denying is in danger. Yet, he who is called the Savior of the world always saw clearly where the danger was, saw that it was Peter who was in danger, saw that it was Peter who should and must be saved. The Savior of the world did not make the mistake of seeing his cause as lost if Peter did not hasten to help him. But he saw Peter as lost if he did not hasten to save Peter. I wonder if there lives or has ever lived a single human being who cannot understand this, which is so clear and obvious—that anytime we deny a friend who himself is in grave danger, that we are putting ourselves in similar danger, by lying. And yet the Messiah is the only one who saw it at the moment of decision, when he himself was the one accused, the one condemned, insulted, and denied.

Rarely is a person tested in a life-and-death decision, and therefore a person rarely has the occasion to test so radically the devotion of friendship. But, in a more important moment, to find only fear and betrayal where, by virtue of the friendship, you were justified in expecting courage and resoluteness—to find lying, double-mindedness, and avoidance instead of openness, determination, and steadfastness—to find only empty blather

instead of a thoughtful view! Alas, how difficult then, in the rush of the moment and of passion, to be able to understand immediately on which side the danger lies. Which of the friends is more in danger, you or he who leaves you in the lurch this way? How difficult then to love the person whom one is seeing deny him—when one sees him changed and unfriendly in this way!

We are now accustomed to praise the Messiah's relationship to Peter, but let us take care that our praise is not strictly an illusion, a figment of the imagination, because we are unable or unwilling to stretch our thinking to think of ourselves as contemporary with the event, as actually or potentially in the same kind of relationship with a "friend" or "friends." Say, for example, we praise the Messiah, which is appropriate. But, on the other hand, provided we do encounter a similar event and experience the same kind of betrayal, we act and think altogether differently from him. No account by the gospel authors regarding the Jewish leaders' view of the Messiah's relationship to Peter has been preserved, but if you were to meet them, these fellow human beings of his, then you could question them. And you would probably hear on this occasion, as on almost every occasion the Messiah did something that was simply a reflection of his divine role and moral perfection, "The fool! Granted that his cause was ever so hopelessly lost, yet not to have the power to muster all his strength for the last time into one single look that could crush this traitor! What sniveling weakness! Is this acting like a man?!" This would be the contemporaries' judgment, and the mocking hatred would acquire a new and more intense expression.

Or the Jewish leader, the man of power who presumed to grasp the situation, would say, "Well, why did he seek the company of sinners and publicans, his adherents among the lowest class of people? He should have joined us, with the synagogue of the elite, but now he is getting his deserved reward. Now then it becomes apparent what reliance can be placed upon that kind of people. Yet just as he has always given in to their weakness, so he does it to the very end. He is not even indignant over such shabby treachery!"

Or a wiser person, who even felt himself to be kindly disposed, would say, "The fact that the high priests had him seized, that he, fanatical as he was, now sees everything lost, must have weakened his mind and broken his courage, so that he collapsed completely into an unmanly, powerless stupor. This can explain his forgiving such treachery, since no man acts that way!" Alas, it is only too true. No man acts this way. It is for this very reason that the Messiah's life is the only instance in which it is even that a teacher, at the moment his cause as well as his life is lost and everything is most terribly forfeited by the disciple's denial, that a teacher by his look in that instant and in that disciple wins his most zealous adherent and thus to a large extent his cause, although it is hidden from all.

Jesus the Messiah's love for Peter was boundless in this way. In loving Peter, he accomplished loving the person whom one sees, whom Jesus saw—Peter! He did not say, "Peter must change and become another person before I can love him again." No, he said exactly the opposite, "Peter is Peter, and I love him. My love, if anything, will help him to become another person." Therefore, he did not break off the friendship in order perhaps to renew it *if Peter would have become another person*. Do you think that Peter would have been won again without the Messiah's faithful friendship? But it is so easy to be a friend when this means nothing else than to request something particular from the friend and, if the friend does not respond to the request, then to let the friendship cease, until it perhaps begins again if he responds to the request. Is this a relationship of friendship? Who is closer to helping an erring one than the person who calls himself his friend, even if the offense is committed against himself, the friend! But the friend withdraws and says (indeed, it is as if a third person were speaking), "When he has become another person, then perhaps he can become my friend again." It is easy to regard this response to a friend's denial and abandonment as good and right. But truly this is not the response of Jesus to his actual friend, Peter, whom he saw in his greatest moment of danger—both his, Jesus the Messiah's, and his, Peter's.

m. The Death of Judas Iscariot

Perhaps starting only two days after Jesus' trial or more than three days after it

Matthew 27:1-10
27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put him to death. 27:2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. 27:3 Then, when Judas, who had handed him over, saw that he had been condemned, he felt great regret and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 27:4 saying, "I have sinned by handing over innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? You see to it."

27:5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple and left. And he went out and hanged himself.
27:6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."
27:7 And they conferred together and bought the Potter's Field with it as a burial place for strangers.
27:8 Therefore, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 27:9 Consequently, that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price has been set by the sons of Israel, 27:10 and they gave them for the Potter's Field, just as the Lord ordered me <Zechariah 11:12,13>."

Explanation of the Above Passage

Matthew first explains that, after Jesus' trial, "the chief priests and elders" put their heads together and decide "to put him to death." Then, they immediately lead him away to hand him over to Pilate for execution. But it sounds as though Judas speaks to the Jewish leaders about his situation at the same time. However, the only people who have been present at Jesus' trial are John and Peter. Plus, the leaders are most likely with Jesus on their way to Pilate's home. Therefore, how did Judas find out about the trial so quickly and how was he able to speak to "the chief priests and elders"? Maybe John and Peter left the trial and went to find the rest of the disciples and report to them what had transpired so far, so that Judas then immediately went to the Jewish leaders and had this conversation (either on the way to Pilate's home or when they arrived there).

But I think it makes more sense that, for Matthew's own purposes, this passage, for which there is no parallel in the other gospels, is out of sequence with respect to the featured story of Jesus. Now that both the chief priests and Judas have together accomplished their initial goal of bringing Jesus to trial for the price of thirty shekels, and before the next lengthy step of Pilate's conversations with both the Jewish crowd and Jesus take place, Matthew probably wants to present Judas' response to all that happens to Jesus in order not to distract from the importance of his death, burial, resurrection, and appearances to his disciples later. Certainly, Judas' response and actions are an intriguing demonstration of human psychology and spirituality, and they are especially significant in the light of Jesus' own response to his situation and the actions which he does and does not perform in the midst of his role as the Messiah sent from God to rescue people just like Judas from God's eternal condemnation.

Therefore, we proceed with examining this story, and the simplest conclusion from it is that Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Jesus, feels great remorse and even commits suicide for having become an integral part of condemning and putting to death an innocent man, while, certainly, the Sanhedrin deserve the most blame for perpetrating this injustice against Jesus. However, there is more to the story than this straightforward conclusion reveals, and I will seek to unpack all that Matthew is communicating. In addition, this is a difficult passage to interpret, but I think that I am at least close to doing so correctly—that Matthew is directing his readers' attention to God and His threat and promise to judge and bring about the death of any Jews who disobey Him and the Mosaic Covenant, especially those who reject His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, all these people, whether Caiaphas, the high priest, or Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' original disciples, who are personally involved in executing God's Messiah, the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, should feel extreme remorse for their actions. They should also repent, or they will incur God's wrath and destruction, even possibly during their earthly existences. Thus, Matthew lets us know that this was definitely true of Judas Iscariot, so that we should extrapolate from him to the remaining men whose decisions resulted in Jesus' death on the cross. He provides no details as to the exact timing of Judas' discovery of Jesus' fate after his trial, but the fact that he speaks with the chief priests and elders most likely means that they have finished their business with Jesus, Pilate, and the crucifixion. Therefore, they are back at the temple, the central place of worship of God, and can interact with Judas. As I will point out, I am guessing that this conversation and the other events start probably two days later on Friday and extend beyond three days later after Saturday.

We should also remind ourselves that Judas has had three important experiences prior to this interaction with the chief priests and elders. First, Matthew, Mark, and John had informed their readers that, on the evening of the previous Wednesday, Lazarus' sister Mary had poured a container of expensive ointment on Jesus' feet, to which Judas had objected vehemently, because the money from selling the ointment could have been used to help the poor. However, Judas, who held the money bag for

the group and used to steal from it, was conveniently hiding his greed with his objection. He was not concerned about being respectable to Jesus nor charitable to the poor. He was concerned about only his own financial gain.

Second, Luke told us, regarding either that Wednesday evening or Thursday, that Satan entered into Judas, so that he went and offered to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. And they were so delighted that they promised to pay him thirty shekels once he completed his side of the agreement. In my explanation of this event, I suggested that the Bible is not clear on exactly what it means for Satan to "enter" into a human being. But we can be sure that when somehow one created being, Satan, influences another created being, Judas, the upshot is that the latter makes a choice that fundamentally is unrighteous and evil. In the case of Judas, he conspires with Jesus' enemies, the "chief priests" and the Jewish guards of the temple in Jerusalem, to arrest him and bring him to trial so that they can hopefully put him to death.

The third prior, important experience is when John in his gospel tells the story of the Passover meal on Tuesday evening.

> John 13:21 After saying these things, Jesus became troubled in his spirit, and he bore witness and said, "Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray me."
> 13:22 The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to which one he meant. 13:23 There was reclining on Jesus' chest one of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved. 13:24 Therefore, Simon Peter motioned to him to inquire which one it was of whom Jesus was speaking. 13:25 As that one leaned on Jesus' chest, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" 13:26 Jesus answered, "The one for whom I dip the piece of bread and give it to him."
> Therefore, after dipping the piece of bread, he took it and gave it to Judas of Simon Iscariot. 13:27 And after the piece of bread, Satan then entered into him. So Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 13:28 But no one of those reclining at the table understood why he said this to him. 13:29 For some supposed, because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. 13:30 Therefore, after receiving the piece of bread, he went out immediately, and it was night.

Again, Satan, God's and Jesus' archenemy, a person who is a member of created beings other than human beings, enters Judas Iscariot and influences him to continue pursuing their mutual goal, which is to bring Jesus to trial before the Sanhedrin. Therefore, Judas leaves the group and their meal and heads out into the night to find the chief priests and the temple guard to lead them to the Garden of Gethsemane and to arrest Jesus. Thus, having learned about both Judas' obsession with gaining wealth and his Satanic obsession with turning Jesus over to Jewish leaders, we begin looking at this event about him in Matthew 27. Matthew begins with vs. 3-5a,

> Matthew 27:3 Then, when Judas, who had handed him over, saw that he had been condemned, he felt great regret and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 27:4 saying, "I have sinned by handing over innocent blood."
> But they said, "What is that to us? You see to it."
> 27:5a And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple and left.

When Judas realizes that his betrayal of Jesus has resulted in his being "condemned" to die by crucifixion, he actually feels such great remorse and "regret" that he wants to return the money which the Jewish leadership paid him for the betrayal. The reason that Judas gives for his remorse is that he has "sinned by handing over innocent blood." He acknowledges that he has done something very, very wrong to the extent that an innocent man has been put to death for a crime he has not committed. However, "the chief priests and elders" care nothing for what Judas says and for his remorse, so that they refuse to take back "the thirty pieces of silver." They simply say, "What is that to us? You see to it," meaning that Judas can do whatever he wants with the money. My guess is that they have no interest in debating Jesus' innocence or guilt, because they were completely convinced that he was guilty of falsely claiming to be the Messiah and thereby deserved to die. To this response by the Jewish leaders, Judas throws the coins "into the temple" and leaves. He obviously wants nothing to do with the payment from them of his betraying Jesus and probably hopes that ridding himself of this money might assuage his guilty conscience.

The key question here is, “In what sense does Judas think that Jesus is ‘innocent?’” Clearly it has something to do with the fact that the Jewish leaders have pronounced such a harsh sentence for him—death by crucifixion. It would seem that Judas, when he decided to hand him over to the Sanhedrin, was not expecting this outcome for Jesus. He supposed that they would only imprison him or somehow punish him lightly—or even provoke Jesus to do what most other Jews believed the Messiah would do, raise an army quickly, overthrow the Romans, and restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. But he was not expecting that they would execute him, and certainly not by getting the Romans involved and crucifying him, and that Jesus (even if he is truly the Messiah) would allow himself to be treated this way. Consequently, the events have unfolded in a much more extreme manner than Judas ever envisioned.

However, did he believe that Jesus had done or said anything in violation of either the Mosaic Covenant or Roman law? Maybe somehow in regard to the Mosaic Covenant. Yet, Judas had heard from Jesus’ own mouth that he was the Messiah and Son of God, which he had also heard God Himself confirm at least once by an audible statement from the heavens. But certainly Jesus had never done anything that violated Roman law, such as murder or theft, to deserve being crucified.

Therefore, what exactly motivated Judas to hand Jesus over to the Jewish leaders? Was it strictly the money? No, because he not only wanted to give it back, but also got rid of it by throwing it into the temple. Was he in direct collusion with the Sanhedrin? Clearly not, because he did not realize just how hostile and opposed to Jesus they were such that they manipulated the Roman authorities into using their method of executing criminals—crucifixion. Was he disgruntled and hurt because of how Jesus was treating him personally? In other words, did he think that he deserved more praise or admiration than what Jesus was giving him and that he did not deserve the rebuke Jesus gave him when he criticized Mary for pouring the expensive ointment on him, so that he decided to get back at him by using his enemies to put him out of commission? And was there more to what was going on inside Judas than even this? My guess is that all this is getting at the core of Judas’ motives, so that his reasons for betraying Jesus were several.

First, to have become so intimate with Jesus and the small group who were closest to him that allowed Judas to interact with Jesus on an hourly and daily basis, to have watched the multiplicity of miracles that Jesus performed, and to have heard all that Jesus said about himself and the Kingdom of God the way that his closest disciples did was obviously not enough to convince Judas that believing in him and receiving salvation from God’s condemnation by means of him was a worthwhile commitment to make with his mind, heart, and will. In other words, there was something really twisted about Judas’ perception of reality and of himself that had moved him to reject the greatest gift that a sinful human being can receive, the Messiah, indeed the *crucified* Messiah—especially after having had the unusual opportunity of hearing, seeing, and participating firsthand in what Jesus was all about.

Second, there is the money which Judas received for handing Jesus over to the Sanhedrin. Was it a large sum so that he could be considered greedy, and this was what was motivating him? Or was it a small sum and therefore not enough to motivate anyone to do much of anything? In the subsection above when Judas went to the Jewish leaders to offer to hand Jesus over to them for trial, we saw that the Mosaic Covenant states in Exodus 21:32,

> Exodus 21:32, “If an ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”

This is approximately $400 of silver at 2021 prices, around three days wages for a laborer. But this amount seems like a rather paltry sum for a human life, even for a slave who is cruelly gored by an ox. Consequently, the answer to our questions is that Jesus’ being put out of commission was not worth a lot monetarily to Judas. He just wanted him sidelined (or finally motivated to act more deliberately as the Messiah), and these leaders, who were opposing him, were the best way to do so. Nevertheless, money is money, so that we can say that, at some level, Judas, in the midst of whatever extreme evil resided within them in accord with Satan’s own goals of opposing God, was motivated also by money to hand over Jesus to his enemies.

Third, we see that Judas grossly misjudged the Sanhedrin. While he thought they would simply rebuke Jesus strongly and prevent him from continuing his ministry momentarily by imprisoning him, or goad him into revealing himself as the Messiah in a more complete way, he did not expect them to sentence him to die on a cross—and to succeed in doing so! Therefore, we can say that Judas was not completely heartless, so that his motivation to betray his teacher was out of something that hurt him

deeply enough and motivated him sufficiently that a small sum of thirty pieces of silver and seeing Jesus publicly embarrassed by a direct confrontation with the Jewish leaders that would lead either to his not being able to pursue his teaching and miracles anymore or to his demonstrating that he really is the Messiah, was sufficient motivation.

Once "the chief priests and elders" respond in v. 4 that they care nothing about Judas' concerns, Matthew tells us,

> Matthew 27:5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple and left. And he went out and hanged himself.

It is clear that the Jewish leaders have no interest in taking back the money that they gave to Judas, and we will learn why in a moment. So rather than Judas' handing it to them anyway, he throws "the pieces of silver into the temple" and leaves. This must have been quite a sight to see a man hurl even a fairly small amount of money into the temple as other Jews walked in and out and milled around outside and they performed their worship of God according to the Mosaic Covenant. Plus, the moneychangers and vendors of doves, goats, sheep, etc. must have been close by and been able to see Judas carry out this uncharacteristic act. We can also imagine that others would have wanted to pick up the money for themselves, but it is on the floor of the temple, God's house and His dwelling place among His people the Jews in Jerusalem, so that no one touches it except the "chief priests and elders."

And then Matthew informs his readers that Judas "went out and hanged himself." While we cannot know precisely what was going on in Judas' mind and heart, it does sound as though his remorse was not only so great that he no longer wanted to live, but also so disturbing that he chose to end his own life. Thus, a perturbed and troubled man, both sinful and anguished over his recent actions and life, finishes his existence on earth by suicide in the midst of experiencing a personal tragedy within his inner being.

Matthew then brings this scene to a conclusion with what the Jewish leaders do with the money which Judas just forfeited,

> Matthew 27:6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." 27:7 And they conferred together and bought the Potter's Field with it as a burial place for strangers.
> 27:8 Therefore, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 27:9 Consequently, that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled,
> "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price has been set by the sons of Israel, 27:10 and they gave them for the Potter's Field, just as the Lord ordered me <cf. Zechariah 11:12,13>."

If we did not know the context, Judas' act of throwing the money into the temple could be construed as a gift to God and to the system of worshiping him according to the Mosaic Covenant, which involves the Levitical priests who are responsible for bringing the Jews' sacrifices and offerings to Him. But they consider this money to be "the price of blood" and therefore the compensation that they have paid to Judas in order to put Jesus to death. We do not know exactly where the "thirty pieces of silver" came from in the first place. Did they come out of the pockets of the Levitical priests or from the "temple treasury," since the money was going to be used to rid the land of Israel and the Jewish people of a false Messiah? My guess is that the "thirty pieces of silver" came from their own pockets, so that they consider them to be part of their responsibility as priests to God for keeping His land and people undefiled.

Therefore, even though the priests believe that they are fully justified in paying for the execution of an obvious and dangerous criminal, there is something about having done so that is preventing them from placing the returned money in the "temple treasury." As they say, "It is the price of blood," i.e., the price of executing one who has broken the Mosaic Covenant and Old Testament Torah (by falsely claiming to be the Messiah), so that Jesus is therefore a criminal and deserves to die. Mixing the payment of "blood," the death of Jesus the false Messiah, with the ongoing worship of Yahweh in the temple is in their minds "not lawful."

Therefore, they choose to do something else with it. They buy "the Potter's field…as a burial place for strangers." Perhaps a commercial potter owned the field as a source of clay for his business and where he could throw the waste from it, and now the field either had become depleted of its vital economic resource or was unusable for much more than burying the dead. As a result, he either needed or decided

to sell it, and the "chief priests" bought it, because, apparently, they had responsibility for disposing of the dead bodies of "strangers," i.e., non-Jews (Gentile proselytes), who were visiting Jerusalem to worship God and who died while there. I also assume that, because "strangers" died fairly often during their visits and the few centuries that the Jews had been living there, this was not the first time that the priests engaged in this kind of financial transaction in order to carry out their responsibility.

Nevertheless, because the money they used to purchase the field had come from the "price of blood" of a supposed criminal, the "chief priests" and the people of Jerusalem called it the "Field of Blood" up to the time that Matthew was writing his gospel a couple decades later. Plus, in vs. 9 & 10, Matthew ties these events and the money to comments that were associated with the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah,

> Matthew 27:9 Consequently, that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price has been set by the sons of Israel,
> 27:10 and they gave them for the Potter's Field, just as the Lord ordered me."

However, interpreting exactly what Matthew means is not straightforward because the quote does not appear in Jeremiah, but a similar statement is made at the end of vs. 12 & 13 of Zechariah 11,

> Zechariah 11:12 I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.
> 11:13a Then Yahweh said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them."
> 11:13b So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of Yahweh.

Zechariah lived about 520 B.C., eighty years or so after Jeremiah. Like these verses in Matthew, chapter 11 of Zechariah is also not altogether easy to interpret. But it involves a good shepherd, who is commanded by God to care for His flock, the Jews, and the shepherd asks them to pay him for his work—if maybe they are willing, but it is ok with him if they are not. In v. 12 they weigh out "thirty shekels/pieces of silver as [his] wages." And probably, as in Judas' day, this is not an extravagant sum. Then, at the beginning of v. 13, God commands the shepherd to throw the money "to the potter," which he does. And v. 13 ends with the good shepherd's saying that he "threw them to the potter in the house of Yahweh." Thus, we have here several connections to the story of Judas,

1) The small payment of thirty shekels/pieces of silver to a man who is associated with a shepherd of Israel. (Zechariah is the shepherd in Zechariah 11, and later Judas is a disciple of the shepherd, Jesus.)
2) A potter, who is associated with the temple of God, to whom the money eventually goes after being thrown in the temple. (Unknown person in Zechariah, and, later, someone who sells his field to the priests in Judas' day.)
3) The temple (or "house") of Yahweh, which is where the Jews worship God and into which the money is thrown.
4) According to Zechariah 11:6 and the rest of the chapter, there will be God's judgment and destruction of the people (or person) associated with the temple as a result of their (his) disobedience of God. (God, through a foreign power, brings about the death of the people of Jerusalem, and, later, Judas, as Jesus' disciple, brings about his own death. Then by extrapolation, forty years and a hundred years respectively after Judas, God will bring about the death of the Jews in Jerusalem when the Romans destroy the city and the temple in A.D. 70 and kill most of the remaining Jews in A.D. 132-135.)

But notice again Matthew's "quote" in vs. 9 & 10 and Zechariah's statement at the end of v. 13,

> Matthew 27:9b "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price has been set by the sons of Israel,
> 27:10 and they gave them for the Potter's Field, just as the Lord ordered me."

Zechariah 11:12 I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.
11:13a Then Yahweh said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them."
11:13b So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of Yahweh.

We notice that Matthew does not quote Zechariah exactly. Plus, it turns out that the quote does not appear word for word in Jeremiah either. Yet, Matthew says that this event is "that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet," by which he means the purchase of the Potter's Field. Consequently, what Jeremiah said "was fulfilled." An important question is, "Can we find a passage in Jeremiah that, like that in Zechariah 11:12-13, comes close to Matthew's wording and what he is saying? Yes, it is located in Jeremiah 19:1-13 as follows,

Jeremiah 19:1 Thus says Yahweh, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.
19:2 "Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you,
19:3 and say, 'Hear the word of Yahweh, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.
19:4 "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent
19:5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;
19:6 therefore, behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.
19:7 "I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.
19:8 "I will also make this city a desolation and an object of hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.
19:9 "I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them."'
19:10 "Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you
19:11 and say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial.
19:12 "This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants," declares Yahweh, "so as to make this city like Topheth.
19:13 "The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods."'"

As I said, Jeremiah lived eighty years or so before Zechariah and during the time of the fall of the southern Kingdom of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In the above passage, God presents a message through Jeremiah to the Jewish leaders of his day that their destruction and their land's destruction is right around the corner because of their extreme disobedience of God. Plus, the destruction and catastrophe will be complete—"even as one breaks a potter's vessel." Thus, we can see several connections of Jeremiah's passage to the story of Judas, as we did with chapter 11 of Zechariah—

1) God commanded Jeremiah to buy a clay jar. (A potter had made this jar, and, six hundred years later, the chief priests take Judas' thirty pieces of silver and purchase a potter's field.)

2) The chief priests of the tribe of Levi participate in the story. (Jeremiah speaks in the presence of the chief priests and elders of Jerusalem, and Judas interacts with the Levitical priests in his day.)
3) God judges and destroys the people (or person) associated with the temple as a result of their (his) disobedience of God. (God, through the Babylonians, brings about the death of the people of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and, later, Judas, as Jesus' disciple, brings about his own death. Then by extrapolation, forty years and a hundred years respectively after Judas, God will bring about the death of the Jews in Jerusalem when the Romans destroy the city and the temple in A.D. 70 and kill most of the remaining Jews in A.D. 132-135.)
4) Those who die in Jerusalem will be buried in a field. (The field in the passage of Jeremiah is called Topheth (meaning unknown), where children were sacrificed to false gods and dead Jews were buried during the siege of the Babylonians in Jeremiah's day, and in Matthew it is called both the Field of Blood and the Potter's Field, where Gentile proselytes who have visited Jerusalem will be buried in Judas' day.)

Thus, we see that the similar elements in these three passages (Matthew 27:9-10; Zechariah 11 (specifically vs. 12 & 13); and Jeremiah 19) are—
1) a potter and his pottery,
2) the religious and political leaders of Israel, who are also associated with the temple in Jerusalem
3) the death and destruction of someone or a group of people in Jerusalem, along with the destruction of the city and its temple

Consequently, I think that Matthew (and probably the other Jews of his day) used the word "Jeremiah" as a way to refer to God's judgment of the Jews, involving these three elements above, and who severely disobey Him as explained first in chapter 19 of Jeremiah (a prophet who lived during the time of Jerusalem's destruction) and then in other passages such as Zechariah 11. Matthew, therefore, is saying that the events surrounding Judas, his money, the purchase of the Potter's Field (the Field of Blood), and his death are a "fulfillment of Jeremiah" and all the similar passages in the books of the prophets, from Isaiah through Malachi. And Matthew presents a "quote" so to speak that is like the wording of Zechariah 11:13 as evidence to this effect, which would then direct the reader to the picture, which God painted through all the prophets, of His bringing about the death of the Jews and most specifically the city of Jerusalem and its temple.

In addition, there are these similarities in at least two of the passages—

1) Judas received "thirty pieces of silver" as his wage, the same as that of the good "shepherd" in Zechariah 11.
2) The "chief priests" were involved in Judas' transactions as they were in Jeremiah's proclamations to Judah.
3) A potter shows up in the events surrounding Judas as well as in the stories of both Jeremiah and Zechariah.
4) A field that either loosely or closely involves sacrifice and blood is part of what Matthew and Jeremiah relate.

My best guess, therefore, is that I think that Matthew references "Jeremiah" to say that, just as the Old Testament prophets predicted God's judgment on His people Israel, their capital city Jerusalem, and their temple for disobeying Him, the same is going to happen to the Jews of Jesus' day. Not only does one particular Jew, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, judge himself and bring about his own death, but also the other Jews who led the charge in executing their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will find themselves under God's judgment and will eventually experience death. We know now that this latter event occurred first in A.D. 70, when the Romans decimated Jerusalem and the temple, and then in A.D. 132-135 when they killed most of the rest of the Jews, while also driving some of them off the land of Israel. These Jews who survived outside their land joined the Jews whom the Assyrians and Babylonians had dispersed seven hundred and six hundred years earlier respectively. And they all remained off the land of Israel for approximately 1,800 years—until the rise of the Zionist Movement in the 19th century.

This means, too, that Matthew does not intend to quote either Jeremiah or Zechariah exactly. He is providing the gist of Zechariah 11:13 and implying everything that the whole of Zechariah 11, Jeremiah 19:1-13, and many other prophetic passages indicate, which is God's judgment on the Jews for their

gross disobedience, especially for rejecting and executing the Messiah in Judas' day. And because, during the Passover, the Sanhedrin and chief priests are busy putting Jesus through a mock trial and then manipulating and convincing the Romans to execute him on a cross, and since the following day is a High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Judas' interaction with them most likely takes place at least two days later on Friday. Then, the weekly Sabbath occurs three days after the Passover, on Saturday, so that Judas could have spoken with them four or more days after the Passover, starting on Sunday.

Above is how I have analyzed Matthew's account of Judas' last days, along with considering Jeremiah 19 and Zechariah 11. But before we leave this story and move on to Jesus' conversations with Pontius Pilate and Herod, we should compare Matthew's description of Judas with Peter's account, which he presents to his fellow Christians in the book of Acts. My translation of Acts 1:15-22 is as follows,

> Acts 1:15 In those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers, and he said (by the way, there was a crowd of about a hundred and twenty present),
>
> 1:16 Men, brothers, it was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus, 1:17 that he was numbered among us and received a portion of this work.
> (1:18 Now this man acquired a field with the wage of unrighteousness, and becoming reckless, he burst open in the middle and all his guts spilled out. 1:19 And it became known to all those living in Jerusalem so that that field was called in their own dialect, '*Hakeldama*,' that is, 'Field of Blood.')
> 1:20 For it was written in the book of Psalms,
> "Let his home become a wilderness,
> And let not there be someone who lives in it" <Psalm 69:25>.
> In addition,
> "Let a different person receive his position of responsibility" <Psalm 109:8>.
> 1:21 Therefore, it is necessary, of the men who have been accompanying us during all the time between when the Lord Jesus came to us and when he left us, 1:22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of his resurrection with us.

In the first chapter of Acts and before Peter's speech, Jesus ascended from the earth to his temporary location where he will reside until he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel, which will be the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God (cf. Acts 1:6-8). Now, Peter and the other ten remaining apostles consider it important to replace Judas Iscariot, who ceased to be Jesus' disciple and one of the twelve, and Peter leads the way with his statements (and Luke's parenthetical comment) in Acts 1:16-21 above. First, Peter names David as the Old Testament author who predicted the events pertaining to Judas. He says that Judas "became a guide to those who arrested Jesus" and that "he was numbered among [the apostles] and "received a portion of [their] work." For all intents and purposes, Judas looked and acted like the other apostles, so that he seemed to be equally genuine in his belief in the truth of Jesus as the Messiah as the rest of them did. The remarkable thing about Judas is that he spent close to three years listening to Jesus, watching him lovingly care for people and heal their physical and spiritual afflictions, and hearing the voice of God the Father proclaim Jesus as His beloved Son, the unique Son of God, who is the final Davidic king of Israel and ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God. In addition, Judas participated in healing illnesses and casting out demons when Jesus sent the twelve disciples to various places to proclaim the Kingdom of God with the same kind of attesting miracles that God performed through him (cf. Matthew 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-13). And yet Judas refused to believe all the evidence he experienced and to embrace Jesus as <u>his</u> Messiah and Savior from God's wrath and condemnation. This is how deep his sin and hostility towards God and Jesus resided in his mind and heart.

Next, Luke adds a few editorial comments in vs. 18-19 that sound a lot like how Matthew describes what Judas and the chief priests did after he threw the thirty pieces of silver into the temple. Matthew says that he hanged himself, followed by the chief priests taking the money and buying the Potter's Field, which became known among the people in Jerusalem as the Field of Blood, because it was purchased with the payment for the blood-death of a supposed criminal. However, Luke says that Judas "acquired a field with the wage of unrighteousness," which sounds as though he and not the Jewish leaders bought it,

and then he took his own life in the field, so that the people of Jerusalem named it the "Field of Blood" because of his death and not because of Jesus' death.

But a more reasonable interpretation that is consistent with Matthew's account is to think of Judas' throwing the money into the temple of God as what could *appear* to any bystander as an act of worship—that he was contributing money to the Levitical priesthood and system of bringing offerings and sacrifices to God. But Judas was only wanting to rid himself of the payment he received for condemning an innocent man, and he certainly was not expecting God to respond to his contribution to His system of worship in the temple.

Nevertheless, Luke is exploiting his action in this way. He is saying that Judas, with his payment for betraying the Son of God to the Jewish leaders after he threw the thirty pieces of silver into the house of God, "acquired a field"—by means of the priests' buying the field. And this is all he "acquired." Judas had every opportunity to repent of his sin of betraying Jesus, especially after he had heard Jesus preach repentance to the Jewish people for three years. Yet, it would seem that he was unwilling to repent, so that he definitely did not obtain God's grace, mercy, eternal life, and entrance into the Kingdom of God. All that he got for his thirty pieces of silver, his "wage of unrighteousness," was a field, which the chief priests bought with his money.

Then, Luke says that Judas did something else as an effect of his "wage of righteousness," i.e., his having received thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus. He took his own life, and he did so in a rather unusual way. The first three Greek words are *kai praynays genomenos* (καὶ πρηνὴς γενόμενος). Most English Bibles translate them something like, "and falling head first," which sounds as though Judas fell down in the field on his head, so that then his body burst open and his intestines came out—as the rest of Luke's sentence indicates. However, *ginomai* is the root verb of *genomenos*, and it typically means to be, become, or happen. And this is the only use in the New Testament of the word *praynays*, which probably means forward, prostrate, head first, or headlong. Therefore, these two words together mean something like "becoming head first" or "becoming headlong." And if headlong can mean reckless as it does in English, then Luke is saying that Judas became even more reckless in his behavior than he already was such that he took his own life in the midst of his despondency and remorse at assisting the Jewish leaders, who executed an innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, in his recklessness, Judas violently ended his life so that "he burst open in the middle and all his guts spilled out." How exactly Judas' body "burst open" Luke does not say, and, again, this sounds different from Matthew's stating that Judas simply hanged himself. But it is more likely that Luke is simply admitting that Judas' suicide was much more violent than Matthew was willing to say. All that Matthew tells his readers is that Judas took his own life, and he most likely is describing it in a fairly generic and nonspecific way, that he "hanged himself." Luke obviously wants to be accurate and graphic, so that he tells us that Judas used a more violent manner than simply placing a rope around his neck. Yet, Luke's description is still not altogether clear. He does inform the reader that this unfortunate man, who had the opportunity to become one of Jesus' authoritative spokesmen after participating in his ministry for several years, ended his own life such that his internal organs came out as he fell to the ground.

But let us look more carefully at the verse where Luke describes Judas' demise –

> Acts 1:18 Now this man acquired a field with the wage of unrighteousness, and becoming reckless, he burst open in the middle and all his guts spilled out.

It seems possible that Luke is saying that two things occurred regarding the field, especially if we translate the clause "and becoming reckless" as the NAS95 does, "and falling headlong" –

1. Judas bought the field (or rather the priests purchased it with his thirty pieces of silver)
2. Judas fell headfirst in the field and thus violently killed himself

This is certainly how all the English translations I inspected interpret what Luke is saying. But, if we conclude that the clause is better translated "and becoming reckless," there is another way to understand his words. Luke is saying that Judas did two things, *but they are not spatially related*. They are *only personally related* –

1. Judas bought the field (or rather the priests purchased it with his thirty pieces of silver)
2. Judas so recklessly and violently killed himself that his inner organs came out of his body.

This second way of interpreting Luke makes more sense to me, but I guess that, in the final analysis, it really does not matter if Judas committed suicide in the field that the priests bought or in some other location, even far away from it. Putting together both Matthew's account and Luke's description, most likely Judas took his own life in a violent and bloody manner, and, through the actions of the priests, he "bought" a field with the money that he had received for putting an innocent man to death in a violent and bloody manner. But I think that it makes more sense that Judas ended his life soon after his last encounter with the priests, and quite a bit later they purchased the field. Therefore, Luke is saying that the people of Jerusalem connected the field to Judas' bloody death, while Matthew indicates that, in the midst of how the priests were reasoning, they also connected it to Jesus' violent death on the cross. Thus, the "Field of Blood" is doubly identified with violent death—as it should[88] be.

These editorial comments then permit Luke to continue with Peter's words to the "hundred and twenty" companions when first he quotes David in Psalm 69:25 –

Acts 1:20a For it was written in the book of Psalms,
"Let his home become a wilderness,
and let not there be one who lives in it."

Here are the verses of Psalm 69:24-26 –

Psalm 69:24 Pour out Your indignation on them,
And may Your burning anger overtake them.
69:25 May their camp be desolate;
May none dwell in their tents.
69:26 For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten,
And they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded.

We see that, in this psalm, David is lamenting the hostility and attacks that he as the king of Israel is receiving from his enemies, whoever these might be. In vs. 24-25, he asks God to pour out his wrath and indignation on them, so that "their camp" may become "desolate" and so that "none" may "dwell in their tents. Peter, through Luke, approximately quotes the Greek translation, the Septuagint, of v. 25, which says,

Psalm 69:25 (LXX) "Let their home become a desert/wilderness, and let there be no one who lives in their tents."

Either David is requesting that his enemies be devoid of children or that their home actually be a desert, i.e., something like an open and barren field where nothing happens but the burial of the dead. Based on the rest of the psalm, he more likely means the former, that he wants God to stop their families from existing after He destroys them for attacking him, and this is probably exactly what happened to Judas, who may not have been married and was childless in his role as a disciple of Jesus.

And finally and briefly, Peter quotes David in Psalm 109, another song of lament about his evil and spiteful enemies who are attacking him. In v. 8, he says –

Psalm 109:8 Let his days be few;
Let another take his office.

The Greek translation of the Septuagint is very much the same as Luke's text of Peter, which says,

Acts 1:20b "Let a different person receive his position of responsibility."

In Psalm 109, David also laments the attacks and accusations that his enemies are directing towards him, and he requests that they die soon so that someone else may take their place either in the Jewish society of his day or in his government while he is serving as king. I think that we can assume that the men who oppose David currently have a useful and rather important role among the Jewish people. However, because they have chosen to become David's enemies, i.e., the enemies of the king of Israel,

they deserve to die, and David asks that others replace them. Accordingly, Peter takes the words of David, the first Son of God and king of Israel of the Davidic Covenant, applies them to Jesus who, likewise, has been betrayed by his own opponent, enemy, and accuser—Judas Iscariot. This allows Peter to encourage his fellow Christians to pray and draw lots as to whom God has chosen to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle. He says that it must be one "of the men who have been accompanying us during all the time between when the Lord Jesus came to us and when he left us, beginning with the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us" (vs. 21,22). And we find out a few verses later (Acts 1:26), that God chooses Matthias.

My conclusion, therefore, is that Luke in Acts is not contradicting Matthew in his gospel account. He is only providing more details of Judas' death which was both violent and very unpleasant.

n. Jesus' Trial Before Pilate and Herod Antipas

Wednesday between about 5:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

Explanations and Passages of the Following Eleven Parts of This Subsection

Remember that we are in the third large section, between Tuesday sundown and Wednesday sundown, of The Passion Week narrative. This section comprises the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest, trials, crucifixion, and burial. We are looking at his trials and have completed the first one when the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, have convinced themselves, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, that Jesus is a false Messiah. Now they are intent upon achieving the most painful way currently available to execute him—by crucifixion. We will learn that the Jews do not have the right themselves to crucify anyone and are therefore dependent on the Romans for putting Jesus to death in this manner.

As a result Jesus' next trial is before the Roman governor Pilate, of which there are the following eleven parts which will include in the middle a brief audience before the Galilean king, Herod Antipas—

1. **The Sanhedrin Lead Jesus to the Roman Governor Pilate**
   Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28
2. **Pilate's Initial Discussion With the Jews Outside His Residence**
   Luke 23:2; John 18:29-32
3. **Pilate's Initial Discussion With Jesus Inside His Residence**
   Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-38a
4. **Pilate's First Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews**
   Luke 23:4; John 18:38b
5. **The Jews Continue Their Accusations Amid Jesus' Lack of Response**
   Matthew 27:12-14; Mark 15:3-5; Luke 23:5
6. **Herod Antipas Questions Jesus and Sends Him Back to Pilate**
   Luke 23:6-12
7. **Pilate's Second Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews**
   Luke 23:13-16
8. **Pilate's Discussion With the Jews About Jesus and Barabbas and His Third Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews**
   Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 16:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40
9. **Pilate Hands Jesus Over to be Crucified and Washes His Hands of Jesus' Innocence**
   Matthew 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25a
10. **Pilate's Soldiers Mock and Mistreat Jesus**
    Matthew 27:27-31a; Mark 15:16-20a; John 19:2-3
11. **Pilate's Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Statements of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews**
    John 19:4-16

And so we begin with the first part –

1. The Sanhedrin Lead Jesus to the Roman Governor Pilate

Wednesday about 5:30 a.m.

Matthew 27:1-2	Mark 15:1	Luke 23:1	John 18:28

27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put him to death. 27:2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor…	**15:1** Early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin immediately held a consultation, and binding Jesus, they led him away and delivered him to Pilate.	**23:1** And the whole group of them rose up and led him to Pilate.	18:28 Later, they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the governor's residence, and it was early. And they did not enter into the governor's residence, so that they would not become defiled, but instead could eat the Passover.[89]

It is now around 5:30 a.m., and the morning is dawning. During the night, the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin have listened to various false testimonies and judged that Jesus deserves to die. By his claiming to be the long-expected Messiah as predicted by the Old Testament, they firmly believe that he is guilty of blasphemy. He is stating a lie and claiming it to be true. Consequently, the members of the Sanhedrin have decided to hand Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor, in hopes that they can convince him to crucify Jesus and thereby complete their purpose of getting rid of him.

We will now look at a total of eleven parts of Jesus' interactions with Pilate. Piecing them together in chronological order is not an easy task, but the clues in the various passages of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) make certain connections quite clear, which I will point out as we go along. One of these parts will be a brief interlude that only Luke records of Jesus' being sent to King Herod for his assessment, and two of them include separate private conversations that Pilate has with Jesus in the governor's palace.

Let us consider the verses above of part 1 of this subsection as the Sanhedrin lead Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate,

> Matthew 27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put him to death. 27:2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.
>
> Mark 15:1 Early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin immediately held a consultation, and binding Jesus, they led him away and delivered him to Pilate.
>
> Luke 23:1 And the whole group of them rose up and led him to Pilate.
>
> John 18:28 Later, they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the governor's residence, and it was early. And they did not enter into the governor's residence, so that they would not become defiled, but instead could eat the Passover.

It has been a long night for everyone, but the Jewish leaders' job is not yet over. They need the Romans' assistance in crucifying Jesus. Thus, Matthew says, "When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put him to death." Mark wants to make it clear that it was not just the chief priests and elders who were gathered at the house of the high priest. It was all the Jewish leaders, "Early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin immediately held a consultation." Thus, they put their heads together and consult with one another on exactly what they are going to do next. Luke is quite brief and says simply that it is "the whole group of them." John tells his readers that they all head out "from Caiaphas" and lead Jesus "into the governor's residence." We recall that John records only a conversation between Jesus and Caiaphas' father-in-law, Annas. Therefore, their leading Jesus "from Caiaphas" is after the trial, of which John has provided no details. Like Matthew and Mark, John does tell us the time. He says that "it was early." I am assuming this means that the sun is rising, and it is about 5:30 a.m.

While Matthew speaks of the Jews' intent in regard to Jesus, "to put him to death," he also says in 27:2, "They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor." Like John, Matthew wants to make it clear that Pilate is the "governor" of Judea, a title given him by the central government in Rome. Originally, after the death of Herod the Great, who was a descendant of Jacob's son Esau and who ruled the land of Israel (the entirety of which was called Judea in those days) from 37-4 B.C., his three sons and sister took over the rule of his kingdom. Archelaus had authority over Jerusalem and the actual area of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea in the south. Antipas reigned over Galilee and Perea, which was the strip of land east of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Philip ruled the areas north and east of the Sea of Galilee, including Caesarea Philippi. And Herod's sister Salome was given two cities to rule, one in the southwestern area of Judea on the Mediterranean coast and one city near the western bank of the Jordan River.

However, the one son, Archelaus, made such a mess of the situation in Judea and Jerusalem that Rome removed him from his throne and banished him in A.D. 6 to Gaul in France. The Roman government then replaced Archelaus with governors who were not related to Herod's family and had the authority and power of life and death that included executing criminals by means of crucifixion. In A.D. 26, Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate as the fifth "governor" of this area.

The governor's official residence was at Caesarea Maritima on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 20 miles north of the modern city of Tel Aviv. It is here, according to Acts 23-26, where the apostle Paul will be taken about twenty-eight years later and be imprisoned for two years before being transferred to Rome after appealing to Caesar Nero. When any governor visited Jerusalem, as Pilate was now as a precaution against any disturbances that might arise during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, he would stay in the palace that had been built by Herod the Great in the northwestern section of the city. Mark will use the words "palace" (*aulay*, αὐλή) and "Praetorium" (*praitorion*, πραιτώριον) in 15:16 to refer to this building. Thus, early in the morning, the Sanhedrin lead Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem from the high priest's house in the southwestern part of the city to Pilate's residence in Herod's palace.

The verse in Mark is not all that different from Matthew's wording, and Luke states simply that they "led [Jesus] to Pilate." John adds an interesting editorial comment, that the Jewish leaders "did not enter into the governor's residence, so that they would not become defiled, but instead could eat the Passover." Wanting to obey the Mosaic Covenant and not become unclean by touching the property of a Gentile, which would ritually disqualify them from participating in the rest of the Passover celebration, these men remain outside the palace, Pilate's Jerusalem home. Probably most of us are aware of the one Passover meal, the "Last Supper," that Jesus celebrated with his twelve disciples of the previous evening and that modern Jews call the Seder Dinner. But apparently there was at least one more festival meal to eat during Wednesday or maybe in the evening after sundown. And John is referring to this meal, indicating that the Jews want to make sure they have the correct ceremonial status to enjoy it. Their remaining outside will also allow Pilate to bring Jesus alone into his palace and question him privately. Only John will explicitly mention two of these situations in part 3 and part 11.

Luke and John now speak of Pilate's initial conversation with the Jews.

2. Pilate's Initial Discussion With the Jews Outside His Residence

Wednesday about 5:30 a.m.

Matthew	Mark	**Luke 23:2**	**John 18:29-32**
No parallel in Matthew	No parallel in Mark	23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding paying taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is the Messiah, the king."	18:29 So Pilate came outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 18:30 They answered and said to him, "If this man had not committed a crime, we would not

			have handed him over to you." 18:31 Therefore, Pilate said to them, "You take him and judge him on the basis of your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is illegal for us to execute someone," 18:32 in order to fulfill Jesus' statement, which he spoke, indicating what kind of death he was about to die.

Here in part 2, the Jewish leaders have arrived with Jesus at the governor's residence, and John writes,

> John 18:29 So Pilate came outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

Because the Jews are standing outside the Praetorium and refuse to enter so as not to defile themselves, Pilate must come out to them. It is still very early in the morning, and probably after being awakened and told by his attendants that the Sanhedrin have brought a man to him to be tried, Pilate gets himself dressed, leaves his wife, and comes out to the Jews. Naturally, he asks them what charge they are bringing against "this man," i.e., this nameless man whom Pilate may have never seen in person even though this is the third time that Jesus has been in Jerusalem. Perhaps, he has heard about him and the miracles that he has performed. But I doubt that he ever laid eyes on him and heard him speak about his being the Jewish Messiah. The hour is so early, and the crowd of Jews is so large and rambunctious that Pilate is probably expecting them to charge Jesus with something like the murder of one of the Jewish leaders.

John then writes of the Jews' response and Pilates' next statements in John 18:30-32,

> John 18:30 They answered and said to him, "If this man had not committed a crime, we would not have handed him over to you."
> 18:31 Therefore, Pilate said to them, "You take him and judge him on the basis of your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is illegal for us to execute someone," 18:32 in order to fulfill Jesus' statement, which he spoke, indicating what kind of death he was about to die.

Having most likely never before been approached by the Jews in such a manner, Pilate has asked the Jews a simple question in which he is saying, "What are you all doing here this early in the morning?" In these next verses, they respond to Pilate's implied criticism, "If this man had not committed a crime, we would not have handed him over to you." In other words, "Pilate, you may think that we are a little out of line by forcing ourselves on you at this hour, but you need to hear us out and examine this man yourself, because he is guilty of crimes, both Roman and Jewish, whereby he deserves to die!"

Pilate then answers in John 18:31 that they themselves should judge and punish Jesus "on the basis of [their] own law," which we assume he knows is the Old Testament and particularly the Mosaic Covenant that they use to conduct their lives and their worship of God in the temple. And suspecting that their complaints about this man are mere petty, Jewish issues and internal squabbles, he wants nothing to do with them. However, they say that it is "illegal for [them] to execute someone," by which they must mean specifically crucifixion, since later in Acts 7 and without hesitation they will put Stephen to death by stoning him. Thus, they are fully convinced that Jesus has done something so egregiously wrong that the Romans should crucify him.

Therefore, the Jews have shown their true colors by stating that, if they believe someone to have violated certain laws in their scriptures and even though they have no authority to put this person to death by crucifixion, their full intent is to see Jesus suffer by means of the cruelest means available, which is crucifixion. I assume that this is the correct way to interpret their statement for two reasons. First, the Jewish leaders will stone to death Stephen at least fifty days later in Acts 7, but we hear of no response by the Roman government to their doing so. Therefore, I am guessing that execution through stoning was legal for the Jews, while putting criminals to death by crucifixion was not. Second, John goes on to add in v. 32 that they are unknowingly demonstrating that their desire for Pilate to crucify "this man" will be the fulfillment of Jesus' previous prediction about the kind of death he is going to suffer. In John 12, God spoke into the creation from His transcendent position, so that Jesus and the people standing with him heard Him declare that He will glorify Himself through Jesus. John then writes,

> John 12:30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for my sake, but for your sakes.
> 12:31 "Now judgment is upon this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.
> 12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."
> 12:33 But he was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which he was to die.

Thus, Jesus knew that he would die on a cross and not by stoning, even though, I assume, this latter method of execution was available to the Sanhedrin—if they chose to use it in his case. But they are not going to give up until they achieve their goal and seeing Jesus crucified, so that Luke continues with the following,

> Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding paying taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is the Messiah, the king."

Thus, only Luke writes of this first answer by the Sanhedrin to Pilate's question, in which they bring three charges against Jesus. The first charge is certainly true from their perspective. Jesus is "misleading" the Jewish people by encouraging them to view him as their primary leader, the long-expected Messiah. However, they obviously think that he is lying, because Caiaphas, the high priest, should be supreme in their eyes—until the legitimate Messiah arrives and especially since they are convinced that Jesus is a false Messiah.

The second charge is clearly false in that they are claiming that Jesus has told the Jews that they are not required, even forbidden, to pay taxes to Rome. When the Pharisees asked Jesus in Matthew 22 if it is lawful to pay a poll-tax to the emperor of Rome, he responded,

> Matthew 22:19 "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought him a denarius.
> 22:20 And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"
> 22:21 They said to him, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

The question of paying taxes to the Romans government was probably a popular one to explore among the Jewish people because of the Mosaic Covenant, which basically made it clear that the Jews were submit to no other government than God and it while living on the land of Israel as His chosen people. But now they are living under a foreign regime who are both defiling the land by occupying it with their Gentile, pagan religion and exercising authority over the Jews, which only God is allowed to do. Therefore, we can see that the Pharisees were asking a very legitimate question of Jesus. If he is the Messiah, should they (and he) be acknowledging the authority of a foreign government by paying taxes to it? And one would think that the true Messiah would say, "Absolutely NOT! And I am here to protect you from this government and rid you (and me) of it!" And this is the response that the Sanhedrin are claiming that Jesus gave and are certainly counting on it playing well in Pilate's presence since it means that Jesus is encouraging sedition and the nation of Israel to rebel against Rome.

Instead, in Matthew 22:21 (and Mark 12:17 and Luke 20:25), Jesus taught that the Jews should "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to render unto God what is God's. They should give themselves with their hearts, minds, and existences to God as His chosen people and their taxes to the Romans as they are required—*as long as God has not yet freed them by means of the Messiah from this foreign power*. In other words, it is perfectly permissible for the Jews to submit to another government on

the land of Israel, which God has given them, as long as He has not fulfilled His promise yet to make them the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant. They did this under Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Greeks. And, now, they are doing so under the rule of Rome and its Caesar. It would seem, too, that Jesus is implying that, while he really is the Messiah, it is not now that he will be restoring the Kingdom of Israel so as to rid them of Rome's rule and taxation, because his task during this first appearance is to die on the cross, rise from the dead, and ascend from the earth in order to set the cosmic stage for his return and completing his responsibility to rule over the nation of Israel and the world.

The Jewish leaders' third charge against Jesus is that he is claiming to be the Messiah, the Anointed One and king of Israel—as described and predicted by the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. Obviously, this charge is definitely true, even though they consider his claim to be false! Consequently, the Jewish leaders have woven together three accusations against Jesus that are intended to demonstrate that he deserves to die according to both Jewish law and Roman law, which should (they hope) motivate Pilate to comply with their demand that Jesus be crucified—and to keep peace in Israel by not provoking them to rise up and create a major civil disturbance, which is what the emperor and Roman Senate have ordered him to do as governor of Judea.

3. Pilate's Initial Discussion With Jesus Inside His Residence

Wednesday about 5:45 a.m.

Matthew 27:11	Mark 15:2	Luke 23:3	John 18:33-38a
27:11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews (σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων)?" And Jesus said to him, "You are saying it (σὺ λέγεις)."	15:2 And Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews (σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων)?" And he answered him, "You are saying it (σὺ λέγεις)."	23:3 So Pilate asked him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews (σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων)?" And he answered him and said, "You are saying it (σὺ λέγεις)."	18:33 So Pilate entered again into the governor's residence. He summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews (σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων)?" 18:34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this in and of yourself, or are others talking to you about me?" 18:35 Pilate responded, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your people and the high priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my assistants would be fighting, so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

			18:37 Then Pilate said to him, "So, you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say that I am a king (σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεύς εἰμι). I have been born for this, and for this purpose I have come into the world, so that I may bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." 18:38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

First, notice that I have skipped Matthew 27:3-10, where Matthew is the only author who records the remorse and death of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus to the Jewish leaders. This was the subject of the previous subsection that Matthew had inserted between Jesus' interaction with the Sanhedrin and his conversations with the Roman governor, Pilate. Next, there are two important clues that permit us to connect these verses of Matthew, Mark, and Luke with those of John. Notice that in all four accounts Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews ?" And the Greek text in all four is exactly the same—σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (*soo ay ho basileoos ton Ioudaion*). Also, when Jesus responds, "You are saying it," the three synoptic gospels use exactly the same words—σὺ λέγεις (*soo legays*). And then four verses after this question in John, Jesus answers, "You say that I am a king." The first two words in the Greek text are exactly the same as in the three other gospels, σὺ λέγεις (*soo legays*), but John adds, "that I am a king"— ὅτι βασιλεύς εἰμι (*hoti basileoos aymee*). I think that John is providing Jesus' complete answer to Pilate's question, and therefore he is also providing the entire conversation that took place between the two men in the privacy of Pilate's residence. This means that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for their own purposes and without indicating the exact location of the conversation, are giving only a brief summary of it.

Thus, the accounts of the three synoptics and the beginning of John's explanation are as follows,

Matthew 27:11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
And Jesus said to him, "You are saying it."

Mark 15:2 And Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
And he answered him, "You are saying it."

Luke 23:3 So Pilate asked him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
And he answered him and said, "You are saying it."

John 18:33 So Pilate entered again into the governor's residence. He summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Mark and Luke are quite brief in their wording, "And Pilate questioned him…" and "So Pilate asked him, saying…" respectively. But notice that Matthew writes, "Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying…" We remember that only Matthew, in the interlude of 27:3-10, explains what happened to Judas Iscariot, which we examined in the previous subsection. Then, he presents the same summary of Pilate's private conversation with Jesus in his residence (as made clear by John's gospel, "18:33 So Pilate entered again into the governor's residence. He summoned Jesus and said to

him,…"). But at least Matthew indicates to his readers that "Jesus stood before the governor," which means that Jesus was alone with Pilate in his home where this conversation took place, starting with the governor's asking Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Here, after listening to the Jewish leaders' concerns about Jesus (that he is misleading the Jews, encouraging them not to pay taxes to Rome, and claiming to the be the Messiah and king of Israel), Pilate himself asks him about his stated role and identity as the "king of the Jews." This means that the first two charges that the Jews are bringing against Jesus are not as interesting to him. Was Jesus "misleading" the people of Israel by claiming to be their primary leader? Ok, but this means that he is only competing with the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas the high priest, which would be of no concern to Pilate. Was Jesus encouraging the Jewish people to forego paying their taxes to Rome? This would definitely be a serious charge in the light of Roman law. But it, too, is not of as much concern at the moment to Pilate than the fact that Jesus is claiming to be a king, indeed the "king of the Jews." Plus, depending upon Pilate's familiarity with the Old Testament and Jewish religion, what exactly does this mean?

For example, Herod the Great, who ruled the Jews as a client king of the Roman government from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C., had claimed this status and role. However, he had done so while fully submitting to the authority of the central powers in Rome. Maybe Pilate is thinking that this is all that Jesus is attempting to do, too. But maybe not. Perhaps Jesus as the Jewish Messiah is attempting to do more by throwing off the authority of the Romans and ruling the Jews alone. So what exactly is Jesus claiming to be, and Pilate asks him pointblank, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Since Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us only Jesus' eventual response, "You are saying it," we turn to John's account for the rest of the full conversation before his response. John writes,

> John 18:34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this in and of yourself, or are others talking to you about me?"

Jesus answers Pilate's question with a question. What exactly is the origin of Pilate's thoughts on the matter of his kingship? The question itself seems a little strange, "Are you saying this in and of yourself, or are others talking to you about me?" Of course the Jewish leaders and the crowd are talking to Pilate about him. But I think that Jesus is characteristically asking Pilate to consider exactly what his question involves, even for himself—the fact that Jesus <u>is</u> the Jewish Messiah and that everyone, including Pilate, should embrace him as such.

Then John explains,

> John 18:35 Pilate responded, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your people and the high priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Unfortunately, Pilate is not at a place in his own mind and heart where he really wants to understand what it means for Jesus to be the king of the Jews and curtly says to him, "I am not a Jew, am I?" Of course he is not a Jew, by which he probably means that he is not very familiar with the Old Testament and has no desire to learn from it about the Jewish God. But we know from the whole Bible that lack of current knowledge of God should not prevent people from learning as much as they can about Jesus in order to respond to him by believing in him as the Son of God and Messiah for all sinners.

Pilate then goes on to say to Jesus, "Your people [the Jews!] and the high priests [of the Jews!] have handed you over to me." Thus, Pilate sees Jesus as just another Jewish problem and not really something that he should have to be dealing with. And then he asks him directly, "What have you done?" Obviously, while it is quite annoying to Pilate to be going through this process concerning a single Jew, he is still trying to figure out exactly what the problem is. What has Jesus done to upset and anger the Jewish leadership to this degree that at 5:30 in the morning they are demanding that he, the Roman governor, put him to death by means of crucifixion?

The next verse is Jesus' response to this last question by Pilate,

> John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my assistants would be fighting, so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

Now Pilate gets to hear from Jesus' perspective what is at the core of these proceedings. Jesus tells him straightforwardly, "My kingdom is not of this world." Finally, Jesus uses a word, "kingdom," that directly relates to the issue, which is that Jesus is definitely a king. Then, he adds, "If my kingdom were of this world, my assistants would be fighting, so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Typically, when Jesus says that his "kingdom is not of this world," Bible students think that he is talking about heaven, that his kingdom is not on the earth but is up in the sky somewhere that we call heaven where Christians go after they die. However, I think that Jesus means something quite different and even more profound than this.

If we take into account both of God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, which we have considered along the way towards looking at this subsection, it makes more sense that Jesus is talking about the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and, therefore, on the present earth. This is the kingdom that will comprise the "great nation" of Abraham's physical descendants, the Jews, when they will all obtain circumcised and changed hearts of authentic belief, and Jesus will rule over them from Jerusalem (and over the whole world, also, as made clear by Psalm 2).

So what does Jesus mean that his kingdom is "not of this world," especially since his kingdom will be in this world and on this earth? He is referring to the moral and governmental nature of the kingdoms, nations, and empires that have existed throughout all human history on the earth. They have been led by sinful human beings who rule with such a strong and immoral craving for power that these governments ultimately result in tyranny if their desire is not checked through a suitable constitution, structure, and set of laws—or through force, i.e., a revolution. Such has been the case so far for the United States of America. In contrast, Jesus' kingdom and rule over the Jews and the rest of the world will be radically different from all these other governments, which have existed and will continue to exist until Jesus returns and establishes his Messianic government.

While sinful human beings' tendency is to rule with more power than they should and with cruel oppression, Jesus will rule with only sufficient power and moral love and justice. He will not rob people of their property through excessive taxation and other means, and he will not steal from them their rightful and independent self-existence. He will always encourage proper ownership and independent choices of a true and biblical moral nature. He will not oppress people and bully them into worshiping some aspect of the creation, such as the weather and the global climate. He will encourage them to believe in and worship him and the one true God, the transcendent creator. Plus, he will not be so self-absorbed and evil like other government leaders in history who have manipulated systems of justice for their own personal self-aggrandizement. Instead, he will require biblical justice to prevail with appropriate protection of the innocent and with fair and right punishment of criminals who harm the innocent. This is what Jesus means by the fact that his "kingdom is not of this world" and that it "is not from here." The ideological and moral sources of his kingdom will not be in man's sin, but in God's ideas of goodness and righteousness and in his own moral perfection. The result will be that Jesus will rule the world with perfect wisdom and understanding of God, human beings, and the reality which God has created.

Jesus goes on to say in the verse above that if his kingdom were like those of this world, his "assistants would be fighting, so that [he] would not be handed over to the Jews," and, by extrapolation, to him, Pilate, and the Romans. While all other kingdoms, nations, and empires have come into existence and continue to exist through the powerful, military activities of sinful people, Jesus does not need the help and support of even his own disciples, who themselves are sinful men, to accomplish his goal of bringing about a new kingdom. This has got to sound quite strange to Pontius Pilate, an official of militaristic Rome and the powerful governor of Judea and Samaria.

It is true that the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation clearly indicate that the transcendent God and Jesus as his "icon" within the story of creation will use great and terrifying military force to destroy Israel's and their enemies in order to restore the Kingdom of Israel. However, this will not happen apart from and until long after the awful crucifixion and death of Jesus, the king of this future kingdom. In other words, the powerful and militant introduction of Jesus' kingdom much later at his second appearance is in conjunction with the unfathomable depth of God's producing His eternal mercy and forgiveness through Jesus' death during his first appearance.

All this is what Jesus means by saying that his kingdom is "not of this world" and "not from here." His kingdom is neither now nor will be like the Roman Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the British Empire, or any other nation, even that of the United States—because all these came into existence and were kept in existence for as long as they lasted by sinful and immoral human beings. Jesus' kingdom on the land of Israel and his rule over the entire earth will be the only earthly government

that comes into existence and remains in existence with perfect righteousness and goodness by means of the direct actions of the eternal, transcendent God and His proxy, Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish Messiah and "king of the Jews."

John's story continues,

John 18:37a Then Pilate said to him, "So, you are a king?"

Pilate finally understands at least a little of what this situation is about. But I seriously doubt that he understands even a modicum of what Jesus has just said. The best that Pilate can do is simply ask the rhetorical question that indicates that he has grasped that Jesus is declaring himself to be the king of some kingdom. And Pilate may be thinking that Jesus is talking about a kingdom that does not have anything to do with the Jews since he would fight to keep from falling into their hands if his kingdom were of this world. And who knows? Pilate may even think that Jesus is a slightly, if not completely, crazy and certifiable lunatic since he is talking about a kingdom that is other worldly. After all, what other kind of kingdom is there, if it is not of this world like the Roman Empire with its oppressive power, force, brutality, security, stability, and law and order?

This same verse contains Jesus' answer to his question,

John 18:37b Jesus responded, "You say that I am a king. I have been born for this, and for this purpose I have come into the world, so that I may bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

As I have suggested, John is providing us with Jesus' eventual complete answer to Pilate's original question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded his response as, "You are saying it." In John's account, Jesus says, "You say that I am king." In other words, "Yes, your conclusion is correct, and I am definitely a king." Then Jesus adds, "I have been born for this, and for this purpose I have come into the world, so that I may bear witness to the truth." If Pilate thinks even a little bit that his prisoner is mentally ill, Jesus is quick to declare that he is on the side of truth so that all that he is doing—past, present, and future—reveals the most important truth in all reality. And we know from the Bible that his truth is God's truth concerning His plans and purposes to bring about the eternal Kingdom of God where Jesus will rule and authentic believers will live in submission to him. It is for this that Jesus was "born" and for this that he came "into the world." His kingdom may not be "of this world" because of its quality and nature that will be radically different from all other political entities in human history. But it will at least begin <u>in</u> this world initially when he restores the Kingdom of Israel and rules over the entire earth.

And then Jesus includes something for Pilate to think very, very seriously about, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Jesus is tacitly claiming to have a following among human beings, and he is encouraging Pilate to become one of them. Is he willing to be "of the truth" and to listen to and understand all that Jesus says, so that he too will eventually participate in his kingdom when he returns?

But John writes,

John 18:38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

All that Pilate can say in response is another question, "What is truth?" This is a great question, but just asking it is not sufficient. We sinful human beings need to pursue the answer to this question with every fiber of our being. This is why we exist—to seek, discover, and learn all that we can about the God of truth and His message of truth that features Jesus as the own who most importantly reveals the truth within the creation.

4. Pilate's <u>First</u> Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews

Wednesday about 6:00 a.m.

Matthew	Mark	**Luke 23:4**	**John 18:38b**
No parallel in Matthew	No parallel in Mark	23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no	18:38b After saying this, he again went out to the Jews and said to

		reason to charge this man."	them, "I find no fault in him."

Pilate has heard from Jesus' mouth that he is a king, but he definitely does not understand what this means. Nevertheless, because Jesus has stated clearly that his kingdom is "not of this world," Pilate can conclude that he is not a threat to Rome even though the Jews may think that he is a threat to them. Therefore, both Luke and John write,

Luke 23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no reason to charge this man."

John 18:38b After saying this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no fault in him."

Luke does not explicitly say that Pilate and Jesus went into his residence alone. John does, so that his statement is clearer, that Pilate "went out to the Jews." But both Luke and John mean the same thing by what their accounts indicate that he says. Pilate means that Jesus has not committed any crime against Rome, and certainly not one that warrants the Jews' coming to him (so early in the morning!) and asking him to put him to death. Matthew and Mark make no explicit mention like this one of Pilate's expression of Jesus' innocence to the Jews. We will see that in their accounts, Pilate implies it once by simply asking the question, "Why, what evil has he done?" in the following, parallel verses –

Matthew 27:23 & Mark 15:14

Pilate also implies Jesus' innocence in the same conversation when he washes his hands with water in front of the crowd and declares, "I am innocent of this man's blood." In contrast, Luke will record that Pilate says explicitly three times, "I find no reason to charge this man," and the third time he asks the same question as in Matthew and Mark, "Why, what evil has this man done?" in the following verses –

Luke 23:4
Luke 23:14
Luke 23:22 (which is parallel to Matthew 27:23 & Mark 15:14)

In addition, I think it is safe to assume that Pilate does state in Luke both this question and his conclusion about Jesus' innocence in the eyes of Rome all three times.

John, on the other hand, tells his readers twice that Pilate directly speaks of Jesus' innocence. But John also implies a third time that Pilate says it. The first time in John's account that Pilate speaks of Jesus' innocence is in this part above of John 18:38b after his initial private conversation with Jesus, which will be followed by more and probably louder accusations from the Jewish crowd in the next part (as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The second explicit statement in John by Pilate of Jesus' innocence will be after his soldiers mistreat him and he presents him to the Jewish leaders. And this will be before his second private conversation with him (cf. John 19:4). However, taking into account Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's gospels, I think we can say that this statement in John is actually the fourth time that Pilate attempts to convince the Jews that they are wrong. Then, two verses later, John will provide a fifth time (cf. John 19:6), while six verses later, he will quickly imply a sixth time that he expresses Jesus' innocence (cf. John 19:12).

Therefore, we can say that John records that Pilate states Jesus' innocence to the Jewish leaders four times in the following verses –

John 18:38b (explicitly by John)
John 19:4 (explicitly by John)
John 19:6 (explicitly by John)
John 19:12 (implicitly by John)

Thus, here in Luke 23:4 and John 18:38b, Pilate states plainly for the first time that he finds nothing about Jesus that would lead him to charge him with a crime, certainly not one under Roman law that

deserves crucifixion and death. And we will see, in this order, Pilate explicitly or implicitly declares Jesus' innocence five more times during his multiple discussions with the Jewish leaders and the crowd –

1. Luke 23:4; John 18:38b – After Pilate's initial private conversation with Jesus above
2. Luke 23:14 – After Jesus' audience before Herod Antipas
3. Matthew 27:23,24; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:22 – During Pilates' conversation with the Jews about Jesus and Barabbas and when he washes his hands with water
4. John 19:4 – After Pilate's soldiers mock and mistreat Jesus
5. John 19:6 – Again, after Pilate's soldiers mock and mistreat Jesus
6. John 19:12 – After Jesus tells Pilate that he has no authority over him other than what God gives him

5. The Jews Continue Their Accusations Amid Jesus' Lack of Response

Wednesday about 6:00 a.m.

Matthew 27:12-14	Mark 15:3-5	Luke 23:5	John
27:12 And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. 27:13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?" 27:14 And he did not answer him in regard to one statement, so that the governor was absolutely amazed.	15:3 And the chief priests were forcefully accusing him. [But he said nothing.] 15:4 So Pilate again questioned him, "Do you not answer? See how many charges they bring against you." 15:5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.	23:5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee to here."	No parallel in John

Pilate has come out with Jesus from his first private conversation with him and declared to the Jewish leaders that he has done nothing against Roman law and that he does not deserve to be put to death. This obviously was not what the Sanhedrin wanted to hear. Therefore, Matthew and Mark indicate that they again accuse Jesus of high crimes. Mark even says that "they were forcefully accusing him." We can imagine their loud, aggressive, and lengthy accusations against Jesus, probably focusing on exactly what it means, according to the Old Testament, for a man to be their Messiah, which would include destroying any opposing powers and governments such as Rome and Caesar. They are making the case that this situation is not just a problem for them in regard to their own biblical laws, but also a huge problem for the Romans, because Jesus is attempting to start a revolution. Thus, the Sanhedrin ramp up their tone of harsh criticisms to a fevered pitch.

Matthew states in v. 12 that Jesus "did not answer." Some of the copies of Mark's manuscript say, "But he said nothing," which is probably original and in parallel with Matthew. Then Matthew and Mark write,

Matthew 27:13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?"
27:14 And he did not answer him in regard to one statement, so that the governor was absolutely amazed.

Mark 15:4 So Pilate again questioned him, "Do you not answer? See how many charges they bring against you."
15:5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Pilate of course thinks that anyone who is being accused of the various charges that the Jewish leaders are bringing against him would clearly, energetically, and loudly attempt to defend himself—especially if he is innocent, which Pilate is most likely convinced that Jesus is. But Jesus is saying nothing in response to the "many charges" being brought by the Jews. "Do you not hear" them, and "Do you not answer?", Pilate says to Jesus. He certainly is not deaf, but he is acting as though he hears nothing of what the Jewish leaders are saying. In addition, he makes no "answer in regard to one statement" of Pilate and continues to remain completely silent, so that all Pilate can do is be "absolutely amazed," while probably wondering what really has made these Jews so upset. Plus, I doubt that he has seen such hostility against and hatred for one man by the Sanhedrin that they have come to him and are demanding Jesus' blood, indeed his crucifixion. And they simply will not relent. This has got to be the strangest situation that Pilate has ever found himself in as a ruler and judge, who has the authority to release those who are innocent and to execute the guilty.

And notice that Luke adds,

> Luke 23:5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee to here."

Thus, Luke provides some details about the charges which the Jewish leaders continue to voice in Pilate's presence. They accuse Jesus of sedition beyond Jerusalem and Judea up into the north of the land of Israel around the Sea of Galilee. And it will be on the basis of these last words that Pilate finds some hope in ridding himself of having to deal with their "Messiah."

6. Herod Antipas Questions Jesus and Sends Him Back to Pilate

Wednesday about 6:30 a.m.

Luke 23:6-12
23:6 When Pilate heard it, he asked if he was a Galilean. 23:7 And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself was in Jerusalem in those days. 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus, for he had wanted to see him for a long time, because he had been hearing about him and hoped to see some sign performed by him. 23:9 So he questioned him with many statements, but he answered him nothing. 23:10 And the chief priests and scribes were standing there, accusing him vehemently. 23:11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating him with contempt and mocking him, dressed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him back to Pilate. 23:12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day, for previously they had been enemies with each other.

I assume it has been about an hour since the Jews first brought Jesus to Pilate. When he finds out that Jesus is from the northern region of Israel, the area called Galilee that surrounds the Sea of Galilee, Pilate decides to send him to Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who is responsible for ruling over Galilee on behalf of the Roman government. Herod, like Pilate, must be in Jerusalem to help keep the peace during the Passover celebration which has attracted a large number of Jews and proselytes from around the Roman Empire. And perhaps Pilate is hoping that Antipas, who has jurisdiction over Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, will take full responsibility for him and satisfy the Jewish leaders' demands to execute him. The last thing Pilate wants to do is look bad in either the eyes of the central Roman government or the eyes of the Jews. This also probably means that Antipas will have to take Jesus back to Galilee, but so much the better for Pilate if he can divert the attention from him and just get rid of this situation.

Whenever Pilate visits Jerusalem, he stays in the palace which Herod the Great had built. However, Herod's son, Herod Antipas, is also in town, so that I would assume Pilate and he would be occupying different parts of the same building. Therefore, the Jewish crowd who have brought Jesus to Pilate may have stayed right where they were, and Herod, as Pilate had done, simply came outside to them. It is still rather early in the morning, and Herod is delighted to give Jesus an audience, because he has heard

much about him and hopes that he will perform a miracle that he can observe. Herod questions Jesus extensively, and much to his disappointment Jesus, just as he did with respect to the Jews and their accusations before Pilate, says nothing and does nothing in response to him. All the while, the Sanhedrin and rest of the Jewish crowd, who initially brought Jesus to Pilate and now are addressing Herod, are once again loudly accusing him of serious and death-deserving crimes. They are probably repeating the charges that they mentioned earlier to Pilate—misleading the Jews, stirring up the people, forbidding the payment of taxes to Rome, and claiming to be the Jewish Messiah and king of Israel. Of course, this last charge would have caught Herod's attention since he himself, like his father, holds the official title of king as designated by the Roman Senate.

Again, the Jewish leaders' goal is to have the Romans, any of the Romans, execute Jesus by crucifixion as soon as possible. And they may be thinking like Pilate, that Herod would want to take control of this situation and execute Jesus himself. Or, if they can persuade him and solicit his help, they can make their case stronger before Pilate. When Jesus says and does nothing in response to Herod's many inquiries and the Jews' accusations, the king must have finally lost his patience and with his soldiers mocks Jesus and treats him roughly, while also dressing him in a beautiful robe worthy of a king.

Afterwards, desiring not to get any more involved in a situation that has so provoked the Jewish leaders, Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate with whom he has been at odds up to this time. But now, as a result of their common experience with this supposed Jewish criminal, they become friends. In other words, Herod must have communicated to Pilate that he was grateful for the opportunity to meet with Jesus personally and that he would back him in whatever he decided to do with him. Is this not uncommon, that two corrupt leaders, whose egos and desire for power have caused them to be at odds with one another, are able to resolve their relationship by cooperating with one another and treating an innocent rival (or rivals) unjustly?

7. Pilate's Second Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews

Wednesday about 7:00 a.m.

Luke 23:13-16
23:13 And Pilate called together the chief priests and rulers of the people 23:14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against him. 23:15 No, nor has Herod, for he sent him back to us. And behold, nothing deserving of death has been done by him. 23:16 Therefore, I will instruct him and release him."

As soon as Pilate receives Jesus back, he calls together the Jewish leaders and, for the second time, declares to them that he has found no evidence to prove their charge against Jesus that he has incited rebellion among the people of Galilee (or anywhere else). In addition, King Herod has examined Jesus and found no evidence to this effect either. In fact, both Pilate and Herod have determined that Jesus has done nothing against Rome which deserves the death penalty as the Jews are demanding. As a result, Pilate tells them that he is simply going to instruct Jesus to stay out of trouble and then release him as an innocent man.

8. Pilate's Discussion With the Jews About Jesus and Barabbas and His Third Statement of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews

Wednesday about 7:30 a.m.

Matthew 27:15-23	Mark 15:6-14	Luke 23:17-23	John 18:39-40
27:15 At the feast, the governor had adopted the custom of releasing for the people one prisoner whom they wanted. 27:16 At that	15:6 Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner whom they requested. 15:7 The man Barabbas had been imprisoned	23:17 However, it was necessary for him to release one prisoner to them at the feast. 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying,	18:39 "Nevertheless, you have a tradition that I release for you one man at the Passover. Do you wish

time, they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas. 27:17 Therefore, when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?” 27:18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed him over. 27:19 And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I suffered greatly last night in a dream because of him.” 27:20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. 27:21 Nevertheless, the governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” 27:22 Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” They all said, “Crucify him.” 27:23 And he said, “But what evil has he done?” And they kept shouting all the more, saying, “Crucify him!”	with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. 15:8 And the crowd went up and began asking for him to do just as he was accustomed to do for them. 15:9 And Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?” 15:10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed him over out of envy. 15:11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd that he would release Barabbas for them instead. 15:12 Responding again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with him whom you call the king of the Jews?” 15:13 But again they cried out, “Crucify him!” 15:14 But Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!”	“Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas.” 23:19 He was the one who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection in the city and for murder. 23:20 But Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again. 23:21 However, they kept calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify him.” 23:22 And he said to them a third time, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found no cause for death in him. Therefore, I will instruct him and let him go.” 23:23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking for him to be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.	that I release for you the king of the Jews?” 18:40 But they cried out again, saying, “Not this man but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas was an insurrectionist.

Here is an interesting scene. Pilate is still trying to rid himself of the responsibility of dealing with Jesus, so that this is the third time that he expresses Jesus' innocence to the Jews. Maybe he can use an annual "tradition" that he has established to dissuade them from demanding that he execute Jesus. The four gospels begin this scene,

Matthew 27:15 At the feast, the governor had adopted the custom of releasing for the people one prisoner whom they wanted.

Mark 15:6 Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner whom they requested.

Luke 23:17 However, it was necessary for him to release one prisoner to them at the feast.

John 18:39a "Nevertheless, you have a tradition that I release for you one man at the Passover."

John is most explicit and tells us what Pilate actually says, that the Jews and he have a "tradition" (*soonaytheia*, συνήθεια), which takes place "at the Passover" and, therefore, once a year at this very same time in the Jewish calendar. Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that it happens "at the feast." Assuming that most Jews in Jesus' day take the Bible, i.e., the Old Testament, very seriously, they probably believe that, through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, they can motivate God to send the Messiah and rescue them from their enemies (as stated by the prophets, Isaiah through Malachi). Thus, the Messiah will appear among them, either by his raising an army and overthrowing the Romans, so that the nation of Israel may once again live alone on the land which God has promised them according to the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, or by their raising an army and overthrowing the Romans, so that the Messiah arrives afterwards and rules the nation of Israel on their land.

As a result, various insurrectionist groups have arisen among the Jews, but they have failed to defeat the Romans and drive them off their land. Instead, the Romans have captured, arrested, and imprisoned many of them, along with their leaders. But these revolutionaries are not considered enemies and violent criminals by all the Jews, many of whom probably sympathize with their efforts. However, because the Israelite zealots disturb the delicate balance of power and authority between the Roman government and the Jewish government, and that has brought a relative peace to their lives, the latter, and most specifically the Sanhedrin, may prefer that they remain locked up by the Romans and incapable of fomenting more civil unrest. Nevertheless, Pilate has established a "tradition" or "custom," and each year he releases from prison "one man at the Passover" whom the Jews want freed. In fact, Luke stipulates that "it was necessary" that he do so—most likely because it was a "tradition."

The four accounts continue (skipping Luke 23:18 and John 18:40a for the moment),

Matthew 27:16 At that time, they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas. 27:17 Therefore, when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?"

Mark 15:7 The man Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. 15:8 And the crowd rose up and began asking for him to do just as he was accustomed to do for them. 15:9 And Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?"

Luke 23:19 He was the one who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection in the city and for murder.

John 18:39b "Do you wish that I release for you the king of the Jews?"…18:40b Now Barabbas was an insurrectionist.

We notice that Luke and John place their editorial comments about Barabbas after the people's response in 23:18 and 18:40a respectively. However, like Matthew and Mark, they are making it clear that this man is "an insurrectionist" and has committed not only rebellion against Rome, but also murder with the other revolutionaries. Did they murder Jews who disapproved of their actions or Roman soldiers who stamped out their violent efforts to overthrow the Roman occupation of the land of Israel? We are not told,

but it seems more likely that it was the latter. Certainly, Pilate could have crucified all these imprisoned men together outside the gate of Jerusalem as a powerful example of the price any Jew will pay who rebels against his authority. But maybe he had been crucifying them one by one as continuous and ongoing examples, and Barabbas is the last one. Matthew describes him as “a notorious prisoner,” who is available for release according to the annual, Passover tradition.

Mark and Luke write that all that Pilate asks the crowd is, “Do you want for me to release for you the king of the Jews?” Thus, these authors are making the important point that the crowd have a choice of whom they want freed from his custody, and they may choose Jesus—which, of course, is what Pilate is hoping. Matthew makes it more explicit what Pilate says, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Messiah?” My guess is that Matthew’s purpose is to make it clear that Pilate truly believes that Jesus is less problematic for the Jews than Barabbas who actually tried to overthrow Rome and who is obviously a violent man by having committed murder. All it seems that Jesus has been doing is healing sick and deranged people and proclaiming a kingdom of another “world.” What sort of crime is this that the Sanhedrin believe that he deserves death, regardless of what he calls himself?

Then, only Matthew and Mark provide their readers with a fascinating assessment of Pilate’s understanding of this situation,

> Matthew 27:18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed him over.
>
> Mark 15:10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed him over out of envy.

After these somewhat brief conversations with the Jewish leaders and Jesus, Pontius Pilate is sharp enough to realize that they envy something about Jesus that is motivating them to want him dead. And what has made the Jews so envious and hateful? My guess is twofold. First, Jesus has drawn large crowds of the populace, who now are more interested in following him than the Jerusalem Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes in all the villages and towns throughout the land of Israel. Popularity and power are intoxicating drugs for especially the intensely selfish and narcissistic. Those who cannot find peace within themselves through God will crave power and popularity as much as, if not more than, any other drug to which sinful people tend to be addicted. Except for the relatively few Jewish insurrectionists, who have sought to take matters into their own hands by attempting to rid their land of the Romans, the rest of the Jews have been completely under the moral, religious, and ceremonial control of their Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. And the last thing the Sanhedrin want to do is to give up any popularity and power to Jesus, an itinerant preacher who has refused to acknowledge their superior authority and leadership. Therefore, they are extremely envious of him.

Second, while claiming to be God’s Messiah and Savior of the Jewish people, Jesus has surprisingly chosen an insignificant and undistinguished group of four fishermen, a tax-collector, a revolutionary, and other no names to be his followers and disciples instead of obvious, Jewish leaders, who (at least in their minds) are THE educated and knowledgeable teachers and biblical guides of Israel. This, too, has rankled them to no end. In other words, the Sanhedrin are offended and angered by Jesus to the extent that there is nothing they want to do more than to see him put to death, and especially by crucifixion, which is the most painful and agonizing death the Romans can produce and which takes at least six hours before the victim draws his last breath. In this contentious and heated situation, Pilate definitely senses their envy and, for his own reasons, is trying his hardest to counteract it by freeing Jesus and crucifying Barabbas—especially since Jesus has done nothing wrong to deserve death!

Next, Matthew alone includes another fascinating and important detail that occurs in this scene,

> Matthew 27:19 And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I suffered greatly last night in a dream because of him.”

While her husband is battling the Jews for Jesus’ life (or death), Pilate’s wife, whose name we are not given, sends him an urgent message. She, too, did not know what important matter pulled him from his bed so early in the morning, but now she has found out that it concerns this man, Jesus of Nazareth. While Pilate is right in the middle of listening to the large crowd and negotiating with them whom he will free from prison according to the annual Passover tradition, she interrupts the proceedings to inform him

that she had a dream about Jesus the night before, and she "suffered greatly" because of it. Plus, her message to Pilate indicates that she considers Jesus to be a "righteous man." As a result, she urges her husband to distance himself from Jesus as far as possible. But what does she suppose he can do? Certainly, he could refuse to acquiesce to the demands of the Jews and merely let Jesus go—regardless of how riotous the Jews become, which I am sure she knows could affect his being able to hold on to his job as governor of Judea and Samaria.

Of course, we are curious as to what exactly is going on in the wife's heart and mind. Has she become a believer in Jesus as her Messiah, like the Syrophoenician, Gentile woman in Tyre (cf. Mark 7:24-30)? Or is she at least in the process of becoming a believer? Or has God simply made her aware of certain events that are taking place in Israel, where her husband rules on behalf of the Roman government, and she knows that something evil and inappropriate, which she would like to avoid, is occurring right nearby her? We know from the gospel accounts that many Jews and Gentiles have become authentic followers of Jesus the Messiah, and Pilate's wife may be demonstrating that God has chosen and predestined her eventually to gain His eternal forgiveness and life through this man who is on trial before her husband—in spite of her relative ignorance and lack of theology.

Then the question of Barabbas vs. Jesus ends this way in the four gospels,

Matthew 27:20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.
27:21 Nevertheless, the governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"
And they said, "Barabbas."
27:22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"
They all said, "Crucify him."
27:23 And he said, "But what evil has he done?"
And they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify him!"

Mark 15:11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd that he would release Barabbas for them instead.
15:12 Responding again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with him whom you call the king of the Jews?"
15:13 But again they cried out, "Crucify him!"
15:14 But Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?"
But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"

Luke 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas"…
23:20 But Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again.
23:21 However, they kept calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify him."
23:22 And he said to them a third time, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found no cause for death in him. Therefore, I will instruct him and let him go."
23:23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking for him to be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.

John 18:40a But they cried out again, saying, "Not this man but Barabbas."

John obviously provides a mere summary of the other gospels' accounts. After Pilate's initial question as to whom they want him to free, Barabbas or Jesus, the people "again," i.e., over and over, continue to demand that he release Barabbas (cf. John 18:40a). Matthew and Mark inform their readers that the Jewish leaders assist the crowd by stirring them up, so that they decide between Barabbas and Jesus. In this way, they are able to manipulate the crowd so that they come across to Pilate as definitely preferring Barabbas over Jesus to be set free. Certainly, a murderer should be less desirable to be wandering around society in Jerusalem and Israel than a man who heals the sick and deranged, even though he claims to be the Messiah. But the Jewish leaders are able to convince the crowd otherwise, in spite of the fact that physical and psychological healing would be more valuable to anyone than scrupulously upholding the Mosaic Covenant and its concerns, if Jesus is falsely claiming to be the Messiah. Yet, "the

chief priests and elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death" (cf. Matthew 27:20; Mark 15:11 is very similar).

Luke then indicates that Pilate is not giving up hope that he can end this ordeal for Jesus and set him free, "But Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again." Matthew puts it, "Nevertheless, the governor answered and said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?'" And Mark writes, "Responding again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with him whom you call the king of the Jews?" Both Matthew and Mark are providing the words of Pilate as he sought again to encourage the crowd to ask for Jesus instead of Barabbas in the midst of probably a lengthier conversation. And how do the people respond? We remember that the Sanhedrin have "stirred up the crowd" (cf. Mark 15:11), so that they are not going to back down just for Pilate's sake. They again say that they want Barabbas released. Then Pilate explicitly asks them once more as to what he should do about "Jesus who is called the Messiah" (cf. Matthew 27:22)? And they respond, "Crucify him!" (cf. Matthew 27:22; Mark 15:13; Luke 23:21).

While Matthew and Mark indicate only that Pilate says, "Why? What evil has he done?", Luke tells us that he says in addition, "I have found no cause for death in him. Therefore, I will instruct him and let him go." And Luke also states that this is the third time that Pilate has said to the crowd that he has found Jesus to be completely innocent of any crime against Rome, so that he is not at all deserving of the death penalty. As a result, Pilate states clearly in Luke 23:22 that he will only "instruct" Jesus and then "let him go."

And how do the Jewish crowd respond to Pilate's intention? They shout "all the more, 'Crucify him!'" (cf. Matthew 27:23; Mark 15:15:14). Luke declares, "But they were insistent, with loud voices asking for him to be crucified. And their voices began to prevail" (cf. Luke 23:23). Certainly, Pilate had not given up looking for a way to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders and the crowd with them are similarly not relenting in their persuading him to put Jesus to death, and to do so by the cruelest, legal means available in their day—crucifixion. As the whole crowd of Jews keeps yelling over and over that he must crucify him, Pilate starts to feel himself unavoidably losing this battle.

9. Pilate Hands Jesus Over to be Crucified and Washes His Hands of Jesus' Innocence

Wednesday about 8:00 a.m.

Matthew 27:24-26	Mark 15:15	Luke 23:24-25a	John 19:1
27:24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but instead a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to the matter yourselves." 27:25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and our children." 27:26 Then he released Barabbas to them, and after having Jesus beaten with a whip, he handed him over to be crucified.	15:15 And wanting to make the crowd happy, Pilate released Barabbas for them. And after having Jesus beaten with a whip, he handed him over to be crucified.	23:24 So Pilate pronounced sentence for their request to be granted. 23:25 And he released the man whom they had asked for, who had been thrown in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed over Jesus according to their desire.	19:1 Then, Pilate took Jesus and beat him with a whip.

They, the crowd, have won. He, the individual, has lost. But there are two individuals—Pilate and Jesus. The first individual is trying to keep the peace now in Israel—because Rome has specifically ordered the rulers whom they send to Judea to maintain law and order as much as possible, knowing that the Jews are a peculiar group with their unique monotheism and sacred scriptures.[90] The second individual will keep the peace in Israel after his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return, i.e., when he restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land which God promised to Abraham's descendants in Genesis 12;1-3 according to His eternal purposes and as delineated in the writings of the Jewish people, the Hebrew scriptures.

Time is moving along, and I think that it is about 8 a.m. Pilate realizes that the Jews are stubbornly committed to put Jesus to death, and he will not be able to convince them otherwise. Instead, they continue to demand that Pilate crucify him. And, according to Matthew, they are starting to "riot." Mark implies the disturbance by saying that Pilate was "wanting to make the crowd happy." Matthew adds an interesting detail, that Pilate takes a washbasin, has a servant pour water over his hands into it in the presence of the Jews, and declares that this symbolizes that he is innocent of Jesus' (innocent!) blood, so that they must take responsibility for whatever happens to him. Without really realizing what they are saying and doing, the Jews willingly place the full responsibility on themselves and all future generations of their nation.

Their prediction of sorts will come true forty years later when the Romans destroy Jerusalem and the temple. And then after another sixty years they will exterminate almost all the Jews living on the land of Israel and enslave and send the rest into faraway lands, never to return for approximately 1,800 years. Little do the crowd in front of Pilate understand that they were basically signing their death warrant for their generation and many more after them. Demanding that their Messiah be executed by crucifixion propelled them into their own execution by the Romans and others for many years and involving many Jewish deaths. And this will be until God decides to prepare the land for the Messiah's return by bringing the Jews, albeit mostly secular and atheistic ones, back into the land in order to go through His final discipline of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. Then, Jesus will return to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and to rule the whole world during the millennial stage of history, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets and many passages in the New Testament, such as the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24-25 and the book of Revelation.

Thus, one individual, Pilate, lacks the courage to save an innocent man, and the other individual, Jesus, exercises great courage to save a guilty nation. Jesus knows exactly what he is doing with respect to the crowd in order to obey God the Father, while Pilate knows exactly what he is doing with respect to the crowd to obey the pagan religion of the Roman government. It is worth noting also that being whipped by the Romans was almost as brutal as being crucified and sometimes even resulted in the death of the victim. This was because the Jews limited their whipping (or flogging) to less than forty times, while the Romans ceased only when the two soldiers decided to do so. They would first strip the victim and then tie his hands to a post above his head. The whip (flagellum) was made of several strips of leather with pieces of bone and lead embedded near the ends. This was their version of a cat-o'-nine-tails. Two men, one on each side of Jesus, would have performed the flogging, and Matthew, Mark, and John do not inform us how many times they whipped him on his back. But here is a medical doctor's description of the physical effects of flogging that Jesus received,

> The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.... Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. (C. Truman Davis, "The Crucifixion of Jesus. The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View," *Arizona Medicine* 22, no. 3 [March 1965]: 185)

On the one hand, wanting to appease the Jews so that they cease their aggressive and manipulative actions, Pilate sets the murderer and insurrectionist Barabbas free, whips the innocent Jesus according to Roman tradition for a man who has just been sentenced to death, and hands him over to his soldiers to be crucified. On the other hand, wanting to be free from the crowd so that only the Father ultimately defines who he is, Jesus submits to Pilate, is whipped on his back for nothing, and sets out to accomplish

his earthly goal of being crucified on behalf of sinful human beings who understand that he is the truth of God and the only means by which they will acquire His eternal mercy and forgiveness.

10. Pilate's Soldiers Mock and Mistreat Jesus

Wednesday about 8:00 a.m.

Matthew 27:27-31a	Mark 15:16-20a	Luke	John 19:2,3
27:27 Next the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's official residence, and they gathered the whole military unit around him. 27:28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. 27:29 After twisting together a crown of thorns, they placed it on his head and a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." 27:30 Plus, they spat on him, and they took the staff and were beating him on the head.	15:16 So the soldiers led him away into the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and they called together the whole military unit. 15:17 And they dressed him in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 15:18 And they began to acclaim him, "Hail! King of the Jews!" 15:19 And they were beating him on the head with a staff, and they were spitting on him and kneeling and bowing before him.	No parallel in Luke	19:2 And the soldiers wove together a crown of thorns and placed it on his head. And they put a purple robe on him. 19:3 Then, they were coming up to him and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews," and they were slapping him.

As the morning progresses, Pilate's soldiers now get their turn to mistreat Jesus in accordance with the crimes for which they heard the Jewish leaders and crowd hold him accountable. After the abuse Jesus received from Herod and his soldiers, this is the second time that Roman soldiers mock and criticize him. Luke offers no parallel to this scene, but Matthew and Mark begin their accounts,

> Matthew 27:27 Next the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's official residence, and they gathered the whole military unit around him.

> Mark 15:16 So the soldiers led him away into the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and they called together the whole military unit.

Pilate and Jesus have been outside with the Jews, who will not enter into the Gentile, governor's home so as not to defile themselves for the Passover. But now that Pilate has pronounced Jesus' sentence, death by crucifixion, the Roman soldiers have free reign to prepare him for the long trek to the hill of Golgotha where they will perform his execution. The first thing they do is to take him inside Pilate's residence, what Mark calls "the palace" (αὐλή), and he labels it the "Praetorium" (πραιτώριον). This is the official, Roman palace originally built by Herod the Great and now used by any Roman ruler of the Jews who visits Jerusalem. The few soldiers, who have been outside with Pilate, take Jesus inside, and "they gathered the whole military," which would be the local battalion of somewhere between two hundred and six hundred men. Probably six hundred men would be too large a group to fit into the room where they have taken Jesus, so that it would be closer to two hundred (or even less) who come together "around" him.

Matthew, Mark, and John describe the rest of this event,

Matthew 27:28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. 27:29 After twisting together a crown of thorns, they placed it on his head and a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."
27:30 Plus, they spat on him, and they took the staff and were beating him on the head.

Mark 15:17 And they dressed him in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 15:18 And they began to acclaim him, "Hail! King of the Jews!"
15:19 And they were beating him on the head with a staff, and they were spitting on him and kneeling and bowing before him.

John 19:2 And the soldiers wove together a crown of thorns and placed it on his head. And they put a purple robe on him. 19:3 Then, they were coming up to him and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews," and they were slapping him.

After leading Jesus into the courtyard of Pilate's home and calling together the entire military unit who are there, Matthew tells his readers that they strip Jesus of his own clothes and "put a scarlet robe on him." This is probably the same robe that Herod Antipas and his soldiers put on Jesus and that he was wearing when they sent him back to Pilate. Also, according to all three accounts, Pilate's soldiers twist together a bunch of thorns in the shape of a crown and place it on his head. They also must have had access to one of Pilate's own executive staffs, a symbol of his gubernatorial authority as the Roman representative of emperor Tiberius, and they make Jesus hold it in his right hand.

Then, the soldiers kneel in front of Jesus and mock him in a tone that mimics a genuine acclamation of a man as a king, saying to him (also according to all three accounts), "Hail, King of the Jews." Like the Jews who just said that they were willing to take full responsibility for putting this apparent charlatan to death, little do these soldiers understand that their actions and words are exactly what they ought to be doing and saying. And, eventually, they will do this again and actually mean it, whether in their hearts and with authentic faith during their current lives, or without faith at the second resurrection and the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. If it is the former, then their acknowledgement of Jesus as "king" will be for the purpose of gaining God's forgiveness and eternal life. And if it is the latter, then it will be to their eternal destruction, because they would never have become authentic believers in Jesus and the Jewish God, the transcendent creator of all the universe and the earth. However, we will see that at the end of the next six hours, when Jesus has finally died on the cross, some of these Roman, Gentile soldiers will actually confess (and I think with authentic faith!) Jesus as the Son of God.

And as if what the soldiers have done already is not sufficient to demonstrate their current contempt for Jesus, they spit on him, slap him, and take Pilate's staff out of his hand and beat him on the head with it. It is hard to imagine what Jesus looked like at this point. After being whipped with pieces of bone and then beat on the head with a heavy staff, he must be practically unrecognizable.

11. Pilate's Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Statements of Jesus' Innocence to the Jews

Wednesday about 8:30 a.m.

John 19:4-16[91]
19:4 Again Pilate went outside and said to them, "Behold, I am leading him out to you, so that you may know that I find no fault in him." 19:5 Afterwards, Jesus went outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And he said to them, "Behold, the man." 19:6 When the chief priests and assistants saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "You take him and crucify him, for I have found no fault in him." 19:7 The Jews responded to him, "We have a commandment, and according to the commandment, he deserves to die, because he has made himself out to be the Son of God." 19:8 When Pilate heard this statement, he became very afraid. 19:9 And he entered again into the governor's residence and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?"

But Jesus gave him no answer.
19:10 Then, Pilate said to him, "Are you not speaking to me? Don't you know I have the authority to release you, and I have the authority to crucify you?"
19:11 Jesus responded to him, "You have no authority over me, except that which has been given you from above. Because of this, the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."
19:12 Because of this, Pilate was seeking to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself out to be a king speaks against Caesar."
19:13 After Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus outside and sat down on the judgment seat in the place called The Stone Pavement, which in Hebrew is Gabbatha. 19:14 Now, it was the preparation day for the Passover, about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king."
19:15 But they cried out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"
Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?"
The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."
19:16 Then, he handed him over to them to be crucified.[92]

Pilate's soldiers are in the midst of having their fun at the expense of Jesus, and, in their opinion, he is almost ready to walk the path to the hill where they will crucify him. However, according to only John in the above passage, Pilate decides one more time to convince the Jews that they are doing the wrong thing by condemning to death an innocent man while he releases a guilty man and murderer back into their society. Consequently, with Jesus still inside the Praetorium with his solders, he comes outside and says to the crowd, "Behold, I am leading him out to you, so that you may know that I find no fault in him." Correlating this statement with Luke's account, this is the fourth time that Pilate has declared Jesus' innocence to the Sanhedrin in an attempt to free him. The governor is not giving up, but he is about to do so—after two more times of appealing to the Jews to allow him to set Jesus free.

Then, the soldiers bring Jesus out of the house, so that he is visible to both the Jews and Pilate and "wearing the crown of thorns" they have put on his head and "the purple robe" originally from Herod. As Jesus stands before the crowd, whipped, beaten, bloodied, and disfigured beyond recognition, Pilate utters the famous words, which in the Jerome's Latin Vulgate are "*Ecce homo*," meaning "Behold, the man" (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος). Yes, Behold the Man, who in no way deserves the torture which he has just received and is about to receive. And, Behold the Man, who is the Jewish Messiah sent from God to rescue sinners from God's wrath and eternal condemnation. And, Behold the Man, who deserves the same quality and quantity of worship as God Himself, because he is God within the creation.

In contrast, the Jews respond to Pilate's statement as loudly as they can, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Even though he knows that it is illegal under Roman law for them to crucify a criminal, Pilate says one more time,

John 19:6b "You take him and crucify him, for I have found no fault in him."

Technically, this is the fifth time Pilate has said that Jesus is innocent. He is still convinced that he has not committed any crime deserving of death. John then writes,

John 19:7 The Jews responded to him, "We have a commandment, and according to the commandment, he deserves to die, because he has made himself out to be the Son of God."

This is the crux of the issue for the Sanhedrin. In their opinion, Jesus is falsely claiming to be the "Son of God," which, according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 and associated passages such as Psalm 2, Psalm 8, and Psalm 89, along with many other texts in the prophets Isaiah through Malachi, means that he is the anointed king of Israel. And since the Jewish leaders are convinced that Jesus is lying, he deserves to die in connection with biblical law. He is not only a false prophet. He is also a false king. With this in mind, John continues the narrative,

John 19:8 When Pilate heard this statement, he became very afraid. 19:9 And he entered again into the governor's residence and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?"

But Jesus gave him no answer.

19:10 Then, Pilate said to him, “Are you not speaking to me? Don’t you know I have the authority to release you, and I have the authority to crucify you?”

19:11 Jesus responded to him, “You have no authority over me, except that which has been given you from above. Because of this, the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”

John says that Pilate “became afraid” when he heard about Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of God.” Probably because Pilate is familiar with the Ancient Near Eastern concept of the Son of God as the human proxy and representative of a nation’s chief god, his fear arises because he may be thinking one of two things. Either Pilate is concerned that, if Jesus is truly lying, then he is making a mistake by considering him completely innocent. Or, if Pilate has heard about Jesus’ miracles (even his raising Lazarus from the dead nearby), which most likely he has, there is something to his claim. And he also is still probably mulling over the stern warning from his wife after she had a dream about this “righteous man” and urged her husband to distance himself from Jesus as much as possible. Therefore, Pilate feels the need for another private conversation with Jesus and takes him back into his residence.

First he asks Jesus where he is from, but what exactly does he mean? Pilate has heard earlier that Jesus is from Galilee, so he knows that he is at least from the northern part of the land of Israel. So what is he asking him now? Does he want to learn Jesus’ specific hometown or village? And how will this information help him? It is not altogether clear what Pilate is asking Jesus, but it seems that he is seeking to learn more about him that pertains to his claim of being the “Son of God.” What does it mean for a Jewish man, who has performed miracles and become quite popular in Israel, to be the “Son of God?” But instead of finding out what he wants to know, Pilate hears only silence from Jesus.

As a result, Pilate asks him why he is giving him no response, especially when, as the leading ruler of the Roman government in Judea, he has the power and authority either to release him or to crucify him. However, probably much to Pilate’s surprise, Jesus tells him that his authority over him does not originate from himself, but comes “from above.” But what does Jesus mean by this? Is he referring to the Roman Senate and Emperor who are above Pilate in the bureaucracy of the empire? Then, indeed, he is correct. But what is his point? Or is he speaking of God? If Jesus is talking about only the Roman government, then he is obviously making a rather trivial point. But it is much more likely that he is speaking of God. Pilate may think that has great authority on earth as the prefect and governor of Judea and Samaria under the authority of the Senate and Emperor in Rome. Jesus characteristically wants him to think about who he is and what he is as a human being who has been created by God.

This reminds me of something which Soren Kierkegaard says in his book Concluding Unscientific Postscript to *Philosophical Fragments*, where he is analyzing the Christianity of Denmark in his day of the early 19th century. The church leaders of the Danish State Church are more interested in writing papers for academic purposes and sounding erudite with their sermons on Sunday mornings than truly understanding themselves as God’s creatures. Thus, Kierkegaard says, “Because of much knowledge people have entirely forgotten what it means to *exist*.”[93] The religious leaders in Denmark are proud and arrogant and think that they really know God, indeed that they know God as well as God knows Himself. But Kierkegaard states that they are wrong and have forgotten that as creatures whom *God has caused to exist* and *whose existence He sustains on a moment-by-moment basis*, their knowledge of everything, especially of God, is so much less than God’s knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Pilate is guilty of the same mentality. He is seeing himself as all powerful in his authority over Jesus, but Jesus is educating him in biblical theology by saying that he has the right to do and will do only that which God causes him to do according to His eternal plans and purposes. Plus, Jesus knows that, because of God’s eternal plans and purposes, Pilate is going to stick with his original decision of sentencing him to death by crucifixion. Nevertheless, if he continues to learn what it means for his authority to have been given to him ultimately by God, then he will be well on his way towards authentic belief and benefiting from Jesus’ death as his high priest before God.

Jesus also makes a comment about the moral degree of Pilate’s sin vs. the Jews’ sin. He says literally that “the one” [singular] who has handed him over to Pilate has the “greater” sin. But to whom is Jesus referring and why is this the case? I think that Jesus uses the singular phrase “the one” to mean the whole group of Jews, the crowd, who are accusing him before the Roman governor. I also think that he says that their sin is “greater” than Pilate’s because of all the information about the Messiah in the Old Testament that clearly points to Jesus’ being the one who fulfills the biblical predictions as the final, Davidic king of Israel. Yet, with all their study of the Bible and claims to be the experts in knowing God

and His plans for Israel to make them the "great nation" of His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, the Sanhedrin are rejecting him and seeking all means possible to get rid of him, including having the Romans execute him with the cruelest punishment available—crucifixion. Pilate, a biblically uneducated Gentile, is merely going to acquiesce to the demands of the rabid crowd, while the Jews are blinding themselves to the truth of their own Hebrew scriptures and are demanding that their Messiah be put to death.

John then writes,

> John 19:12 Because of this, Pilate was seeking to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself out to be a king speaks against Caesar."

For some reason to which we are not privy, Jesus' comments about Pilate's authority and the Jews' sin touch him even more deeply so that he seeks all the more fervently to set Jesus free. We can also say that this is the sixth time that Pilate declares before the crowd that Jesus is innocent of all crimes and of being punished by death. However, the Jews are adamant, claiming that Pilate will make himself an enemy of Caesar if he releases Jesus, who rebelliously claims to be a king, supposedly in opposition to the Roman Caesar, something which Pilate has not yet found compelling after he first interviewed Jesus, who said that his kingdom is not of this world.

John finishes the scene with these verses,

> John 19:13 After Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus outside and sat down on the judgment seat in the place called The Stone Pavement, which in Hebrew is Gabbatha.
> 19:14 Now, it was the preparation day for the Passover, about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king."
> 19:15 But they cried out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"
> Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?"
> The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."
> 19:16 Then, he handed him over to them to be crucified.

In spite of all attempts to free Jesus these six times when he has expressed his innocence to his Jewish accusers, Pilate now realizes that, if we wants to follow Rome's orders and keep the peace as much as possible among these peculiar and monotheistic Jews, he has no choice but to condemn Jesus to death. Therefore, he leads him outside so that he is in front of the crowd, sits down on the chair from which he proclaims his official judgments in the place called The Stone Pavement (*Gabbatha* in Hebrew) and says to the Jews, "Behold, your king."

Pilate is thus making clear exactly what are the charges. The Sanhedrin and crowd are accusing Jesus of falsely claiming to be their Messiah and king. If this is a final attempt to change their minds, it proves fruitless, and they all the more cry out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate tries one more time and asks them explicitly if they really want him to crucify their king? Is there something about Jesus that is really beginning to convince Pilate that he is not only innocent, but also a special person, who certainly does not deserve to die? And then the Jewish crowd pull out their trump card. They are so desperate to rid themselves of Jesus and they are so worked up and angry with the whole process that they state unequivocally that they have only one king, the Roman Caesar—even though they know from the Bible that this is not true and that God is their king! Or we should say that, on account of all they understand from the Hebrew scriptures, they know that God *ought* to be their king. But obviously He is not. Despite all the glitter of their Jewish religion that is supposedly based on the Mosaic Covenant, they are merely playing at worshiping God. Their Judaism is just a show for themselves and not a genuine act of humbling themselves before God and obeying Him. As a result, they are absolutely correct that they "have no king but Caesar." They are definitely rejecting both their own God as their transcendent king and also God's Messiah, their earthly king, who stands bloodied and beaten in front of them.

Pilate finally reaches the end of any hope that these circumstances can turn out differently, and once again and for the last time he hands Jesus over to his soldiers to crucify him in accordance with the people's wishes. Lastly, the Gospel author John indicates that it is "about the sixth hour," by which he most likely means that the night has progressed from sunset the previous evening into the 6th watch, there being ten watches during a 24-hour day.[94] This situates this event about the middle of the 6th watch

and around 7:30-8:00 a.m. It is also "the day of preparation for the Passover," meaning that it is the first day of the two feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread, especially the day for preparing for the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, which will be the next day.

As a result of all these conversations, first between Jesus and the Sanhedrin (a crowd of seventy men), then between Pilate and the Jewish crowd, and finally between two individuals, Pilate and Jesus, we have a classic example of what Soren Kierkegaard describes in his book, The Point of View For My Work As An Author. Just as Jesus, the primary spokesmen of God in history, was communicating his message of being the Messiah to a society where most everyone considered themselves to be genuine Jews and followers of God according to their Bible, the Old Testament, Kierkegaard sought to communicate the same message of Jesus to a culture where most Danes believed they were genuine Christians of the New Testament. The prevailing government of Jesus' day on the land of Israel was the religious, Jewish leaders (under the authority of the political government of the Romans). The prevailing government of Kierkegaard's day was the Danish State Church (under the authority of the political government of Denmark, so that the pastors were paid by this government and were not separate from it).

As a result, the society of Galilee and Jerusalem surrounding Jesus was a religious, Jewish culture, while the Danish society in which Kierkegaard lived was a religious, Christian culture. This made the "crowd" of Jews who rejected Jesus one that believed they were authentically following God and similar to the "crowd" of Christians in Denmark who believed they were authentically following God. Jesus spoke to and against the erroneous Judaism of his day, while Kierkegaard, who never claimed to be an authority or expert on Christianity himself, wrote and spoke to and against the erroneous Christianity of his day.

The important thing to remember when reading the quote from Kierkegaard below is that every "crowd"—a gathering and collection of human beings for political, sociological, business, or religious (even Christian) purposes—can never be relied upon to demonstrate and lead people to the truth of the Bible. We would love to think that "our crowd," our gathering, our group, our people are the ones with the truth. But the only authoritative, accurate, and complete source of truth is Jesus and the Bible, so that it is vital that each one of us separate himself from the "crowd" and become a "single individual" who seeks after the truth of Jesus and the Bible, regardless of what other people are doing, saying, and believing. Thus, Kierkegaard, i.e., my slightly modified rendition of Kierkegaard, writes,

> "This side of Jesus' return, a crowd of sinful human beings is characterized most likely by lies and falsehood. As a result, the Messiah was crucified, because, although he addressed himself to the whole world as a crowd (if they all would only be willing to listen to him), he never relied on the crowd. He never depended on them to help him in any way. And, in this regard, he absolutely repelled people and refused to gain the support of a crowd. He sought not to establish a political party, an interest group, or a mass movement that would take over a nation or the world. And he did not make decisions by voting or a show of hands, even from those who claimed to believe in him. Instead, he chose simply to be who he is, The Truth (and here we are talking about the *eternal truth*), who is humbly willing to relate himself not to the crowd and not to the whole world, but to **the single individual**.
>
> Therefore, every one person, who will genuinely serve The Truth, is by this very fact, in one way or another, a maverick (an independent existential human being) and a martyr (willing to suffer execution at the hands of the shouting crowd). To win a crowd is not too difficult. For this only lies and falsehood (indeed, irrational nonsense and a little knowledge of human desires and passions) are needed. But no witness to The Truth dares to get involved with the crowd and the world. Instead, refusing to be confused and led astray by politicians, demagogues, and scientific and sociological experts (even pollsters!), who claim to understand reality correctly, he engages with every one person, by primarily and individually talking to each person separately on the streets and byways, not seeking to form a crowd and become popular, but with the hope that one or another individual might extricate and free himself from the crowd and become a **single individual of truth**."[95]

o. The Roman Soldiers Lead Jesus Away to Crucify Him

Wednesday about 8:30 a.m.

Matthew 27:31-32	Mark 15:20-21	Luke 23:26-32	John 19:17a

27:31 When they had mocked him, they took the robe off him, and they put his own garments back on him. 27:32 As they were coming out, they found a Cyrenian named Simon, and they forced this man to take up his cross.	15:20 And after they had mocked him, they took the purple robe off him and put his own garments on him. And they led him away to crucify him. 15:21 And they compelled a certain passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.	23:26 As they were leading him away, they took hold of a certain Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, and they placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.	19:17a So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross

Explanation of the Above Passages

It is still around 8:30 a.m. Jesus has gone through the triple ordeals of being questioned and evaluated in regard to his identity and purposes by the Jewish leaders, Herod Antipas, and Pontius Pilate. Now he knows that he is finally on the last part of his journey that will end in death. Matthew and Mark start by saying in this small subsection,

> Matthew 27:31 When they had mocked him, they took the robe off him, and they put his own garments back on him.
>
> Matthew 15:20a And after they had mocked him, they took the purple robe off him and put his own garments on him.

Both authors comment that Pilate's Roman soldiers have mocked Jesus, and it must be a relief to him that they have finished doing so. We know from other historical documents that the soldiers had a tendency to whip and beat a criminal until he died, thus foregoing the extra work of having to crucify him. However, in Jesus' case, they have made sure that he is still alive, so that they he will have to suffer the pain of crucifixion. For a while now, Jesus has also been wearing "the purple robe" given to him as a joke by Herod Antipas, but the soldiers take it off and put "his own garments back on him."

All four gospel accounts finish this brief part,

> Matthew 27:32 As they were coming out, they found a Cyrenian named Simon, and they forced this man to take up his cross.
>
> Mark 15:20b And they led him away to crucify him. 15:21 And they compelled a certain passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.
>
> Luke 23:26 As they were leading him away, they took hold of a certain Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, and they placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.
>
> John 19:17a So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross

This is obviously another place where critics of the Bible would point out a contradiction because Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention another person who carries Jesus cross, while John says that "he went out, bearing his own cross." Plus, John never mentions this other man, Simon of Cyrene. However, it is always important for us to consider what were the specific intentions and purposes of all the biblical authors. And, in this case, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that John wants his readers to know what is the situation at the beginning of Jesus' leaving Pilate's residence and walking towards the place of execution. In other words, John mentions that Jesus initially carries his cross, that is, the heavy wooden

crossbeam, which was typical of all criminals who were put to death this way. But clearly John's intention is not to provide the detail of Simon's being "compelled" by the Roman soldiers to carry it part of the way for him. As long as the cross starts and ends with respect to Jesus is all that John cares about.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke however have purposed to add this other detail, probably in light of Jesus' having obviously been terribly weakened by all he has endured through the night without any sleep. Therefore, as John indicates, he "went out, bearing his own cross," but he eventually must have faltered, so that it became clear to the soldiers that he would not be able to carry it the entire way. It is hard to imagine the pain that Jesus was suffering with the heavy crossbeam on his shoulders where the prior whipping had torn away the skin and exposed his muscles and other soft tissue. Under these circumstances, the soldiers are leading him away "to crucify him," but the only way that they will be able to do so is if someone else carries his cross for him. Consequently, Mark provides the most details and says that "they compelled a certain passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." We have to wonder how Mark obtained all this information about Simon, and it may be that, at some point, he had already become or did become a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, so that he later made contact with the apostles. And thus Mark, too, learned his identity. This would then be how Matthew could write that "they found a Cyrenian named Simon, and they forced this man to take up his cross." Plus, Luke, in the process of doing all his research in order to write an account of Jesus and his ministry, said that "they took hold of a certain Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, and they placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus."

We notice also that both Mark and Luke state that Simon was coming "from the country," which may possibly mean that Jesus carried his cross as far as the gate of Jerusalem near the place of execution, but it became clear to the soldiers that he would not be able to carry it any further. Simon happens to be coming through the same gate in the opposite direction and all of a sudden finds himself being forced to carry Jesus' cross behind him. As a result, Matthew comments about all of them "coming out," and Mark's and Luke's saying that Simon was "coming in from the country" refer to the same place, the gate of the city, since it would be common knowledge that crucifixions never occurred inside the walls of Jerusalem but outside them. This would fit with Mark's stating simply, "And they led [Jesus] away to crucify him" and Luke's writing that "as they were leading [Jesus] away, they took hold of a certain Simon…" Yes, the Roman soldiers led Jesus away from Pilate's residence and "were coming out" through the city gate when Simon is "compelled" to carry his cross for him.

So now we can picture Jesus' leaving the Praetorium carrying his own cross through the streets of Jerusalem and, while on his way to being crucified at the place named Golgotha, he makes it as far as the city gate. But, in his weakened conditioned, he falls down short of the place of execution, so that a mere passer-by, a man by the name of Simon, who is from the seaport of Cyrene in northern Africa and who is the father of two men, Alexander and Rufus, who also probably became believers in Jesus as the Messiah, finds himself basically in the wrong place at the wrong time. For some other reason, he has been away from the city and is coming back into it, just minding his own business. And he observes the procession of the Roman soldiers, Jesus, and the crowd of both sympathizers and hostile critics as they have walked away from Herod's palace in the northwest part of the city and are now leaving the city through the gate that he is entering. All of a sudden, after Jesus falls to the ground under the weight of the cross, the Roman soldiers grab Simon and force him to carry it and walk behind him. We can thus suspect that this unpleasant experience for Simon was exactly what God used to bring him to a point of genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and then used it also as part of the process of changing the hearts of his sons, Alexander and Rufus.

p. The Crowd Who Are Following Jesus and the Criminals Being Led Away Also

Wednesday between about 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

Luke 23:27-32
23:27 A large crowd of people was following him, and of women who were mourning and lamenting him. 23:28 And Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 23:29 For behold, days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' 23:30 Then they will

begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us' <Hosea 10:8>. 23:31 For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will they do when it is dry?"
23:32 Two others also, who were criminals, were led away with him to be put to death.

Luke is the only author who comments on the crowd who are following Jesus to his place of execution. He says in v. 27 that a "large crowd was following him," including several "women who were mourning and lamenting him." They are naturally, visibly upset and suffering deep and uncontrollable grief for all that is happening to Jesus. Then Luke writes,

Luke 23:28 And Jesus turned to them and said,
"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.
23:29 For behold, days are coming in which they will say,
'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.'
23:30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains,
'Fall on us,'
and to the hills,
'Cover us' <Hosea 10:8>.
23:31 For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will they do when it is dry?"

Recall that both Herod's and Pilate's soldiers have whipped and beaten Jesus so that he is merely an unrecognizable and bloody facsimile of a human being. So how did he muster up the strength to speak to these women, who are grieving his pain and suffering? But he does, and he turns to them and calls them "Daughters of Jerusalem," which is a phrase that is used seven times in the Song of Solomon to refer to the women who are faithful to God, just as these women are being faithful to Jesus in their support and affirmation of him as he walks to his death. They are not only inhabitants of the most important city in Israel and in the world, Jerusalem, but, by their genuine faith, they are also *bona fide* members of the nation of Israel whom God has judged and disciplined at various times and whom He will be faithful to make the most powerful nation in all human history when Jesus returns.

Jesus urges them not to "weep for me, but for yourselves and for your children." This is because "days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed." Normally, Jewish women consider it practically a curse from God not to be able to bear children. However, an event is coming in the future, indeed the near future because it will involve these women and their children, when the women would rather be childless. During this situation, they and the rest of those dwelling in Jerusalem will long for the mountains to fall on them and for the hills to cover them. Is this in order that death may come quickly or that God protect them? Probably more the former, because most of the people of Israel will be in an inner state of unbelief and rebellion against God. Consequently, like the Israelites of Hosea's day prior to and during the destruction by the Assyrians of the northern Kingdom of Israel, the people in Jerusalem will still not repent of rejecting him, their Messiah, and will experience God's harsh judgment.

It could be that Jesus is encouraging these women to weep for themselves because of an event that will not actually involve them, which is still future to us—the destruction of Jerusalem and of unbelieving Jews just before and as Jesus is returning (cf. Revelation 18,19). But I think it makes more sense that he is referring to the same destruction of the city that he described in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. For these women, Jerusalem's destruction will be in approximately forty years when the Romans, under General Titus and his 60,000 troops (up from the 3,000 who normally reside in Judea), will lay siege to the city in the spring of A.D. 70 and finally level it and its sacred temple by autumn. Jesus is predicting that the situation for the Jews in Jerusalem will be so desperate and bleak that women will watch their children suffer hunger and death while wishing that they had never borne them.

In addition, everyone will look for protection from all possible sources, but there will be none available. As a result, they will call for the immovable and powerless "mountains" and the "hills" to save them from God's judgment on them for having rejected and put to death the Messiah. Yet, the Roman soldiers became so disgusted with the stubborn resistance of the Jews in the city that when they finally attained the victory they were looking for and entered the city, they indiscriminately slaughtered men, women, and children. And this was after many of the Jews had starved to death, with fathers snatching

food from the hands of their children and children snatching food from their parents, so that they resorted to even cannibalism in their attempts to survive the six-month siege.[96]

And Jesus finishes his comments to them by asking, "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will they do when it is dry?" It is clear that he is referring to the Jews who have worked so hard to convince Pilate and the Romans to crucify him. This, along with their opposition to him during the last three years," are the "these things" which they have done while they have had a green tree in their midst. He has been the luxuriant and verdant tree that has brought them so much fruit of truth and encouragement to obey God and embrace him as their Messiah, even by performing a multitude of miracles to verify his identity. Plus, his presence has included God's protection from their enemies, at least His protecting them from complete destruction (or almost complete destruction, which will be the situation in A.D. 70 and 132-135 when Roman soldiers kill almost 600,000 Jews and either exile or sell into slavery the rest). Thus, Jesus is wondering aloud what evil choices the Jews will make during the coming, intense time of suffering and the "dry" tree when God replaces him with judgment, destruction, and death forty and one hundred years later respectively. These choices will be in comparison to the evil choices they are now making during the time of the presence of their Messiah, who is obviously a blessing from God.

And finally in this subsection, Pilate's soldiers also conduct two common criminals down the same path through the gate of the city "to the place called Golgotha,…the Place of the Skull" (see below) in order to crucify them with Jesus.

q. The Roman Soldiers Crucify Jesus at Golgotha and Divide Up His Garments Among Them

Wednesday about 9 a.m.

Matthew 27:33-38	Mark 15:22-28	Luke 23:33-34	John 19:17b-27
27:33 And when they came to the place called Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull, 27:34 they gave him wine to drink mixed with bitters. And after tasting it, he was unwilling to drink. 27:35 After they crucified him, they divided up his garments by casting lots. 27:36 Then, sitting down, they began to keep watch there. 27:37 And above his head they placed the charge against him which was written, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." 27:38 At the same time, two bandits were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.	15:22 Then they brought him to the place Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull. 15:23 And they were giving him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 15:24 Then they crucified him and divided up his garments, casting lots for them <Psalm 22:18> to see who would take what. 15:25 It was the third hour when they crucified him. 15:26 And the inscription of his charge had been written, "King of the Jews." 15:27 They also crucified two bandits with him, one on his right and one on his left. [15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled	23:33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. 23:34 And Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And they cast lots for his garments and divided them up among themselves <Psalm 22:18>.	19:17b to the place called The Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha, 19:18 where they crucified him. And with him were two others, one on either side, and Jesus in the middle. 19:19 And Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." 19:20 Many of the Jews read the notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And it was written in Hebrew, Roman, and Greek. 19:21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

	which says, “And he was numbered with lawbreakers <Isaiah 53:12>.”]		19:22 Pilate responded, “What I have written, I have written.” 19:23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier, and also the tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole. 19:24 Therefore, they said to one another, “Let us not divide it, but instead cast lots for it for whose it shall be,” so that the scripture could be fulfilled, which says, “They divided my garments, and they cast lots for my clothing <Psalm 22:18>.” Thus, the soldiers did these things. 19:25 His mother, his mother’s sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood by the cross of Jesus. 19:26 So, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by her, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” 19:27 Then, he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” Consequently, from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home.

Explanation of the Above Passages

All four gospels begin this subsection similarly,

Matthew 27:33 And when they came to the place called Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull,

Mark 15:22 Then they brought him to the place Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull.

Luke 23:33a When they came to the place called The Skull,

John 19:17b to the place called The Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha,

Matthew and Mark indicate that the place where Jesus was crucified is called "Golgotha," the Aramaic word for "Place of the Skull" or Place of the Head. The exact location is unknown although many suggestions have been put forth. It is clear that it was outside the northern wall of the city of Jerusalem and probably a popular place for the Romans to crucify criminals, so that travelers entering or exiting the city by means of the road that led towards the north could be reminded of the severe punishment for violating Roman law and refusing to submit to Roman authority. Luke calls the place in Greek simply "The Skull," *kranion* (κρανίον), from which we get our word cranium, meaning skull, the bony enclosure of the brain. John calls it "The Place of the Skull," and he identifies the last word as "Golgotha" in "Hebrew" i.e., in Aramaic of the Jewish vernacular. This word, meaning head or skull, also appears twelve times in the Old Testament as *Gulgoleth* (גֻּלְגֹּלֶת). We do not know why this place was called The Skull, but perhaps it was because many Jews ended their earthly existences right there by means of the cruel death of crucifixion.

Matthew and Mark then provide the next part of this scene,

Matthew 27:34 they gave him wine to drink mixed with bitters. And after tasting it, he was unwilling to drink.

Mark 15:23 And they were giving him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Matthew calls this drink "wine…mixed with bitters (χολή, *cholay*)," a word that refers to something that is bitter to the taste and perhaps even poisonous. Most English translations use the word "gall," which means the same thing. Mark identifies the drink as "wine mixed with myrrh (ἐσμυρνισμένον, *esmurnismenon*)," based upon the Greek word σμυρνίζω (*smurnizo*), which means to be like myrrh and, therefore, like the fragrant and medicinal resin found in certain trees. Perhaps Mark means that the wine had some kind of medicinal substance intended to dull Jesus' senses and thereby mitigate his existing pain and the even greater pain that he is about to endure on the cross. But let us consider first that Matthew most likely wants his readers to remember Psalm 69:21,

Psalm 69:21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

In this psalm, David laments the suffering he is enduring because his enemies are out to destroy him. Yet, he trusts in God to save him and his people, his fellow Jews, so that God will "build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it." In other words, David is still counting on God to fulfill His promise to Abraham to make the Jews the "great nation" of the world and His promise to David to cause one of his descendants to rule them as their king. Yet, as part of how David's enemies have mistreated him, they have given him "gall," i.e., poison, for his "food" and "vinegar to drink." And he is most likely speaking metaphorically, that they have simply made life miserable for him. The Hebrew word for "gall" is *rosh* (רֹאשׁ), which refers to a poisonous plant that is bitter in taste. The Greek translation of the Psalm, the Septuagint, uses the word *cholay* (χολή), the same word for "bitters" is in Matthew's text and that many English Bibles translate as "gall."

Therefore, we see a possible connection between what David means in Psalm 69:21 and what Matthew means in this passage. In both cases, the king of Israel is receiving something quite bitter and potentially poisonous to drink—so to speak. As I suggested above, in David's situation, he is the first king of the Davidic Covenant and is speaking metaphorically, so that his enemies, whom he does not specifically identify, are harassing him and seeking to kill him. Jesus, the final king of the Davidic Covenant, is in a similar situation. Before the soldiers nail him to the cross, they as his enemies are offering him a mixture of wine and something bitter, which is also probably poisonous if it is drunk in large quantities. This may have been common practice, that criminals were offered this drink to dull their pain and possibly hasten death while they hung on their crosses.

Mark must mean something along the same lines as Matthew. By saying that the wine is *esmurnismenon* (ἐσμυρνισμένον), i.e., mixed with something like myrrh, he too is claiming that the soldiers have put a myrrh-like substance in the wine to help Jesus endure what he is about to experience when they crucify him. There also may be a play on words here, because the Hebrew word for "bitter" is *mar* (מַר), which is similar to the Greek word for perfume, *muron* (μύρον), and also for myrrh, *smurna* (σμύρνα), but minus the "s". Perhaps, the Greek verb σμυρνίζω (*smurnizo*), meaning to mix with myrrh, could refer to something being bitter, poisonous, and a pain reliever, so that Mark is indicating that the soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with something bitter and poisonous as standard procedure for criminals who were crucified.

Mark then states simply that Jesus did not drink the potion, while Matthew tells his readers that Jesus tasted it, perhaps thinking that it might actually be something helpful when he smelled the wine in it. But then he refused it—once he tasted the bitterness (and potentially poisonous nature) of it. Once again, are these two authors contracting each other? No. It is definitely true, as Mark says, that Jesus did not drink the wine mixed with myrrh. However, Matthew chooses to tell the story more completely, that Jesus did not drink the wine and gall after first tasting it. We see, therefore, that, for their own reasons, these two men include some details of the event while leaving out others, while clearly not contradicting one another.

Next, all four accounts make statements about the actual crucifixion,

> Matthew 27:35 After they crucified him, they divided up his garments by casting lots. 27:36 Then, sitting down, they began to keep watch there.
>
> Mark 15:24 Then they crucified him and divided up his garments, casting lots for them <Psalm 22:18> to see who would take what. 15:25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.
>
> Luke 23:33b there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. 23:34 And Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And they cast lots for his garments and divided them up among themselves <Psalm 22:18>.
>
> John 19:18 where they crucified him. And with him were two others, one on either side, and Jesus in the middle…19:23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier, and also the tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole. 19:24 Therefore, they said to one another, "Let us not divide it, but instead cast lots for it for whose it shall be," so that the scripture could be fulfilled, which says, "They divided my garments, and they cast lots for my clothing <Psalm 22:18>." Thus, the soldiers did these things.

We notice that there are no details about the actual process of nailing Jesus to the cross. These were probably common knowledge for anyone who lived in the 1st century Roman Empire, so that the gospel authors believed them unnecessary to include in their accounts. All four of them say simply, "They crucified him." At the beginning of their explanations of this subsection, Luke in v. 33 and John in v. 18 add that there were two "criminals" who were crucified with Jesus. Luke says that there was "one on the right and one on the left." John describes this as "one on either side, and Jesus in the middle." Matthew and Mark attest to this in the following verses at the end of their explanations,

> Matthew 27:38 At the same time, two bandits were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.
>
> Mark 15:27 They also crucified two bandits with him, one on his right and one on his left. [15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "And he was numbered with transgressors <Isaiah 53:12>."]

Luke has called these two men "criminals" (*kakourgoi*, κακούργοι, literally "evil-doers"). Matthew and Mark identify them as "bandits" (*laystai*, λῃσταί, meaning robbers or insurrectionists). We saw that John had called Barabbas, whom Pilate released instead of Jesus, an "insurrectionist" (*laystays*, λῃστής), the singular of *laystai* (λῃσταί) While they may not be like Barabbas, a true insurrectionist, whom Pilate released instead of Jesus, they are more likely the same kind of robbers and bandits (also *laystai*,

λῃσταί) who are mentioned in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan who had attacked and robbed the injured man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thus, these two crucified men are probably highway robbers, who were caught, arrested, and condemned by the Romans to die. Later, Jesus will have a conversation with these men that will reveal the final condition of their own hearts with respect to God.

There is also the possibility in Mark (if the textual variant is a part of his original document) that he included an interpretation of Jesus in the presence of the two criminals, such that this scene "fulfilled" Isaiah 53:12, to which Jesus referred in Luke 22:35-38 when he encouraged his apostles to take a money-belt, a coin bag, and a sword with them to the Garden of Gethsemane (see **f. A Money-Belt, A Coin Bag, and A Sword** under **3. The Last Supper and Jesus' Arrest, Trials, Crucifixion, and Burial**), and which reads,

> Is. 53:12 Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great,
> And he will divide the booty with the strong;
> Because he poured out his existence to death,
> And was numbered with the transgressors/lawbreakers;
> Yet he himself bore the sin of many,
> And interceded for the transgressors/lawbreakers.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says at the end of chapter 52 and in all of chapter 53 that His "servant" will prosper by going through rejection by his people and suffering death on their behalf. This, of course, is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected Messiah from God who will rescue His chosen people, the Jews, from His condemnation and their earthly enemies by means of his death, resurrection, ascension, and eventual return. It is he whom Mark identifies with a line from Isaiah 53:12, that "he was numbered with transgressors" (και μετα ανομων ελογισθη), meaning that the servant was considered a criminal by his own people, who are the actual criminals as "transgressors" against God and "lawbreakers" of His commandments in the Torah. But Jesus' death was so he could "bear" their sin metaphorically and intercede before God on their behalf by qualifying to be their high priest (as most clearly described in the book of Hebrews).

By saying that this event "fulfilled" the fourth line in Isaiah 53:12, Mark does not mean that the prophet actually predicted that two criminals would accompany Jesus on their own crosses in the place where the Romans typically crucified those who violated their laws. Instead, he is saying that Isaiah predicts that the servant of God, the Messiah, would be classified as an actual criminal and put to death on behalf of spiritual criminals, i.e., sinners, indeed Jewish sinners, who, by their personal and individual belief, would benefit from his taking on this role, so that he becomes the very basis for their salvation from God's wrath and condemnation. In other words, Mark declares that Jesus is the suffering servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12, who, through his crucifixion, is willing to rescue from God's condemnation the very people who condemn him to death.

Next, according to Luke in v. 24, "Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.'" On behalf of whom is Jesus speaking? The Jewish leaders and crowd who brought him to Pilate? Pilate and the Roman soldiers who are actually performing the crucifixion? All those who have had a part in putting him to death? I think the context, where Jesus' statement is in between "they crucified him" in v. 33 and "they cast lots for his garments" in v. 34, should lead us to conclude that he is requesting God to forgive these Roman soldiers. It is they who "know not what they are doing." They have no familiarity with the Hebrew scriptures except for what they have observed of the Jews' performing their stipulated worship of God at the temple and their peculiar practices of eating kosher and resting on the Sabbath. But when it comes to God's plans for Israel to provide them with a Messiah, indeed a crucified Messiah, who will act as their high priest before Him by having made himself a propitiatory offering through his own death, this the Roman soldiers must be mostly ignorant. Therefore, Jesus is requesting that God acknowledge their lack of understanding and be merciful to them for putting him to death as if he were a common criminal. We will see a little later how God responds to Jesus' prayer.

While it may sound very unappealing to us, that the Roman soldiers would take from the criminals whom they crucified the dirty clothes that they had been wearing, it still must have been common practice for them to do so. Certainly, after being executed, these men would never again need something to wear. In this situation, John provides the most details in vs. 23-24, that Jesus has certain "garments" that can be divided into four parts, one for each of the four soldiers who are crucifying him, and a "tunic" which "was seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole." John goes on to say that the soldiers did not

want to tear the tunic into four pieces but to cast lots for it to see who would receive it whole. All four authors refer to the soldiers' dividing up his clothes and "casting lots" for his tunic. And John also makes it clear that this is "so that the scripture could be fulfilled, which says, 'They divided my garments, and they cast lots for my clothing.'"

The Old Testament passage which is being "fulfilled" here is Psalm 22:18,

Psalm 22:18 They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.

In this psalm, David laments greatly that both God and man have abandoned him. Yet, he appeals to God to deliver him from his enemies and declares that he will announce God's goodness and salvation to his fellow Jews who believe in God as he does. David also proclaims the coming Kingdom of God, whereby He will rule the entire earth such that both Jews and Gentiles will worship Him. I suggest that this kingdom will be the one that John describes in the vision of Revelation 20, the millennial kingdom that Jesus will inaugurate after his return and when he rules the Jews on the land of Israel and the Gentiles in the rest of the world.

In v. 18 of the psalm, David indicates that those who seek to harm and mistreat him have taken his clothes and divided them amongst themselves, even casting lots for any they cannot divide in equal parts for each person. Thus, whatever happened to David, John indicates that this was "fulfilled" by the four soldiers who did the same thing to Jesus' garments. David is probably speaking metaphorically, that he feels stripped of the life he was previously enjoying as the king of Israel. Here in John 19:24, as in many other uses of the word "fulfilled" in the New Testament, it does not refer to something which was explicitly predicted in the Old Testament. Instead, John means that something that occurred in the Old Testament happened similarly in New Testament times, such that the latter event is obviously even more important because it pertains to the Messiah, to Jesus himself. As a result, we can say that the Roman soldiers' dividing up Jesus' garments and casting lots for his tunic "fills out" the statement that David makes about his own clothing a thousand years earlier. David did not actually envisage Jesus' clothing being taken by the Roman soldiers, but the Roman soldier's doing so was a kind of future filling out of the example in David's life.

Then, according to Mark, it is "the third hour" when the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross and set it upright. Measured from 6 a.m., which makes the most sense, they were crucifying him about 9 a.m. the morning of the Passover day. And Matthew provides the information that, after crucifying all three men, the soldiers sat down and "began to keep watch there" until they die.

Matthew, Mark, and John then write,

Matthew 27:37 And above his head they placed the charge against him which was written, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Mark 15:26 And the inscription of his charge had been written, "King of the Jews."

John 19:19 And Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews."
19:20 Many of the Jews read the notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And it was written in Hebrew, Roman, and Greek.
19:21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"
19:22 Pilate responded, "What I have written, I have written."

It was common that some sort of sign be attached to the cross of the criminal being executed such that the sign stated his crime that warranted such harsh punishment. John makes available the most information, that Pilate has written on a placard an inscription in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, so that Roman officials, Jews, and visiting Gentiles may understand who this man is on the cross. Thus, the soldiers would have attached the sign above Jesus' head, and it reads, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." However, the Jewish leaders object to what Pilate has written on the sign. They want him to writer only that Jesus claimed to be the "King of the Jews," so that his crime is mostly in his words, not in his actually being their king, as implied by Pilate's inscription. But maybe as a way to rebuke the

Sanhedrin for pressuring him into executing an innocent man (we remember that they threatened to riot right in front of him), Pilate responds, "What I have written, I have written." In other words, the Jewish leaders are just going to have to accept what he has done—regardless of how uncomfortable it makes them, when it most likely makes him a little more comfortable with his decision to crucify Jesus. And the irony in this sin is, of course, Pilate's "charge" against Jesus was exactly who he was and is and will be—the "King of the Jews."

John attaches one more part to his account, whose information we will revisit later in Matthew, Mark, and Luke,

> John 19:25 His mother, his mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood by the cross of Jesus.
> 19:26 So, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by her, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." 19:27 Then, he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." Consequently, from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home.

John says that four women are standing "by the cross." The first woman is Jesus' mother, whose name we know is Mary. The second woman is her sister, presumably Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of Jesus' disciples James and John (cf. Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1). The third woman is another Mary, the wife of Clopas, and we have no idea who Clopas is. Finally, the fourth woman is Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (cf. Luke 8:2).

With the women is one of Jesus' disciples, and John identifies him as the one "whom [Jesus] loved." Plus, he is "standing by" Jesus' mother. When Jesus sees the two of them together, he says first to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he addresses the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And John relates that "from that hour, the disciple took her into his home." In this way, Jesus was instructing them and ensuring that his mother would be taken care of, especially since it is assumed that Joseph, her husband, died even before Jesus began his ministry three years earlier.

If Jesus' brothers (actually, half-brothers by their father Joseph) are also present near the cross, it is curious that he assigns the responsibility of taking care of his mother to someone else, "the disciple whom he loved." Does Jesus not trust his brothers to care for her? Or have they indicated to him that, if something bad happens to him, such as death, because of his claiming to be the Messiah, they may very well limit their association with him, even abandoning their mother? We do not know, other than the fact that Jesus' brother James (obviously a different James from the son of Jesus' mother's sister and son of Zebedee) becomes not only a strong believer in him, but also one among the apostles who leads the community of Christians in Jerusalem (as shown by Luke in Acts 15) and who writes the letter of James in the New Testament. In addition, Jesus' brother Jude also becomes a prominent spokesman on his behalf regarding his messianic claims and writes the New Testament letter that we know by his name. Therefore, it seems most likely that Jesus simply uses this opportunity for his mother, as she watches him die on the cross, to provide for her long-term care, and this particular and beloved disciple is his person of choice to do so.

And who is this disciple? John speaks of him in the same terms in the last chapter of his gospel when "that disciple whom Jesus loved" identified him as standing on the beach of the Sea of Galilee when he was out fishing with Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and "two others of his disciples." Therefore, one of these seven men is "that disciple whom Jesus loved." John also talks indirectly of the author of this gospel when he says in John 20:30,31 that the miracles in this "book" (*biblion*, βιβλίον) have been written so that the reader may believe in Jesus and acquire eternal life. Because of the similarity of language in this "book" to 1, 2, and 3 John, and although John identifies himself in 2 and 3 John only as "the elder" and among the ones, i.e., the apostles, whom a man by the name of Diotrephes "is slandering…with evil words," the clues seem to point to the apostle John as this author and the beloved disciple who takes Jesus' mother, Mary, into his care after his death, resurrection, and ascension. Because John is the son Zebedee, whose wife is Jesus' mother's sister Salome, he is also Jesus' cousin. Consequently, it makes all the more sense that Jesus would request of a close family member to take care of his mother.

r. The Jewish Leaders, the Jewish Crowd, and the Roman Soldiers Mock Jesus on the Cross

Wednesday from about 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Matthew 27:39-43	Mark 15:29-32a	Luke 23:35-38	John
27:39 And those passing by were verbally abusing him, wagging their heads 27:40 and saying, "You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 27:41 In the same way, the chief priests, the scribes, and elders were mocking him, saying, 27:42 "He saved others. He cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 27:43 He trusts in God. Let Him now rescue him, if He delights in him <cf. Psalm 22:8>."	15:29 Those who were passing by were verbally abusing him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 15:30 save yourself and come down from the cross." 15:31 In the same way, the chief priests were mocking him among themselves along with the scribes and saying, "He saved others. He cannot save himself. 15:32 Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe."	23:35 And the people stood by, looking on. The rulers were also mocking him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, the Chosen One <cf. Isaiah 42:1>." 23:36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up to him, offering him sour wine, 23:37 and saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." 23:38 And there was an inscription above him, "This is the king of the Jews."	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

The scene draws quite a crowd as time moves along toward Jesus' death at about 3 p.m. Matthew, Mark, and Luke initially state,

> Matthew 27:39 And those passing by were verbally abusing him, wagging their heads 27:40 and saying, "You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."
>
> Mark 15:29 Those who were passing by were verbally abusing him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 15:30 save yourself and come down from the cross."
>
> Luke 23:35a And the people stood by, looking on.

Word has spread from Jesus' trial by the Sanhedrin that he has been accused of claiming that he will destroy the temple in Jerusalem (that took Herod the Great forty years to construct) and rebuild it in three days. We can imagine people's surprise when they hear this rumor (if they have not already heard it since it may have been circulating for three years since he made his initial statement about his death and resurrection). But, most likely, they are not surprised that the Jewish leaders have been able to convince the Romans to crucify him—for violating the Mosaic Covenant by also falsely claiming to be the Messiah. Therefore, as many as have time during their day, for whatever reason, to observe him on the cross, are "passing by…, wagging their heads" at Jesus and "verbally abusing" him. They challenge him about his supposed claim and exhort him to "save" himself if he is the one who has said that he can destroy the

temple and rebuild it in three days. Matthew includes that he has also identified himself as the "Son of God," which, according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 and as the Jewish leaders and people imply in this passage, refers to his being the "Messiah" (Anointed One) and the "King of the Jews," the words in three languages on the sign above his head. Certainly, it should be even easier to free himself from the nails and the cross than rebuilding the huge temple in Jerusalem. Luke says only at this point that "the people stood by, looking on."

Then, all three gospels continue,

> Matthew 27:41 In the same way, the chief priests, the scribes, and elders were mocking him, saying, 27:42 "He saved others. He cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 27:43 He trusts in God. Let Him now rescue him, if He delights in him <cf. Psalm 22:8>."
>
> Mark 15:31 In the same way, the chief priests were mocking him among themselves along with the scribes and saying, "He saved others. He cannot save himself. 15:32 Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe."
>
> Luke 23:35 And the people stood by, looking on. The rulers were also mocking him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, the Chosen One."

Pilate had refused to change the sign above Jesus' head that unequivocally labels him "King of the Jews," so that "the chief priests, the scribes, and elders" (Matthew), who are the religious and spiritual "rulers" (Luke) of the Jews and who were so provoked by Pilate's sign, are "mocking" Jesus, just as the rest of the people are doing. Probably, these statements, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are each said at various times and multiple times during the six hours that Jesus languishes on the cross before he dies. And each statement is probably intended to dissuade anyone who walks nearby from actually believing that Jesus is the Jewish King, the Messiah, and the Son of God as predicted by the Old Testament.

On the one hand, the religious leaders acknowledge that "He saved others," meaning that he healed people who were ill and even raised some from the dead. But they most likely believe that he did so by some sort of sorcery or trickery. Therefore, they mock him by including, "He cannot save himself." After all the supposed miracles that Jesus performed over the course of three years, the Jews are astonished, but also pleased, that he cannot perform the same kind of miracle for himself now that he is in such a predicament that his own death is imminent.

While observing the sign over Jesus' head which reads, "King of the Jews," they repeat its meaning, but in a mocking and sarcastic tone, "He is king of Israel." This leads them to add quickly at various times, "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Another way that they state this is, "Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Implied in both these commands to Jesus is that they may not have seen an actual miracle which he had performed during the last three years. But, if they see only this particular one, his saving himself from the cross, then, of course, they will believe that he is the Messiah and the king of Israel!

They also say, "He trusts in God," but, of course, this is a lie. Obviously, he cannot be the Messiah who implicitly trusts in God, because he is nailed to the cross and cannot free himself from it. So the religious leaders add, "Let [God] rescue him, if He delights in him," which is a reference to Psalm 22:8,

> Psalm 22:8 "Commit yourself to Yahweh; let Him deliver him;
> Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

We can assume that not only "the chief priests, the scribes, and elders" attended synagogue weekly during the course of their adult lives, but also the rest of the Jewish people living in and around Jerusalem had done the same. Therefore, they have heard all the passages of the Hebrews scriptures, the Old Testament, about God's plan eventually to bring to the Jews, the nation of Israel, and to the rest of the world His Messiah to restore the Kingdom of David on the land of Israel to the Jews and to grant them peace, safety, and security from their enemies and peace throughout the whole world. As a result, the Jewish people know what the original king of the Davidic Covenant, David himself, wrote *in the psalms* about God and His relationship with him—that God would always be faithful to the him and rescue him

from his enemies, if he wholeheartedly obeyed God and led the rest of the Jews in doing the same. And that this would be the case for all the kings of the line of David after him, including and especially for the ultimate and final king, the Messiah, about whom the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah through Malachi, spoke and predicted.

Consequently, the Jewish people of Jesus' day have also learned in their weekly synagogue meetings that Isaiah, for example, has much to say about the coming Messiah and God's not only restoring the Kingdom of Israel through him, but also this being God's fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make the Jews the "great nation" of the world and eventually to rule the world with their Messiah. We will see in moment that, according to Luke, these same "rulers" of the Jews will also refer most likely to Psalm 22:8. However, the prophet Isaiah, especially chapter 42, will also help us to understand their perspective on the coming Messiah.

But before we get to Isaiah, we should consider three psalms (Psalms 89, 16, and 22—in this order) to fill out what the Jewish leaders and the rest of the people are thinking when they see Jesus with the sign, "King of the Jews," over his head and they hurl abusive and mocking statements at him as they pass by the cross. We should also recall my list and categories of messianic psalms earlier in this document, and I will highlight by bolding their numbers in red where these three fall in the list—

1) David writes a psalm about himself where his experiences become analogous to those of Jesus
   Psalms 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, **22**, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 131, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145
2) David writes a psalm about someone related to him where this person's experiences become analogous to those of Jesus
   Psalms 2, 8 (too)
3) David writes a psalm about Israel, and it is analogous to Jesus and future Israel
   Psalms 13, 14, 15, 24, 29, 36, 37, 53, 60, 65, 68, 122, 124, 131 (too), 133, 144 (too), 145 (too)
4) David writes a psalm that is a direct prediction of Jesus
   Psalms **16**, 110
5) Another author writes a psalm about David that is analogous to Jesus
   Psalms **89**, 132
6) Another author writes a psalm about someone related to David that is analogous to Jesus
   Psalms 45, 72, 127

First, we will look at Psalm 89, which another author wrote about David, and it provides a fairly comprehensive explanation of the Davidic Covenant. Next, David wrote Psalm 16, but, as we will see, the apostle Peter indicates that he was looking ahead to the future Messiah and making a rather startling prediction about him. Finally, David also wrote Psalm 22, but he did so about himself. Yet, his experience ends up being very similar to Jesus. In fact, many of David's psalms explicitly describe difficult circumstances of great suffering that he himself was experiencing. But, because he was the initial Son of God and king of Israel, they indicate what all the kings of Israel will encounter as the main and key instruments of God's plan to bring about the eternal Kingdom of God—which is hostility and rejection from unbelievers, whether within the nation of Israel or throughout the Gentile world. Therefore, even though most of the prophetic passages in Isaiah through Malachi predict a successful and glorious efforts by the final Davidic king, i.e., Jesus, to conquer Israel's enemies, restore the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel, and rule the whole world, David's psalms of suffering in the face of hostile opposition indirectly predict that Jesus will have to suffer likewise in order to fulfill his role as both king and priest. I think that this is how we can make sense of the apostles Peter's and Paul's statements in Acts 3:18; 17:3; 26:22,23 that the Old Testament declares that the Messiah had to suffer in order to reach his glorious rule of the Jews and the world—

> Acts 3:16b [Peter says] "Men, Israelites, why are you marveling at this [man's being healed of his lameness], or why are you staring at us as if by our own power or devotion to God we have made him walk? 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, who judged that he should be released. 3:14 You denied the Holy and Righteous One, and you asked for a murderer to be

given you. 3:15 Thus, you killed the leader of life whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.
3:16 His name has strengthened this man whom you observe and know—on the basis of belief in his name. And belief, which is through him, has given to him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. 3:17 And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, just like your leaders. 3:18 **But God has thus fulfilled the things which He announced beforehand through the mouth of all His prophets, that His Messiah would suffer.** [emphasis mine]

Acts 17:1 When [Paul and Silas] had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a gathering of the Jews. 17:2 **And, according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and, for three Sabbaths, he reasoned with them from the scriptures.** 17:3 **He explained and gave evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and "This is the Messiah Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you."** [emphasis mine]

Acts 26:19 Consequently, King Agrippa, I [Paul] did not become disobedient to the heavenly vision, 26:20 and I continued declaring first to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem, throughout the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, to repent and turn to God, performing actions worthy of repentance. 26:21 Because of these things, the Jews seized me while I was in the temple and attempted to kill me. 26:22 **Therefore, having obtained help from God, I stand this day bearing witness to the small and to the great, saying nothing outside the things of which the prophets and Moses said regarding things that were going to happen,** 26:23 **that there would be a suffering Messiah, that by virtue of the resurrection from the dead he would be the first to proclaim light to the people and to the Gentiles.**" [emphasis mine]

Now, we begin our consideration of three messianic psalms and four chapters of Isaiah with Psalm 89, which, in its superscript, identifies the author as Ethan the Ezrahite. There was a man by this name who lived at the time of David and his son Solomon, but the events that the psalmist describes occurred much late. Consequently, I think that the author of Psalm 89 is a different Ethan, and it would certainly not be unusual for there to be two Ethan the Ezrahites in Old Testament times. Verses 1-4 of this psalm read—

Psalm 89:1 I will sing of the multiple acts of loyal love of Yahweh forever (חַסְדֵ֣י יְהוָ֣ה עוֹלָ֑ם) (τὰ ἐλέη σου κύριε εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα);
To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness (אֲמוּנָתְךָ) (τὴν ἀλήθειάν σου) with my mouth.
89:2 For I have said, "Lovingkindness will be built up forever;
In the heavens You will establish (תָּכִ֖ן) Your faithfulness."
89:3 "I have made (כָּרַ֣תִּי) a covenant with My chosen (לִבְחִירִ֑י) (τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς μου);
I have sworn (נִשְׁבַּ֖עְתִּי) to David My servant,
89:4 I will establish your seed forever (עַד־עוֹלָ֣ם אָכִ֣ין זַרְעֶ֑ךָ)
And build up your throne to all generations (וְלִדֹר־וָדֹ֥ר)."

Ethan, the author, begins by extolling the "multiple acts of loyal love" and "faithfulness" of God to all the generations of the Jews who will exist in the present realm. He means that God will never abandon the Jews and transfer the promises which He has made to them through the Abrahamic Covenant to anyone else, including the community of believers in Jesus made up of both Jews and Gentiles, i.e., the church—as some Bible students, such as John Calvin, have concluded during the last two thousand years. In addition, Ethan the psalmist quotes God to the effect that He has made a covenant with David, whom He has chosen, so that He will establish his line into the far distant future to rule over Israel. And David is God' servant, who rules the Jews as His proxy and representative and who exhorts them to follow His commandments in the Mosaic Covenant. By extrapolation, future Davidic kings, including the final one, Jesus, should do the same, because God is promising through Ethan to "build up [David's] throne to all generations of the nation of Israel.

The psalm continues in vs. 5-13—

Psalm 89:5 The heavens will praise Your wonders, Yahweh;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
89:6 For who in the skies is comparable to Yahweh?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like Yahweh,
89:7 A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,
And awesome above all those who are around Him?
89:8 Yahweh, God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty Yah?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
89:9 You rule the swelling of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.
89:10 You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;
You scatter Your enemies with Your mighty arm.
89:11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all it contains (תֵּבֵל וּמְלֹאָהּ) (τὴν οἰκουμένην καὶ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῆς), You have founded them.
89:12 The north and the south, You have created them;
Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.
89:13 You have a strong arm;
Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted.

Next, Ethan personifies the creation that God has made and states that it praises Him and declares to the nation of Israel, “the assembly of the holy ones,” the ones who have been set apart by God to be His chosen people, ethnically speaking, that He is faithful of them. And his reason is that there is no one stronger in the skies of the creation than Israel’s God. The entire creation, all two hundred billion galaxies, obeys His purposes at every moment of its existence, whether the sea, the waves of the sea, or Egypt as a nation who opposed God and the Israelites. Consequently, everything in every direction—north, south, east, and west—is something that He has created and that He continues to shape and use for His own eternal purposes. Thus, God has the transcendent strength to carry out His plans, and no one can thwart Him.

Then, Ethan writes in vs. 14-18—

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice (צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט) (ικαιοσύνη καὶ κρίμα) are the foundation of Your throne;
Lovingkindness and truth (חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת) (ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια) go before You.
89:15 How blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are the people who know the joyful sound!
Yahweh, they walk in the light of Your countenance.
89:16 In Your name they rejoice all the day,
And by Your righteousness they are exalted.
89:17 For You are the glory of their strength,
And by Your favor our horn is exalted.
89:18 For our shield belongs to Yahweh,
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Not only is God the creator, but He is also morally perfect and pure. Indeed, He rules over the creation with righteousness and justice, i.e., with moral perfection and perfect legal treatment of sinful human beings, along with loyal love and truth, i.e., with following through on His promises to Abraham and being a God of only truth. He never lies, like sinful human beings. He is a person of only true truth. Therefore, His people, the Jews, who live their lives in the light of God’s moral character and instructions are themselves blessed. God will make sure that they become the “great nation” of authentic believers that He has promised them. Indeed, they will rejoice in God and will be strong in the midst of their enemies because of His greatness and glory. Thus, God shields the Jews from those who oppose them as He rules them as their king, who Himself is set apart and distinct from all other beings, because He is the only uncreated and eternal person, while everyone and everything else has been created and brought into existence by Him.

Ethan then says in vs. 19-29—

Psalm 89:19 Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones,
And said, “I have given help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen (בָּחוּר) (ἐκλεκτὸν) from the people.
89:20 “I have found David My servant;
With My holy oil I have anointed him (מְשַׁחְתִּיו) (ἔχρισα αὐτόν),
89:21 With whom My hand will be established (תִּכּוֹן);
My arm also will strengthen him.
89:22 “The enemy will not deceive him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
89:23 “But I shall crush his adversaries before him,
And strike those who hate him.
89:24 “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him,
And in My name his horn will be exalted.
89:25 “I shall also set his hand on the sea
And his right hand on the rivers.
89:26 “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’
89:27 “I also shall make him My firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
89:28 “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever (לְעוֹלָם אֶשְׁמוֹר־[אֶשְׁמָר]־לוֹ חַסְדִּי),
And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.
89:29 “So I will establish his descendants forever (וְשַׂמְתִּי לָעַד זַרְעוֹ)
And his throne as the days of heaven.

Next, the author quotes God in regard to David. It was during his reign as king of Israel that God found him, came to him, anointed him as king (metaphorically), exalted him as someone whom He had chosen to be set apart from the rest of his people, established him as king and strengthened him against his (and God’s) enemies. As a result, God promised to crush his adversaries, because He would be faithful and loyal to him with His love, allowing him to rule from over the land of Israel and potentially over the rest of the world where there are both rivers and oceans. Thus, we see that Ethan implies that the David will encounter opposition and hostility from people who reject and rebel against God. He does not say whether these will be Jews or Gentiles, but I think we can assume that it will be both. With these statements and their implications, the psalmist is also indicating that future Davidic kings, including the final one, Jesus of Nazareth, will suffer the same kind of antipathy from unbelievers. And it makes sense that Peter and Paul were referring to this psalm, too, in the book of Acts regarding how the Old Testament teaches that Jesus had to die on the cross in order to fulfill his role as the last Messiah.

Then, Ethan says that, in David’s relationship with God, he could cry out to Him as his Father, his God, and the very foundation of his own salvation from his sins. And God has made David His firstborn son, the one who rules the nation of Israel and inherits all His property, the land of Israel and actually the rest of the creation. Plus, God will always and forever be faithful to David and to his descendants who are the future kings of Israel—as long as Israel exists as a separate ethnic group on this earth, which we now know will be through the time of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus has returned.

Then, verses 30-37 of the psalm state—

Psalm 89:30 “If (אִם) his sons forsake My law
And do not walk in My judgments,
89:31 If (אִם) they violate My statutes
And do not keep (לֹא יִשְׁמֹרוּ) My commandments,
89:32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod
And their iniquity with stripes.
89:33 “But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,
Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.

89:34 “My covenant I will not violate,
Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.
89:35 “Once I have sworn (נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי) by My holiness;
I will not lie to David.
89:36 “His descendants shall endure forever (זַרְעוֹ לְעוֹלָם יִהְיֶה)
And his throne as the sun before Me.
89:37 “It shall be established forever (יִכּוֹן עוֹלָם) like the moon,
And the witness in the sky is faithful.”

Nevertheless, Ethan indicates that the stability and security of the Davidic Kingdom on the land of Israel depends upon the obedience of the future kings, David’s descendants. If they disobey God, then He will punish them, and it will hurt and not be a pretty picture. Again, we know from the historical passages of the Old Testament that God followed through on His threat by destroying the southern Kingdom of Judah around 600 B.C. when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, leveled the temple, killed many of the Jews, and took the rest of them into exile to Babylon.

Nevertheless, in the verses above, God declares unequivocally that He will never violate” the Davidic Covenant (and by extrapolation, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants) by abandoning them and the nation of Israel. Indeed, His covenant with David is permanent, because He is the loyally loving, faithful, and holy (set apart and different from sinful human beings) God, so that the kingdom will go on as long as the sun, moon, and sky exist in the present realm. Revelation 20 and 21 tell us that this creation lasts through the time that Jesus rules over Israel and the world on this earth, and then God destroys the current universe and creates an entirely new one. Therefore, the meaning of “forever” in 37 above is for as long as the people of Israel, the Jews, remain a distinct, ethnic group, which is only through the season of the “great nation” of Abraham’s physical descendants and the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Closing in on the end of the psalm, verses 38-45 read,

Psalm 89:38 But You have cast off and rejected,
You have been full of wrath against Your anointed.
89:39 You have spurned the covenant of Your servant;
You have profaned his crown in the dust.
89:40 You have broken down all his walls;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.
89:41 All who pass along the way plunder him;
He has become a reproach to his neighbors.
89:42 You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
You have made all his enemies rejoice.
89:43 You also turn back the edge of his sword
And have not made him stand in battle.
89:44 You have made his splendor to cease
And cast his throne to the ground.
89:45 You have shortened the days of his youth;
You have covered him with shame.

Now, somewhat surprisingly, Ethan attests to the fact that God has expressed His wrath towards the king of Israel, the Messiah, so that the walls of Jerusalem have been destroyed and people have plundered his wealth and prevented him from successfully defending himself and the nation of Israel from their attacks. Indeed, the king has been brought to a condition of shame and humiliation, which all sounds like the destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah, of Jerusalem, and of the temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Perhaps, the Ethan of Ezrahite in David’s and Solomon’s day is peering into the future and predicting the downfall of the kingdom approximately three hundred years later, which is entirely possible for God to give him this kind of supernatural knowledge. But I wonder if this is another Ethan who lived after the fateful day of Jerusalem’s downfall by the Babylonians, and he is praising God for the Davidic Covenant, while observing or having heard of His judgment on the southern Kingdom of Judah. In either case, he continues and finishes the psalm—

89:46 How long, Yahweh?
Will You hide Yourself forever (לָנֶ֣צַח)?
Will Your wrath burn like fire?
89:47 Remember what my span of life is;
For what vanity You have created all the sons of men!
89:48 What man can live and not see death?
Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?
89:49 Where are Your former multiple acts of loyal love, O Lord,
Which You swore (נִשְׁבַּ֖עְתָּ) to David in Your faithfulness?
89:50 Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants;
How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples,
89:51 With which Your enemies have reproached, Yahweh,
With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.
89:52 Blessed be Yahweh forever (בָּר֣וּךְ יְהוָ֣ה לְעוֹלָ֑ם)!
Amen and Amen.

Thus, Ethan ends this psalm by asking a simple question of God, "How long?" How long will God cause the people of Israel to live in shame and be oppressed by their enemies? Will it be for the rest of his life, which is so short in comparison to God's eternal beingness? Thus, Ethan is implying that things are still a mess on the land of Israel and in the city of Jerusalem. As a result, he asks God to remember not only what His chosen people have endured (albeit, because of their disobedience), but also His loyal love and promised faithfulness towards them in the midst of God's enemies, who are the Jews' enemies, who are mistreating His anointed one, the Messiah and king of Israel—again, meaning even after 586 B.C. Then, the author's last lines are "Blessed be Yahweh forever! Amen and Amen."

A good question to ask now is, "What did the Jews of Jesus' day think of the ramifications of Ethan's explanation of both the Davidic Covenant and God's discipline of the king of Israel as these pertained to the predicted Messiah who would restore the Kingdom of Israel after its destruction in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians?" Did they believe that God's discipline of the king (and kings) of Israel could potentially occur for all the kings *except the final Messiah*, so that once he appeared, anyone who might oppose him would not succeed in mistreating him and certainly would not kill him? Certainly, this seems to be the message of the books of the prophets in the Old Testament, that God's Messiah will powerfully and without fail destroy the Jews' enemies and establish his kingdom on the earth. Or did Jesus' contemporary Jews allow for the possibility that all the kings of Israel, from David through the final Messiah, were sinners liable to discipline by God and more than likely would receive such from Him, even while God is in the process of fulfilling His promise to Abraham to shape the Jews into the most powerful nation in human history? Before we attempt to answer these questions, we should consider the other two psalms, 16 and 22, and the four chapters of Isaiah 41, 42, 44, and 45. First, there is Psalm 16, but we should begin by noticing what the apostle Peter has to say about it in his initial sermon to the Jewish people in Acts 2—

Acts 2:22 "Men, Israelites, listen to these words. Jesus the Nazarene, a man who has been confirmed by God to you by means of powers, warning signs, and signs, which God did through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know,
2:23 this man, given over by the fixed plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
2:24 God resurrected him, having loosed the cords of death because it was impossible for him to be held by it,
2:25 for David says with reference to him,
'I was always seeing Yahweh in front of me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be disturbed.
2:26 On account of this my heart was cheered, and my tongue exulted. Moreover, my flesh will dwell in hope,
2:27 because You will not abandon my life to Hades, and You will not give your committed one to see decay.

2:28 You have made known to me the ways of life. You will fill me with joy with Your presence’ <Psalm 16:8-11>.
2:29 Men, brothers, it is right to say with bold openness to you concerning the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day.
2:30 Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat someone from the fruit of his loins on his throne,
2:31 he foresaw and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah, that he would neither be abandoned to Hades, nor his flesh see decay.
2:32 God resurrected this Jesus of whom we are all witnesses.”

In vs. 25-28 above, Peter quotes Psalm 16, which David wrote. The important point for our sake is that he says that David was writing not of himself, but of someone else who would exist future to him. Therefore, “he foresaw and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah,” whom Peter knew and we know was and is Jesus of Nazareth. This is why I have categorized Psalm 16 in the list above as one of two in #4, psalms that David writes where he is making a direction prediction of the Messiah Jesus. In the Hebrew Bible, the superscript for this psalm says simply that it is a *miktam* (מִכְתָּם), a sort of painting and artwork of David. It reads in its entirety—

Psalm 16:1 Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.
16:2 I said to Yahweh, “You are my Lord;
I have no good besides You.”
16:3 As for those who are set apart on the land,
They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.
16:4 The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied;
I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.
16:5 Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.
16:6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.
16:7 I will bless Yahweh who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.
16:8 I have set Yahweh continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
16:9 Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.
16:10 For You will not abandon my existence to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
16:11 You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

If David is truly making predictions about the future Messiah, Jesus, and indeed this is what Peter must be correctly claiming, then this is one of two genuine, messianic psalms (Psalm 110 being the other). As a result, David is not only foretelling what will happen to Jesus, but also quoting him of sorts. For example, during his life on earth, Jesus says directly to God (or at least intimates this by his prayers and actions) several things:

1) That He is his refuge and his Lord
2) That the authentic believers among the people of Israel are a delight to him
3) That he would never even think of worshiping false gods
4) That God Himself is the ultimate inheritance he will receive in the midst of the land of Israel, whose boundaries God has drawn
5) That God as the transcendent creator is his strength as he walks on the earth as a real human being

6) That he rejoices in God, because not only will He instruct him in exactly how he should perform his role as the earthly Messiah, but after he dies (which is implied!), God will not allow his body to decompose; instead, He will raise him from the dead (also implied!).

In other words, David, at least indirectly, is indicating that the Messiah will die (and perhaps his death will not be a natural one, but a violent one of suffering and pain), so that whatever else the other psalms and the prophets say about the one whom God brings into existence to restore the Kingdom of Israel, he will experience hardship and suffering similar to David's own experiences in the psalms of category #1 above. We will consider this more after we now look at the final psalm, 22, and the passages from Isaiah. Here is Psalm 22, which the superscription says is a psalm of David. He could have been looking into the future and predicting Jesus' experience, especially his death on the cross (because he will soon use the first line to cry out to God as he dies), but I think it makes more sense that he was writing about himself, so that his experience is analogous to that of Jesus—

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.
22:2 O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;
And by night, but I have no rest.

Right away, David declares that he is in trouble, and it certainly seems to him that God has abandoned him, even though he is the king of Israel (unless he wrote this psalm while fleeing from Saul, the first king of Israel, whom he succeeds, which is a possibility). We will see in another sub-section that Jesus quotes the first line, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", just before he dies.

David continues in vs. 3-5—

22:3 Yet You are holy,
O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
22:4 In You our fathers trusted;
They trusted and You delivered them.
22:5 To You they cried out and were delivered;
In You they trusted and were not ashamed (וְלֹא־בֹ֝ושׁ֗וּ) (κατῃσχύνθησαν).

In spite of sensing that he is distant from God (or that God is far from him), David reminds Him and himself that He is both holy and the one whom his ancestors, from Abraham through Moses, trusted for their deliverance from troubles, such troubles, for example, as being enslaved in Egypt. Indeed, God did rescue them, and they were certainly not left ashamed and disappointed in their predicament of being mistreated by the Egyptians. by God's response to their cry for help. The Hebrew word for ashamed, בּוֹשׁ (*bosh*) appears at least 112 times in the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic books, and a form of the Greek word καταισχύνω (*kataiskuno*) appears at least 27 times in the New Testament. The biblical authors are quite concerned about the shame and disappointment that human beings experience in the present realm because of their own sin and mistreatment and abuse by other sinful human beings, and they are determined to assure their readers that God alone, by His grace and mercy through the Messiah, will rescue them from their sin and their circumstances, so that they never suffer these painful effects again—if they but place their faith and trust in God alone.

In verses 6-8, David further describes his own situation—

22:6 But I am a worm and not a man,
A reproach of men and despised by the people.
22:7 All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,
22:8 "Commit yourself to Yahweh; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

David's enemies are making him feel small, rejected and insignificant. They are mocking him with both their words and their facial expressions, just as Jesus' enemies are doing as he hangs on the cross.

And they call out to David to trust in God to rescue him from them, because he claims that God delights in him, since he is special in His eyes. This last part is what the religious rulers quote and encourage Jesus to do, if he truly is the king of Israel, who has come to free them from the Romans.

But David turns to God again in vs. 9-11 and then goes on to describe his predicament even more in vs. 12-18—

22:9 Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts.
22:10 Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother's womb.
22:11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near;
For there is none to help.
22:12 Many bulls have surrounded me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.
22:13 They open wide their mouth at me,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.
22:14 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.
22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You lay me in the dust of death.
22:16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
22:17 I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;
22:18 They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.

In spite of his dire circumstances, David relates his past trust in God and His faithfulness to him when he was a child. Now, he exhorts God to be with him as He has been in the past, because his enemies surround him to kill him like angry bulls, and he has lost all his strength to fight them. Yet, he also knows that it is God, who created him according to His sovereignty, who is laying him low in the midst of his enemies' attacks that are close to bringing him death. Indeed, it is as though they might as well divide up his clothes as if he is dead already, because he feels emaciated and powerless by how greatly they are mistreating him. We saw in the previous sub-section that the Roman soldiers did exactly this to Jesus and divided his garments among the four of them, except for the tunic, which was seamless. They cast lots for it.

Next, David further appeals to God in vs. 19-21—

22:19 But You, Yahweh, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.
22:20 Deliver my existence from the sword,
My only life from the power of the dog.
22:21 Save me from the lion's mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

Thus, David entreats God to be close to him and rescue him from death and his enemies, whom he likens to a dog, a lion, and wild oxen.

And what will David do if God saves his life?

22:22 I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
22:23 You who fear Yahweh, praise Him;

All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.
22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.
22:25 From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.

Because of his theology and knowledge of God, David assures God that, if He rescues him from his enemies and from death, he will praise Him when he gathers with his fellow Jews to worship Him. He imagines himself among them as he exhorts them to fear God, to praise Him, and to stand in awe of Him, because He responds to those who cry to Him for help. The upshot also is that David himself will praise God and fulfill whatever commitments he has made God who fear Him as he does.

Finally, in vs. 26-31, David expands his understanding of what the future holds to include both the Jews and the Gentiles—

22:26 The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise Yahweh.
Let your heart live forever!
22:27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to Yahweh,
And all the families of the nations (כָּל־מִשְׁפְּחוֹת גּוֹיִם) will worship before You.
22:28 For the kingdom is Yahweh's,
And He rules over the nations.
22:29 All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,
All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his existence alive.
22:30 Posterity will serve Him;
It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.
22:31 They will come and will declare His righteousness
To a people who will be born, that He performs it.

In the end, God's kingdom will extend beyond the mere boundaries of the relatively small land of Israel to encompass the whole earth, so that both the nation of Israel and the nations of the Gentiles will worship Him and serve Him. It will be "all the families of the nations" who bow before God, all those who cannot make themselves exist, because they will recognize that only God has the power and ability to create human beings and to keep them alive moment by moment as He continues to tell the story that He composed before He made the universe. Therefore, "all the families of the nations" (כָּל־מִשְׁפְּחוֹת גּוֹיִם) and "all those who go down to the dust" will be the same as "all the families of the earth" (כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה) in Genesis 12:3, who will "come" to Israel, even if it is merely by properly acknowledging in far distant parts of the world that the Jews are God's chosen people, who alone have the right to live on the land of Israel, which He promised them in Genesis 12 in the Abrahamic Covenant. And they will all declare categorically that God is a good and righteous God, who has carried out and continues to carry out all His promises, plans, and purposes. In other words, here David is actually predicting the future and a time which has not yet occurred, when Jesus will return, restore the Kingdom of Israel among the Jews, and rule the world with them.

At least seven times, the New Testament quotes at least a portion of certain verses of this psalm. Therefore, the Jews of Jesus' day must have been quite familiar with it, so that they take David's words about his own current suffering and apply them to Jesus' predicament and his claim to be the final Davidic king. But my guess is that they are doing so sarcastically, because they are under the impression that the final king of Israel, the Messiah, will only conquer their and his enemies and not suffer any harm from them. Nevertheless, these Jewish leaders are borrowing from David and his experiences and saying that, if Jesus truly is the "King of the Jews," as Pilate's sign ignominiously declares, then God must delight in him and should be willing to rescue him in a heartbeat from death on the cross. But the harsh and indisputable fact is that Jesus is still on the cross, so that most of the Jewish people have already concluded that God is <u>not</u> delighted in him, which means that he is <u>not</u> the Messiah and king of Israel.

Also, at some time during the hours, the Jewish leaders declare in Luke 23:35, “Let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, the Chosen One.” In Psalm 22:19-20 above, Ethan the Ezrahite made the comments that God had both *chosen* and *anointed* David to be the king of Israel, that He separated him from the rest of the nation and gave him this special role and status. It stands to reason that all David’s descendants after him who became kings of Israel, e.g., Solomon and Rehoboam, could also be labelled as *chosen* and *anointed* by God for their special roles of ruling the nation of Israel. And, certainly, the final Messiah, Jesus, is someone we have already concluded that Psalm 22 is describing analogously. Therefore, in Luke’s account, the “rulers” of the Jews most likely are referring to v. 19 of this psalm when they sarcastically wonder if Jesus will “save himself, if he is the Messiah of God, the Chosen One.” However, the phrase “Chosen One” also appears in Isaiah 42:1, and it will be worthwhile for us to look at a few chapters of this prophet, including chapter 42, to help us understand what the Jewish people and their leaders were thinking about the Messiah as they mocked Jesus on the cross.

First, we will consider Isaiah 41—

Isaiah 41:1 “Coastlands (אִיִּים), listen to Me in silence,
And let the peoples gain new strength;
Let them come forward, then let them speak;
Let us come together for judgment.

The Hebrew word translated “coastlands” is *’iyyiym* (אִיִּים) and can refer either to the coastal area of a land, such as the coast of Israel, Egypt, or Lebanon in modern times, or to islands, such as Cyprus or Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. I think God is speaking to Gentiles and not Jews, to people who live somewhere different from the land of Israel and with respect to the Mediterranean Sea. He is requiring that they listen to Him and also talk to Him about what makes sense about how to understand the nature of reality and to judge people’s actions together as to who is correct. Is God correct in His assessment of their actions or are the Gentiles correct?

In the next two verses, God then talks about a special person in the area of Israel—

41:2 “Who has aroused one from the east
Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet?
He delivers up nations before him
And subdues kings.
He makes them like dust with his sword,
As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.
41:3 “He pursues them, passing on in safety,
By a way he had not been traversing with his feet.

God goes on to ask the Gentiles, “Who is bringing someone “from the east,” who will conquer “nations,” other Gentile peoples and empires, and crush them into “dust with his sword?” Then this person will pass on beyond them and continue conquering foreign lands. In the context of Isaiah 40-45, I suggest that God is referring to Cyrus, the ruler of the Persian Empire in the middle of the 6th century B.C. and approximately two hundred years after Isaiah. He will move out of Persia (modern day Iran) and first take over the Babylonian Empire and then conquer other lands, including Israel.

God asks in v. 4—

41:4 “Who performs and accomplishes it,
Calling forth the generations from the beginning?
‘I, Yahweh, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’”

God is posing the question, “Who will bring Cyrus onto the scene of the Ancient Near East at that time, so that the person who does so has also brought past generations of peoples into existence?” He answers that it will be He, “Yahweh” who is “the first and with the last.” In other words, the transcendent and sovereign God of all the history of the creation is this one. No one else can accomplish and will accomplish what God does as He causes the story of the cosmos to unfold exactly as He chooses, including raising up this special ruler of the Persian Empire.

Then God goes on the state in vs. 5-7—

41:5 The coastlands have seen and are afraid;
The ends of the earth tremble;
They have drawn near and have come.
41:6 Each one helps his neighbor
And says to his brother, “Be strong!”
41:7 Thus the craftsman encourages the smelter,
And he who smooths metal with the hammer encourages him who beats the anvil,
Saying of the soldering, “It is good”;
And he fastens it with nails,
So that it will not totter.

At some point in their lives, even the Gentiles recognize God’s existence and greatness, and they become afraid. Why? I think we can infer that they know about Him just from watching His relationship with Israel—that He is not someone to be trifled with and treated in a cavalier manner. But, instead of approaching God and seeking His goodness, mercy, and grace as they should, the Gentiles band together in hopes of defending themselves against His justice and condemnation. And what are they hoping will be their best defense? Manufactured idols—molded, metal figurines that represent their false gods, the forces of nature such as the sun, the moon, and the weather, that impinge on their tiny, little lives within the creation! We human beings come up with the stupidest ideas for how we should pursue life and find safety and security within the created realm. Instead of looking to and trusting the very source of our existence and ability to breathe and act as rational and moral human beings, God, we ignore and reject Him while desperately attempting to control all the elements of nature and the creation around us!

In contrast, God next in vs. 8-16 directs His comments to the people of Israel, whom He has chosen out of all the ethnic groups on the earth—

41:8 “But you, Israel, My servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
Descendant of Abraham My friend,
41:9 You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,
And called from its remotest parts
And said to you, ‘You are My servant,
I have chosen you and not rejected you.
41:10 ‘Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’
41:11 “Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored;
Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.
41:12 “You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them,
Those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent.
41:13 “For I am Yahweh your God, who upholds your right hand,
Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’
41:14 “Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel;
I will help you,” declares Yahweh, “and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
41:15 “Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges;
You will thresh the mountains and pulverize them,
And will make the hills like chaff.
41:16 “You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away,
And the storm will scatter them;
But you will rejoice in Yahweh,
You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.

While the Gentiles are doing all they can to avoid God by relying solely on elements within the creation to sustain their lives, God is doing all He can to embrace the Jews, the descendants of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob—short of changing and circumcising all their hearts and making them the "great nation" that He promised Abraham. This is coming in the future, which God goes on to assert and describe. He has chosen the Jews and will never reject them. They are His servant. Therefore, they need not be afraid. God will strengthen them, help them, and uphold them after He has brought them back to the land of Israel from the far reaches of the world. The result will be that any people who get angry with the Jews and contend with and attack them will find themselves ashamed, dishonored, and dying so as to disappear from existence within reality. All this because God is the one who rescues Israel. In addition, He will His chosen people a weapon of His own to pulverize and destroy His and their enemies. In response to His wonderful and powerful actions towards them, the Jews will rejoice in God and find their glory and greatness in only Him—not in the false gods of other peoples.

In verses 17-20, God states what the land and physical environment will be for the Jews who have returned—

41:17 "The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none,
And their tongue is parched with thirst;
I, Yahweh, will answer them Myself,
As the God of Israel I will not forsake them.
41:18 "I will open rivers on the bare heights
And springs in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water
And the dry land fountains of water.
41:19 "I will put the cedar in the wilderness,
The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree;
I will place the juniper in the desert
Together with the box tree and the cypress,
41:20 That they may see and recognize,
And consider and gain insight as well,
That the hand of Yahweh has done this,
And the Holy One of Israel has created it.

God here could be speaking of the Gentiles who lack authentic faith in Him or of the Jews who are in the same condition. In the context of vs. 8-16, I think that it is the latter. Because of the disobedience of the nation of Israel, they, even those on the land of Israel (and certainly those in far distant lands of the Gentiles), are experiencing all different kinds of hardship—literal thirst that a well-watered and fertile area could abate. Is He speaking of the situation in Isaiah's day, or later, perhaps even during the time of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord immediately before Jesus returns (according to the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation in the New Testament)? I think that the later time makes more senser, so that God is declaring that He will make the land of Israel fertile and lush just as they approach becoming the "great nation" with Jesus' ruling over them, so that the Jews will gain insight and recognize in their hearts and minds that He, the Holy One of Israel, has provided abundant water for the thirsty Jews. After all, He is THEIR God who has chosen them and declared His loyal love and faithfulness to them, so that the covenants which He has made with them (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New) He will fulfill completely.

Next, in vs. 21-24, God turns His attention back to the false gods of the Gentiles—

41:21 "Present your case," Yahweh says.
"Bring forward your strong arguments,"
The King of Jacob says.
41:22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place;
As for the former events, declare what they were,
That we may consider them and know their outcome.
Or announce to us what is coming;
41:23 Declare the things that are going to come afterward,
That we may know that you are gods;
Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.
41:24 Behold, you are of no account,

And your work amounts to nothing;
He who chooses you is an abomination.

Following His encouraging words to the nation of Israel, God invites the false gods of the Gentiles, whose images they have made, to come before Him and declare what the future will be for the Israelites. He also wants them to state what the past has been in order that they may predict the future on the basis of the past. He would also have them act in a good or evil manner, i.e., do something, so that He (and everyone else) may fear these false gods. But God concludes that the false gods are just exactly this—false. They simply do not exist as forces that ultimately control the reality in which human beings exist and are therefore nothing, so that God's assessment of anyone who follows them and looks to them for help in life is himself an abomination and worthy of condemnation.

And then, in vs. 25-26, God speaks again of a special person who will be coming into history in the Ancient Near East—

41:25 "I have aroused one from the north, and he has come;
From the rising of the sun he will call on My name;
And he will come upon rulers as upon mortar,
Even as the potter treads clay."
41:26 Who has declared this from the beginning, that we might know?
Or from former times, that we may say, "He is right!"?
Surely there was no one who declared,
Surely there was no one who proclaimed,
Surely there was no one who heard your words.

In these two verses above, God repeats the fact that He is bringing someone from the north, who will actually come from the east and the rising of the sun to perform His will. This, as in vs. 2-3 above, must be Cyrus the Great of Persia who will acknowledge the God of the Jews and of Israel and will destroy other kings and rulers in adjacent lands. But God wants to know which false god, which autonomous element of the creation, has declared that these events will occur and has been able to do so from the beginning of time? The obvious answer is, None of them. Only the true God, the God of Israel, has made such bold predictions and continues to state what the future will be for the people of the Ancient Near East, and especially for the nation of Israel.

Is the situation any different in Jerusalem for the Jews? God says in vs. 27-29 that it is not—

41:27 "Formerly I said to Zion, 'Behold, here they are.'
And to Jerusalem, 'I will give a messenger of good news.'
41:28 "But when I look, there is no one,
And there is no counselor among them
Who, if I ask, can give an answer.
41:29 "Behold, all of them are false;
Their works are worthless,
Their molten images are wind and emptiness.

God has hoped that someone will speak up in Jerusalem and counsel His people in the truth, so that they may turn from their disobedient ways and submit to Him. However, no person can be found there who is doing so. Everyone speaks lies, just like the Gentiles, and the Jews' religious activities, even if they outwardly appear obedient to God according to the Mosaic Covenant, are worthless. And this must be because they lack genuine hearts of repentance and humility. Plus, they, like the Gentiles, have made molten images of false gods, which are just as empty of wisdom and truth as His people, the nation of Israel centered in the Kingdom of Judah and the Davidic king in Jerusalem.

God's switches topics slightly as He continues in Isaiah 42—

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations (מִשְׁפָּט לַגּוֹיִם יוֹצִיא).

42:2 “He will not cry out or raise his voice,
Nor make his voice heard in the street.
42:3 “A bruised reed he will not break
And a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice (מִשְׁפָּט).
42:4 “He will not be disheartened or crushed
Until he has established justice in the earth (עַד־יָשִׂים בָּאָרֶץ מִשְׁפָּט);
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law (וּלְתוֹרָתוֹ).”

While it is plausible that God is addressing the entire nation of Israel, the Jews, who was the “Servant” of chapter 41, here it makes more sense that He is referring to a single individual. And I think that this person is the same one of Isaiah 52 & 53, who will suffer rejection by his own people and death from ultimately God for the sake of the sins of the peoples. Here, at the beginning of chapter 42, God says that this servant is His “chosen one” and that He “delights” and enjoys Him. He will also place His “Spirit” on this individual, who will “bring forth justice to the nations.” In other words, this “Servant” and “chosen one” will be the basis both for God’s recompense to those who rebel against Him among the Gentiles (and the Jews) and for His mercy and forgiveness to all those who properly believe in Him.

Therefore, if the Jewish leaders in Luke 23:35 are thinking of the “Chosen One” of Isaiah 42 (in addition, probably, to Psalm 89’s “chosen one”) as they look at him, then they are sarcastically wondering how he will judge the nations after he expires on the cross.

Next, in Isaiah 42:5-25, God provides the Jews of Isaiah’s day with more context in regard this “Servant.” First, there are verses 5-9—

42:5 Thus says God Yahweh,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,
42:6 “I am Yahweh, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people (וְאֶתֶּנְךָ לִבְרִית עָם),
As a light to the nations (לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם),
42:7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.
42:8 “I am Yahweh, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.
42:9 “Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”

In v. 5, God calls Himself “God Yahweh,” and states that He has created the entire universe and placed all the people who are alive on the earth wherever they are to act out their existences. But He has also “called” His Servant and will lead him by the hand to “appoint” him to perform his role of bringing another “covenant” to the people of Israel and to proclaim the “light” of truth to all the *goyim* (גּוֹיִם), the many nations of peoples, both Jews and Gentiles, on the earth. As a result, by what he teaches, this “Servant” and “chosen one” will lead people out of the “darkness” of their lies and false ideas, so that they think and act instead according to truth. Of course, the ultimate source of all this is God Himself, whose name is Yahweh (literally “He is” (יְהוָה)) and who takes all the glory for all that happens in regard to what His “chosen one” accomplishes, because what God says He is going to do, He does, and no image or false god can stop Him.

Then, verses 10-12 continue this important context for God’s “Servant”—

42:10 Sing to Yahweh a new song,

Sing His praise from the end of the earth (מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ)!
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.
You islands/coastlands (אִיִּים), and those who dwell on/in them.
42:11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices,
The settlements where Kedar inhabits.
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,
Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.
42:12 Let them give glory to Yahweh
And declare His praise on/in the islands/coastlands (בָּאִיִּים).

It seems that Isaiah the prophet breaks into the discussion and encourages all the peoples and nations of the world to acknowledge God's greatness and to sing praises to Him. He speaks specifically of "Kedar," the desert area northeast of the land of Israel (southern Syria today) and "Sela," which is just southeast of the Dead Sea (in modern day Jordan). Isaiah also refers to the same places that God addressed at the beginning of chapter 14, the *'iyyiym* (אִיִּים), which are the islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea where Gentiles live. Therefore, the prophet's perspective on the people who should "give glory to Yahweh and declare His praise" are both the Jews on the land of Israel and the Gentiles outside this land. Consequently, they all should and will give the God of Israel the glory that only He deserves for being the creator of all reality and the producer of all human history that is centered in His "Servant," the "chosen one."

Again, in the minds of the Jewish leaders who are speaking in Luke 23:35, has Jesus correctly been claiming to be a vital part of what God is doing throughout the world, because he now is dying on a cross? We know that the answer to this question is a resounding, "Yes!" But most Jews of Jesus' day (and it would certainly seem from that time) cannot see how it is the true that Jesus is the crucified Messiah as the apostle Paul identifies him in 1 Corinthians 1, which to Jews is a stumbling block and to Gentiles is foolishness.

Isaiah and God then say in vs. 13-25—

42:13 Yahweh will go forth like a warrior,
He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.
He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.
He will prevail against His enemies.
42:14 "I have kept silent for a long time,
I have kept still and restrained Myself.
Now like a woman in labor I will groan,
I will both gasp and pant.
42:15 "I will lay waste the mountains and hills
And wither all their vegetation;
I will make the rivers into coastlands (לָאִיִּים)
And dry up the ponds.
42:16 "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know,
In paths they do not know I will guide them.
I will make darkness into light before them
And rugged places into plains.
These are the things I will do,
And I will not leave them undone."
42:17 They will be turned back and be utterly put to shame,
Who trust in idols,
Who say to molten images,
"You are our gods."
42:18 Hear, you deaf!
And look, you blind, that you may see.
42:19 Who is blind but My servant,
Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?
Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me,

Or so blind as the servant of Yahweh?
42:20 You have seen many things, but you do not observe them;
Your ears are open, but none hears.
42:21 Yahweh was pleased for His righteousness' sake
To make the law great and glorious.
42:22 But this is a people plundered and despoiled;
All of them are trapped in caves,
Or are hidden away in prisons;
They have become a prey with none to deliver them,
And a spoil, with none to say, "Give them back!"
42:23 Who among you will give ear to this?
Who will give heed and listen hereafter?
42:24 Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers?
Was it not Yahweh, against whom we have sinned,
And in whose ways they were not willing to walk,
And whose law they did not obey?
42:25 So He poured out on him the heat of His anger
And the fierceness of battle;
And it set him aflame all around,
Yet he did not recognize it;
And it burned him, but he paid no attention.

Isaiah the prophet declares in v. 13 that God will "raise a war cry" and do serious battle against "His enemies," who, in this context, refer to not only God's enemies, but also Israel's enemies. Those who speak against and seek to harm, even annihilate and destroy, the Jews speak against God and are His enemies just as much as they are enemies of the nation of Israel. And God does not take lightly threats and attacks against His chosen people and, therefore, against Him. Rather than their enemies destroying the Jews, God will destroy His and their enemies.

But God admits, starting in v. 14, that He has not acted in favor of the Jews for a long time. And the rest of the passage indicates that they have suffered tremendously, partly because of their worshiping idols, i.e., elements of the creation, instead of God, and partly because their enemies have succeeded in making them suffer. Indeed, in this case the "servant of Yahweh," who must be the nation of Israel and not the individual at the beginning of the chapter, has been blind and deaf to God's instructions and Torah. In response, God has given His own people, the nation of Israel, "up for spoil," and there is no one to say, "Give them back" to their land and to worshiping the one, true God, their God! Nevertheless, now is the time for Him to spring into action and to "make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains," which is to bring both truth and a life of safety and security to them. And when is this time? We can guess that it is after Israel's enemies have brought great harm and suffering to them, for example,

1) after the Assyrian invasion of the northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century B.C., or
2) after the Babylonian invasion of the southern Kingdom of Judah in the 6th century B.C., or
3) after the attacks by Antiochus Epiphanes IV in the 2nd century B.C., or
4) after the Romans destroy Jerusalem and kill most of the Jews in A.D. 70 and 132, or
5) after the many years of persecution and suffering of the Jews since Jesus's first appearance leading up the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord immediately before his second appearance.

I think that this last option makes the most sense, especially in the context of the Isaiah 42 where God's individual "Servant" will bring justice to all the nations of the earth. And when God rescues the whole nation of Israel from their enemies with acts of justice and righteousness towards them, they will recognize that they have been disobedient to Him and have deserved His discipline. Once again, therefore, He calls them collectively His servant, because they are intended to obey Him according to the various covenants He has made with them, and He is given them His explicit instruction in the greatness and gloriousness of the Torah of the Mosaic Covenant. But after they have become a prey to foreign people as God pours out His anger on them, and they are put to shame because they have worshiped false gods and not Him with genuine and humble hearts, they will have still be alive, even though they

endured God's justice because of their moral and spiritual blindness. Fortunately, He will lead them out of the darkness of their disobedience and into the light of His truth—because, as stated and implied, they are His chosen people. And, again, no one will be able to stop Him from doing so.

We skip Isaiah 43 and continue with chapter 44—

Isaiah 44:1 "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant,
And Israel, whom I have chosen:
44:2 Thus says Yahweh who made you
And formed you from the womb, who will help you,
'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant;
And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land
And streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring (אֶצֹּ֤ק רוּחִי֙ עַל־זַרְעֶ֔ךָ)
And My blessing on your descendants (וּבִרְכָתִ֖י עַל־צֶאֱצָאֶֽיךָ);
44:4 And they will spring up among the grass,
Like poplars by streams of water.'
44:5 "This one will say, 'I am Yahweh's;
And that one will call on the name of Jacob;
And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to Yahweh,'
And will name Israel's name with honor.
44:6 "Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts:
'I am the first and I am the last,
And there is no God besides Me.
44:7 'Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it;
Yes, let him recount it to Me in order,
From the time that I established the ancient nation (עַם־עוֹלָ֑ם).
And let them declare to them the things that are coming
And the events that are going to take place.
44:8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid;
Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it?
And you are My witnesses.
Is there any God besides Me,
Or is there any other Rock?
I know of none.'"

Once again addressing the entire ethnic group of Jews as His "servant," God encourages them not to be afraid, because He will pour out His Spirit on them and change them into people who properly obey Him from their hearts. This will be like His pouring out "water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground." And this will occur for all their descendants—at some point in their history, which we can assume will be when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation" according to His covenant in Genesis 12-22. They will be so alive and numerous that they "spring up among the grass, like poplars by streams of water."

As a result, each individual Jew will know and declare himself to belong to Yahweh, to the God of the Jews, amongst whom there are no other gods. Some will even write on their hands, "Belonging to Yahweh." And God calls Himself the "King of Israel" and their "Redeemer." God also is the only one who accurately predicts the future, declaring "the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place." Thus, the nation of Israel are His "witnesses" to this effect, so that, if God knows of no other god, who relates to the Jews as their "Rock" of safety, security, and peace, then there is no other god. Yes, there are elements within the creation that contribute heavily to the sustenance, lives, and enjoyment of human beings on this earth, but these exist only because the transcendent creator causes them to exist. Therefore, it makes sense to look beyond the creation to Him for whatever we need in this life.

And now, in vs. 9-20, God provides a brief lesson on idolatry and the making of false gods—

44:9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.
44:10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?
44:11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.
44:12 The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, [1]fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.
44:13 Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house.
44:14 Surely, he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.
44:15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.
44:16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, “Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire.”
44:17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god.”
44:18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.
44:19 No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, “I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!”
44:20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

The bottom line here in the above verses is that false gods are worthless and the human beings who make them are fools. The physical representations of these gods are simply natural forces and aspects of the universe, which the one, true God has made! Ultimately, He controls these forces, so that the people who make images that they liken to them are just as blind and futile in the hope they place in them as they are unlikely to provide them with sustenance, happiness, and life—if God cause them to go in an unexpected and undesirable direction. For example, if God causes the earth to shake, so that an earthquake destroys an entire city, then what is the point of counting on the earth to remain stable and friendly in its relationship to us human beings. If God causes the weather to produce storms of wind and rain that destroy buildings and even people’s lives, then what is the point of thinking that we control the weather, while we refuse to submit our hearts, minds, and wills to the God of the weather.

Indeed, God reveals the foolishness of human beings by relating how, in the Ancient Near East, the idol maker would cut down a tree, and with part of it he would warm himself and cook his food by lighting it on fire. Then, the rest of the tree he would shape into an image that he called a “god,” or at least a representation of some natural force that he recognized as impinging on his life and that he feared, because it could either sustain his life or take it from him. But this kind of thinking is only foolishness. And it happens because God Himself has blinded the eyes of the maker of the idol, so that his heart and mind think and believe that the creation, not the creator, is what he needs to exist appropriately as a human being. However, this is only a lie.

And then, in verses 21-22, God reminds the nation of Israel—

44:21 “Remember these things, O Jacob,
And Israel, for you are My servant;
I have formed you, you are My servant,
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.
44:22 “I wipe out your transgressions like a thick cloud
And your sins like a heavy mist.
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

The “servant” of God here is once again “Jacob,” the people of “Israel.” And God would have his “servant” see clearly who He is and who they are. He is God, and they are human beings whom He has “formed,” so that He always keeps them in mind and will not forget them. Indeed, somehow, someway, God forgives them their sins—which we now know is through the death and resurrection of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. And this will become clear when he returns and God changes the hearts of all the remaining, living Jews who will live on the land of Israel which He promised them through Abraham.

And so, in verses 23-28, God would have the whole creation respond to Him appropriately and understand what He is going to do in history—

44:23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for Yahweh has done it!
Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth;
Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it;
For Yahweh has redeemed Jacob
And in Israel He shows forth His glory.
44:24 Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb,
“I, Yahweh, am the maker of all things,
Stretching out the heavens by Myself
And spreading out the earth all alone,
44:25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail,
Making fools out of diviners,
Causing wise men to draw back
And turning their knowledge into foolishness,
44:26 Confirming the word of His servant
And performing the purpose of His messengers.
It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited!’
And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built.’
And I will raise up her ruins again.
44:27 “It is I who says to the depth of the sea, ‘Be dried up!’
And I will make your rivers dry.
44:28 “It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd!
And he will perform all My desire.’
And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’
And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’”

God exhorts the entire creation to shout for joy, because He has redeemed and freed His people Israel from their enemies to demonstrate His glory in and through them. Plus, He is the God who has made everything in the universe, so that those who refuse to worship Him but who think that they are really wise and smart will be shown to be merely fools. The end result of this earth will be that the people of Israel will inhabit Jerusalem, which has previously been destroyed, and they will dwell on the surrounding land of Israel. And this demonstration of God’s sovereignty and power will begin with the coming king of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. It will be he after Babylon has destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C., who will decree several decades later that the Jews should return from their exile and rebuild the city and the temple.

God continues in chapter 5, verses 1-4—

Isaiah 45:1 Thus says Yahweh to Cyrus His anointed (לְמְשִׁיחוֹ),
Whom I have taken by the right hand,
To subdue nations before him
And to loose the loins of kings;
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:
45:2 “I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;
I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.
45:3 “I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden wealth of secret places,

So that you may know that it is I,
Yahweh, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.
45:4 "For the sake of Jacob My servant,
And Israel My chosen one,
I have also called you by your name;
I have given you a title of honor
Though you have not known Me.

Here also at the beginning of chapter 45, God speaks to Cyrus, king of Persia, and He even calls him "His anointed," literally His Messiah (לְמְשִׁיחוֹ), the same title that God has given to both David and Jesus as a result of the Davidic Covenant. Thus, we see that the term "Messiah" means that Cyrus is God's special instrument of history, so that he will conquer other nations and even come to know that the God of Israel is the one and only God. Plus, this is all for the sake of the Jews, Israel, who is God's "chosen one" and His "servant," just as the individual servant of Isaiah 42 is His "chosen one." God, therefore, has given Cyrus a "title of honor" even though he had not known him before God began to use him on behalf of the Jews, who were exiled and in captivity in Babylon.

Then, in verses 5-7, God presents a very profound description of Himself—

45:5 "I am Yahweh, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;
45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am Yahweh, and there is no other,
45:7 The One forming light (יוֹצֵר אוֹר) and creating darkness (וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ),
Causing well-being (עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם) and creating calamity (וּבוֹרֵא רָע);
I am Yahweh who does all these (אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל־אֵלֶּה).

Thus, as I said, we finish our consideration of Isaiah with one of the most important passages in all the Bible. We have certainly already heard God state that He is the only God and that there are no other gods, implying that anything else that exists, including all the forces of nature and the universe that affect us as human beings on this earth, has been created by Him. God is also the one who will "gird" and imbue Cyrus with the strength to fulfill the role that He will soon give him at that time. And His purpose for doing so is in order that people everywhere in the Ancient Near East (and, by extrapolation, in the rest of the world, when they become aware of what God has done through Cyrus) "know" and understand that He is Yahweh, and, again, there is no other God.

Then, in verse 7, God defines exactly who He is with respect to the creation. First, He is the "One forming light and creating darkness." The Hebrew word "forming" (יוֹצֵר) is the same that Moses used to describe what God did with Adam, that He "formed" (וַיִּיצֶר) him "of the dust of the ground" (cf. Genesis 2:7). In v. 18 of Isaiah 45, which I have not quoted, God will also state with the same word that He "formed (יָצַר) the earth." In Genesis 2, God took existing material, "the dust of the ground," and shaped it into a living man. In Isaiah 45:18, He may be saying that He took existing, created material of the universe, and shaped some of it into the earth. Or He may be saying, in line with His creating "the heavens" in Genesis 1, that He brought the earth into existence *out of nothing*.

Nevertheless, in verse 7 of Isaiah 45, God says that He <u>forms</u> light, while He also <u>creates</u> darkness. The word for create, *boray'* (בּוֹרֵא), is the same as in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created (*bara'* (בָּרָא)) the heavens and the earth." Definitely, in Genesis, Moses means that God brought the universe into reality when there was no material from which to do so. In other words, He made the creation *out of nothing*, or *ex nihilo* (Latin for "out of nothing") as theologians like to say. Consequently, in Isaiah 45:7, I think it is appropriate to conclude that God is saying, if there is either "light" or "darkness" in the creation, then they exist only because He has caused them to be there *out of nothing*. If either light or darkness (the absence of light) occurs anywhere, e.g., as light comes from our own sun, then it is God alone who causes this light (or its absence) to be exactly where it is, and He did not need something prior to it in order for Him to make it—<u>because He is dependent on nothing and no one for who He is, what He thinks,</u>

and what He does. Again, for example, He can say, "Let there be light," and all of a sudden, light occurs because He has created it. Of course, this is what it means for God to be the creator, that elements within the creation such as these, light and darkness, cannot have any other origin or source but God Himself.

But what about "well-being" and "calamity" (as the Hebrew words, *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם) and *ra'* (רָע) are translated in the NAS95)? Is God saying that He causes these by bringing them into existence literally *out of nothing*? For example, what about a "calamity," such as a thief's robbing a house, or a tyrant's army, which invades a foreign land and kills innocent people? And if we consider that the King James Version translates these two words as "peace" and "evil" respectively, were the 17th century translators in England correct, particularly in interpreting the Hebrew word *ra'* (רָע) as "evil"? Does God literally create the evil *choices* of a robber or a foreign tyrant such as Hitler, Putin, or Sinwar?

First, we note that the Hebrew verb in the NAS95 phrase "causing well-being" is *'oseh* (עֹשֶׂה), which means to make, do, or produce. The noun, as I have indicated, is *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם), which means well-being, peace, or wholesomeness. If we consider peace between neighboring countries or neighbors in a neighborhood, is God saying that He produces this kind of peace *apart from the free-will choices of the human beings*? In other words, the human beings make their choices completely independently of God, which is how we typically define free-will, but then God produces the effect, which is *shalom* and peace. Is this what God is saying in regard to both *shalom* and the "calamity" or "evil" that arises between people? Or is God declaring unequivocally that, regardless of what aspect, element, part, or thing within the creation we are talking about, He causes it to exist? And this includes the *things* of free-will human choices, because they are not independent of God?

Second, we note that the Hebrew verb in the phrase "creating calamity" is *boray'* (בּוֹרֵא), which means to bring into existence that which had not existed before and to do so *out of nothing*. It is the same word as in the previous line where God says that He is the one "creating," *boray'* (בּוֹרֵא), darkness. The noun, as I have indicated, is *ra'* (רָע), which is the plain vanilla word for evil. Again, what is God saying, that human beings make their choices, even evil choices, completely independently of Him, and then He produces the effects, which are *ra*', i.e., evil and calamitous? Or is He claiming that He causes these choices to occur just as much as He causes to exist their effects and the human beings who make these choices?

While the idea of God's creating the choices of human beings is difficult (even repugnant!) for us to believe, it nevertheless makes sense, because, by definition, the choices are *in the creation and an existential part of the creation*. And if something is in the creation and a part of the creation, then how did it get there? Did it create itself *out of nothing*? In other words, was it self-created? Or did it spontaneously or intentionally arise out of previously created material, as if this material is capable of causing something to exist without God as the ultimate creator and His making it do so? In other words, can a human being, who himself is material stuff in the creation, cause something to come into existence, specifically his choices, without the creator Himself having caused it?

I think that the only logical answer to question of what causes human beings' choices to come into existence is that they are created by the creator. This is to say, that, ultimately God causes literally every thing within the creation to be exactly where it is, including our choices. Otherwise, it does not, will not, and cannot exist. This also means that our *free-will* choices are free from the rest of the creation, but not from God. My computer is not causing me to make the *free-will* choices to type these words on the screen. Indeed, nothing else in the creation is causing me to produce this document. But God is, whether or not I am willing to understand or admit it. In addition, this means that truth is logical and rational. If it is not, then nonsense can be true, such as the fact that God can make a rock that He cannot lift, or He can make a rock that both exists and does not exist at the same time and in the same respect. What I am suggesting is that God, the Bible, and the truth we learn from the Bible are grounded in God's own rational and logical nature that He has shared with human beings, even sinful human beings, so that they can know and understand Him correctly—unless they rebel against Him and believe in nonsense, which they obviously do in many, many situations.

Therefore, I think that the NAS95 is correct in regard to the first word, "well-being," while the KJV is correct in its translation of the second word, "evil." God is saying that He is the one who causes (literally "makes" or "produces" (עֹשֶׂה)) that which is characterized by well-beingness, including the moral goodness of any individual's (or individuals') choices that brings about and accompanies it. When someone lovingly gives a glass of water to a thirsty person, it is God who is *causing*, *making*, and

producing this choice and its effects. He also is the one who "creates" (בָּוֹרֵא) *out of nothing* (so to speak) evil, including the moral evil of any individual's (or individuals') choices that bring about accompanies it and the resultant calamity. When someone maliciously withholds a glass of water from a thirsty person, it is God who is ultimately *creating* this choice and its effects—as if He were creating it *out of nothing*.

In other words, the dynamic between God and every moment of time of the creation, as it occurred in the past, as it is occurring in the present, and as it will occur in the future, is no different from the dynamic between Him and His initial act of bringing the universe into existence as stated in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created (*bara'* (בָּרָא)) the heavens and the earth." Every moment of God's continuing to create the cosmos is as if He is creating it *out of nothing*, because He does not need the existing material of the creation in order to produce the next moment of the creation. Nor is He dependent on the current universe to make the next moment of time of the universe. He needs and depends upon only Himself and His willing the creation into existence—as if it did not yet exist. This is how majestic, independent, and transcendent (outside the creation and different from the creation) God is and how completely dependent all the universe and its contents are on God at every moment of time and into eternity when the new heaven and earth of the new creation of Revelation 21 will exist.

Consequently, with these statements in Isaiah 45:5-7, God is declaring Himself to be the determiner of everything within the reality of the creation, so that nothing can existence in it unless it is truly created by God. As I have argued, this means that sinful human beings' choices, whether good or evil, cannot exist unless God causes them to do so. The theological logic of this is found in the question, "Do human beings' choices occur in the creation?" And the obvious answer is, "Yes." Then, by definition, they are created, because how could anything in the creation be other than created, except for God's causation of the creation that comes from outside the creation? And the obvious answer to this question is, "It cannot." Therefore, no rock, no tree, no snail, no shark, no human being, or any human being's choices can be in the creation unless the creator causes it to be there. This is what God is declaring in Isaiah 45:7.

Assuming the Jewish leaders and the rest of the people entering and exiting Jerusalem near Jesus' cross have learned the Hebrew Bible and such passages as these psalms and chapters of Isaiah above to the effect that the Messiah will free them of all their earthly enemies, e.g., from the Romans, and will restore the Kingdom of Israel, while also ruling the rest of the world, they think they have plenty of reason to mock Jesus as he hangs dying on the cross. They refer to the miraculous healings he has performed, while sarcastically wondering why he was able to "save" others, and yet he is not able to "save" himself from death. In their minds, his inability to *prevent* his crucifixion or to *end it* by miraculously releasing himself from the nails that pierce his hands and feet is proof that he is not the Messiah, even if it were true that he had healed others of their diseases and raised the dead. A Messiah who can "save" the Jews but not himself is no Messiah at all. If he would but demonstrate his power in the midst of his own catastrophic circumstances, they would certainly believe in him—they say.

As further evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah, they note that God has not moved a finger to rescue him from death. Surely, He would save Jesus if he were His Messiah. For example, according to Psalm 22:8, if God "delights in him" and is pleased with him, and if he, in return, truly trusts in God (as David did), then Jesus would be leading the Jews against the Romans and freeing them from their oppression—not dying on a cross. But God is not bringing about the former. Instead, Jesus is languishing on a cruel device of Roman execution, and God is not rescuing him from it. This can mean only that none of his claims is true. Therefore, for these Jewish leaders, the multitude of miracles that Jesus has performed is not sufficient proof of his Messiahship, which, for the Bible student, is clear evidence of how hardened their hearts have become.

In addition, the Jewish leaders are misunderstanding David's psalms and missing a very important point that they are either asserting explicitly or implying. By writing about his own suffering, David was saying that part of the role of the king of Israel and Son of God, whether it be himself, his son Solomon, or even eventually Jesus, the final Messiah, king, and Son of God, is to be rejected and mistreated by God's enemies and his enemies, even by those who are unbelieving members of the nation of Israel. Certainly, most of the passages in the prophetic books of Isaiah through Malachi about the final Messiah speak of his conquering his enemies and ruling the Jewish people as the most powerful nation on earth. But there are a few places in the Old Testament, such as David's psalms of his own difficult experiences, Isaiah 53, and Zechariah 12, that teach that the last and victorious king of Israel will have to die before he reigns over his kingdom on the land of Israel and throughout the rest of the earth.

The logic holds true for followers of Jesus, what Soren Kierkegaard basically calls the situation of contemporaneity and that the apostle Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who resolve to live in a worshipful fashion in regard to the Messiah Jesus will be persecuted.” Until Jesus returns and God changes the hearts of all the Jews who will live on the land of Israel during the restored Kingdom of David, most human beings in the world will oppose God, the Bible, and His truth. Therefore, just as Jesus experienced the same kind of mistreatment that David encountered, his followers will always experience the same kind of mistreatment that both David and Jesus encountered. In his writings, Soren Kierkegaard described this as a situation of contemporaneity, because Christians find themselves being mistreated by unbelievers as if they were living *at the same time as Jesus* and facing the hostility of those who opposed him and eventually put him to death. But we also see that Christians find themselves being mistreated as if they were living *at the same time as David*, who wrote about his experiences in the psalms a thousand years before Jesus appeared. Therefore, our situation of contemporaneity, i.e., our experience that in metaphorically occurs in the same time period, is as if we are living when both David and Jesus lived. But this is simply the way God has designed reality to be for David, Jesus, and Christians—that, for the most part, the world remains hostile and opposed to God and the biblical truth until Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.

We also saw that the people “passing by” were mocking Jesus for his supposed claim that he would destroy the Jerusalem temple and then rebuild it in three days. Of course, Jesus had made no such assertion. It is only that a number of people have misunderstood a cryptic prediction of his death and resurrection that he had made during his first visit to Jerusalem at the end of John 2. These individuals are insisting, like the Jewish leadership, that Jesus prove his ability to perform such a feat by saving himself from the cross.

Then Luke alone provides one more detail,

> Luke 23:36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up to him, offering him sour wine, 23:37 and saying, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

In this verse, the Roman soldiers, who have crucified Jesus and are standing watch, while awaiting his death, also join the circus of mocking him. And as they offer him sour wine, possibly to ease his pain (or cruelly to prolong his suffering by keeping the pain from reducing his strength and killing him), they continue their own taunts and challenge him to demonstrate to them that he is the King of the Jews by rescuing himself from the cross. Finally, at the end his description of this portion of the events, Luke adds what Matthew, Mark, and John have already stated in the previous subsection,

> Luke 23:38 And there was an inscription above him, “This is the king of the Jews.”

s. The Two Bandits Interact With Jesus

Wednesday sometime between 9 a.m. and 12 noon

Matthew 27:44	Mark 15:32b	Luke 23:39-43	John
27:44 And the bandits who were crucified with him were also insulting him in the same way.	15:32b And those who were crucified with him were also insulting him.	23:39 One of the criminals who was hanged was verbally abusing him, saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” 23:40 But the other responded, and rebuking him he said, “Do you not fear God, because you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 23:41	No parallel in John

		Indeed, we are being punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." 23:42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." 23:43 And he said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."	

Explanation of the Above Passages

We see that Matthew and Mark write just one verse to summarize this scene, while Luke begins his account with several verses,

Matthew 27:44 And the bandits who were crucified with him were also insulting him in the same way.

Mark 15:32b And those who were crucified with him were also insulting him.

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who was hanged was verbally abusing him, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us."
23:40 But the other responded, and rebuking him he said, "Do you not fear God, because you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 23:41 Indeed, we are being punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong."

It does appear as though Matthew and Mark are contradicting Luke. Matthew and Mark state clearly and unequivocally that "the bandits who were crucified" with Jesus "were also insulting him." Mark says only this, but Matthew adds, "in the same way," which is to say, as the rest of the people were. But Luke seems to be indicating the exact opposite, that "one of the criminals…was verbally abusing" Jesus, while the other rebuked the first and declares that Jesus is innocent and that they are guilty and worthy of death by crucifixion.

We could conclude that Matthew and Mark attribute verbal abuse of Jesus by both criminals in order to say very briefly (and rather unclearly, like other storytellers) that only one of them was actually guilty of this offense towards him as the Messiah. Or we could conclude that Matthew and Mark describe what both these men do *initially*, mocking Jesus (and this is all they want to say about them), so that Luke provides another important detail, that, sometime during the three-hour period when the men are waiting to die on their crosses, *one of them* has a change of heart, literally (by the Spirit of God), and comes to his senses. He then chastises the other criminal for not revering God and not realizing that the two of them deserve their punishment, while Jesus is innocent and being punished unjustly. I think that this second option makes more sense in that Luke describes another miracle of God, the changing of this criminal's heart as he is in the process of dying on a cross right next to the Messiah.

According to Luke, the first man says to Jesus, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." Does this criminal sound as though he believes that Jesus is who he has claimed to be, the Messiah and king of Israel? Indeed, it does, but what kind of belief is this? It cannot be authentic, because we should consider how the second man responds to him," "Do you not fear God, because you are under the same sentence of condemnation? Indeed, we are being punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we did. But his man has done nothing wrong."

This second criminal is accurately viewing God, his own inward, sinful condition and choices, and the appropriate consequences of his actions. Indeed, there is a humility about him that the first man lacks altogether. He says that the two of them are "under the same condemnation" as Jesus. Pilate condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion. More than likely he himself did the same to these two men. And the second criminal acknowledges that their crimes were egregious enough that they deserve to be executed, even punished by means of crucifixion. In other words, these are two bad men.

But the second one easily concludes and explicitly declares that Jesus is perfectly innocent, "But this man has done nothing wrong." We are not told how the criminal has come by this knowledge and insight. Perhaps, as both criminals were carrying their crossbeams close by Jesus (as Luke informed us two subsections ago), they watched the women who were grieving as they followed him and they heard Jesus' warning to them as "Daughters of Jerusalem." And, based upon what we know from the rest of the Bible, God eventually worked in the second man's heart and mind and led him to acknowledge his sin and to realize that Jesus was speaking the truth to the women of his role as the "green tree" and Messiah.

Luke continues,

Luke 23:42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."

Here, we find out that the second criminal has acquired enough information about Jesus and Old Testament theology that he turns from the other man to him and, in the midst of Jesus' death and his own death, requests that he be a member of Jesus' future "kingdom." The criminal's insight into this whole situation is such that he realizes that Jesus' death on the cross will not prevent him from bringing about his "kingdom," by which he probably means the actual Kingdom of God as predicted in the Old Testament. In fact, he may have a small but foundational understanding that Jesus' death is the very basis and means by which he will acquire the Kingdom of God. As a result, this man, this criminal, who has committed such a heinous crime (or heinous crimes) that he deserves to be executed by the Romans, may very well be the first sinner among his fellow Jews who <u>fully</u> understands that the Messiah must die in order to qualify to be the king of Israel (and rescue sinful Jews like himself from *God's* condemnation). And he also realizes that after Jesus' death (and resurrection, for how can Jesus "come in [his] kingdom" if he is not alive again!), he will return and bring about the Kingdom of God. In this way, he is making a genuine appeal to Jesus to be granted mercy and to participate in his kingdom in spite of his own sins and worthiness of death.

And then Luke writes his last sentence of this subsection,

Luke 23:43 And he said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus' response is gracious and hopeful to this second man, that "today [he] will be with [him] in paradise." There are two somewhat difficult words in his response. The first is "today," the Greek word σήμερον (*saymeron*), because not even Jesus will be available "today" to be with this man after the two of them die on their respective crosses. Indeed, both of them will die "today," and Jesus will be dead for three days, while the other man will remain dead until the first resurrection as described by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14,

1 Thessalonians 4:13 On another subject, we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, so that you do not grieve as do, indeed, the rest who have no hope. 4:14 Because we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, it is just as certain that God also will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

Paul also makes it explicit in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23,

15:20 Indeed, the Messiah <u>was</u> raised from the dead—the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. 15:21 For since death is through a man, indeed resurrection from the dead is through a man. 15:22 For just as all men die in Adam, thus also all men will be made alive in the Messiah, 15:23 and each in his own turn—the first fruits, i.e., the Messiah, then those who belong to the Messiah at his grand appearance.

In these two passages, Paul is saying that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, He will do likewise those who have been authentic believers in history. And the latter will come back to life when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. I think that this is what John is describing in the vision of Revelation 20:4-6,

> Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and rule [of the earth!] was given to them. And I saw the existences of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And **they came to life** and reigned with the Messiah for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead **did not come to life** until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of the Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years. [emphasis mine]

Consequently, when God resurrects authentic believers from the dead when Jesus returns, their coming to life will seem as though it is the same day as their death. As far as they will know *consciously*, it will definitely be "today," i.e., the day of their deaths, so that this criminal and all other sinful *believers* throughout all human history will be resurrected and accompany Jesus at his return.

The second difficult word to interpret in Jesus' statement is "paradise," which is an old Persian word that means a park or garden that is characterized by unparalleled beauty. How did this word end up in the Greek and Hebrew languages, so that Jesus uses it in his statement to the bandit on the cross next to him? Part of the answer comes from what we learned in the Isaiah passages above, chapters 41-42, and 44-45, that the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. This obviously was his introduction to the Jewish residents of the city of Babylon, who had been taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar around 600 B.C. when he destroyed the southern Kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem. The Jews most likely taught him about Yahweh, the one true God of the Israelites, and, according to Isaiah, He moved Cyrus to release the Jews from their exile, so that most of them returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt both the city and its temple. We also know from the book of Esther that Jews ended up in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire, because this story took place during the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus in the Hebrew text) about seventy years after Cyrus. Therefore, I think that we can conclude that the Jews were exposed to the Persian word for a place of incomparable beauty, but they also incorporated it into their own language, so that it became פַּרְדֵּס (*pardays*) in Hebrew and then παράδεισος (*paradeisos*) in Greek.

The latter term became additionally important because Alexander the Great swept through the Ancient Near East about two hundred and fifty years after Cyrus, around 300 B.C., and even conquered the Persian Empire. The culture which Alexander and his soldiers brought with them became so attractive to the Jews that some of them actually stopped speaking Hebrew (and Aramaic) and started speaking only Greek. But their religious, Jewish colleagues did these monolingual, Greek-speaking Jews a great favor and, around 270 B.C., translated the Hebrew scriptures, our Old Testament, from Hebrew into Greek. For example, in Genesis 2:8, they used the Greek word παράδεισος (*paradeisos*) for the Hebrew word גַּן (*gan*), meaning "garden",

> Genesis 2:8 And Yahweh God planted a garden (גַּן, *gan*) (παράδεισος, *paradeisos*) toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

The Greek translation by these men soon after Alexander's presence in the area of Persia and Israel has been called the Septuagint (from the Latin *septuaginta*, meaning seventy), because, by tradition, it is believed that seventy-two Jewish scholars accomplished this work in Alexandria, Egypt. Consequently, we should not be surprised that both the Hebrew word פַּרְדֵּס (*pardays*) and the Greek word παράδεισος (*paradeisos*) appear in Nehemiah 2:8, which was probably written just before 400 B.C. and was influenced by the Jews' adopting Persian terminology and the Greek language— s and the word *paradeisos* appears in at least three other verses of it, Song of Solomon 4:13, Ecclesiastes 2:5, and Nehemiah 2:8, which I provide below—

Nehemiah 2:7 And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah 2:8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest (שֹׁמֵר הַפַּרְדֵּס אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ, *shomayr happardays 'asher lammlek*) (φύλακα τοῦ παραδείσου ὅς ἐστιν τῷ βασιλεῖ, *phulaka tou paradeisou hos estin to basilei*), that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

However, it is surprising that Solomon, who ruled Israel from 968-928 B.C. and was the author of the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, three hundred years before Cyrus conquered Babylon and Israel, used the Hebrew word פַּרְדֵּס (*pardays*) that had been derived from the Persian word for garden. We see this below in So of Solomon 4:13 and Ecclesiastes 2:5—

Song of Solomon 4:13 "Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates (פַּרְדֵּס רִמּוֹנִים, *pardays rimoneem*) (παράδεισος ῥοῶν, *paradeisos hro on*) with choice fruits, henna with nard plants."

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks (גַּנּוֹת וּפַרְדֵּסִים, *gannoth oophardayseem*) (κήπους καὶ παραδείσους, *kaypous kai paradeisous*) for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

I think that best explanation for the appearance of these two words in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles of the Old Testament is that Solomon (and probably his father, David, before him) became such powerful rulers in the Ancient Near East that they engaged in international trade with not only Mesopotamians (call them Babylonians) to the north and Egyptians to the south, but also with Persians east of Mesopotamia. When Solomon learned the Persian word for incomparable garden and park, he adopted it and incorporated it into his own writing. And, of course, when the translators of the Septuagint encountered this word in their Hebrew texts, they naturally translated it with the same word, παράδεισος (*paradeisos*), that they used in Genesis 2:8 and Nehemiah 2:8.

Therefore, we can say that Jesus uses a word, "paradise," that was Persian but had been in use in the Jewish culture for over nine hundred years. Plus, the Jews eventually adopted this word to refer not only to a garden or orchard, but also to the Kingdom of God as it will exist when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his descendants, the nation of Israel, a "great nation," i.e., the most powerful nation in human history during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. As a result, Jesus is telling this new believer, the bandit on the cross next to him, that it will seem like only the blink of an eye before he is with him in the Kingdom of God when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on earth. And this, of course, will also lead to his participating in Jesus' eternal kingdom of the new earth of Revelation 21.[97]

t. Jesus Dies on the Cross and Various People Respond Immediately

Wednesday from about 12 noon to 3 p.m.

Matthew 27:45-54	Mark 15:33-39	Luke 23:44-48	John 19:28-30
27:45 And from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* <cf. Psalm 22:1>?" This means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"	15:33 When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. 15:34 And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* <cf. Psalm 22:1>?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"	23:44 It was already about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 23:45 because the sun was obscured. And the veil of the temple was torn in two. 23:46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I	19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had been accomplished, so that the scripture could be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." 19:29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. Therefore, they put a sponge full of sour wine on a branch of hyssop, and they

27:47 And some of those standing there, when they heard him, were saying, “He is calling for Elijah.” 27:48 And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and he gave him a drink. 27:49 But the rest of them were saying, “Let us see if Elijah comes and saves him.” 27:50 Then Jesus again cried out with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. 27:51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 27:52 In addition, the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the ones who were set apart and had fallen asleep were raised, 27:53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the sacred city and appeared to many. 27:54 Now the centurion and those who were keeping guard over Jesus with him, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.”	15:35 When some of the bystanders heard him, they were saying, “Behold, he is calling for Elijah.” 15:36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a staff, and gave him a drink, saying, “Hold on. Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.” 15:37 And Jesus let out a loud cry and died. 15:38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 15:39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of him, saw the manner in which he died, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”	commend my spirit <Psalm 31:5>.” And having said this, he died. 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he was glorifying God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.” 23:48 And all the crowds who had come together for this spectacle, when they observed these things that happened, they were returning, beating their chests.	brought it up to his mouth. 19:30 When he received the sour wine, Jesus said, “It is finished.” And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Explanation of the Above Passages

We have finally reached in this document the second of the five most important events in human history, which are:

1) Jesus' birth
2) Jesus' death
3) Jesus' resurrection
4) Jesus' ascension
5) Jesus' return

Matthew, Mark, and Luke begin their description of Jesus' death as follows—

Matthew 27:45 And from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

Mark 15:33 When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Luke 23:44 It was already about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 23:45a because the sun was obscured.

All three accounts indicate that it is about "the sixth hour," which would be six hours past 6 a.m. and therefore 12 noon. At this time, "darkness fell over the whole land," and Luke tells his readers that this was "because the sun was obscured." Exactly how it became shrouded and concealed we are not told. We get our word eclipse from the Greek verb used for "obscured" (ἐκλείπω, *eklaipo*, which means to fail, give out, die out). Could this darkness have happened because the moon is hiding the sun? Or was there a dust storm that came over Jerusalem from the eastern desert during the full moon of the Passover? We are not told exactly, but certainly, something supernatural is occurring. And it is not clear how far is the extent of the "whole land" where the darkness is occurring. But it involves at least Jerusalem and the surrounding area where the Jews are celebrating the feast of Passover in the city.

Two passages in the Old Testament, Exodus 10:21-22 and Amos 8:7-10, mention the same kind of phenomenon—

Exodus 10:21 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt."
10:22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.

Amos 8:7 Yahweh has sworn according to the pride of Jacob, "I will never forget all their actions. 8:8 Because of this, will not the land quake, and will not all those who dwell on it mourn? All of it will rise up like the Nile, and it will be tossed about and sink like the Nile of Egypt."
8:9 "And it will happen in that day," declares Adonai Yahweh, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will cause it to be dark on the land in the day of light. 8:10 I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentations. And I will cause sackcloth on everyone's loins and baldness on every head. I will establish it like mourning for an only son, and its end will be like a bitter day."

In the first passage, around 1500 B.C., God is producing the ninth of ten plagues on Egypt before Pharaoh relents and allows the Israelites to leave Egypt and travel into the wilderness of Sinai under the leadership of Moses. The tenth plague, when the angel of death kills the firstborn son in each Egyptian family, will finally convince Pharaoh to let the people go. But during the ninth plague and wherever they lived, the Egyptians had no light for three days, while the Israelites in the land of Goshen, the eastern part of the Nile delta northeast of modern-day Cairo and above the Gulf of Suez, had plenty of light to carry on their lives normally. Again, how did God cause the darkness to occur? We are not told, but it was obviously a miraculous and supernatural event in that He literally allowed no sunlight to reach one area of Egypt while another area where the Israelites lived enjoyed three normal days. This plague, like all the others, was a clear sign that the God of Israel was, is, and always will be in control of all circumstances and events, including the weather (!), within the created reality.

In the second passage (and in all of chapter 8 of Amos), around 750 B.C., God is predicting that He will eventually judge the northern Kingdom of Israel and upend the Jews' lives of merriment and celebration that they are enjoying in the midst of disobeying Him and the Mosaic Covenant. He will cause both an earthquake and the concealing of the sun during the day, so that the people's emotions suddenly change from joy to sadness and grief. It is possible, and I think most likely, that God is speaking metaphorically about the natural phenomena, so that they really refer to the invasion of the Assyrians, who will destroy the Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and lead the remaining people into exile. Some of them will return many, many years later, but most of them will never return. It is also possible that, in this passage, God is pointing to His final acts of judgment and discipline of the Jews after they have rejected Jesus as their Messiah and immediately before his return. But I think the clues in Amos 8 point to God's speaking of the Jews and the Assyrians in the 8th century B.C., while His judgment of His people will be similar during the period of time between Jesus' first and second appearances and harshest just before Jesus returns. In either case, as in the situation with Pharaoh in Egypt, God is revealing both His sovereignty and His justice.

Thus, similar to the events described in Exodus and Amos, God creates three hours of darkness, from 12 noon to 3 p.m., as Jesus progressively succumbs to his mortality and death on the cross. His own people, the nation of Israel and especially the religious leaders, have rejected him as their Messiah and consider him a criminal and disobedient to the Mosaic Covenant, so that he is deserving of death. As a result, they have persuaded the Roman government to execute him by crucifixion. But God is still in control of all created reality and, by means of the darkening sky and similar to His purpose in Egypt in Exodus 10 and in Israel in Amos 8, is revealing His displeasure. This time it is in regard to Israel's mistreatment of His Messiah.

Matthew, Mark, and John continue their accounts of the story—

Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* <Psalm 22:1>?" This means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"
27:47 And some of those standing there, when they heard him, were saying, "He is calling for Elijah."
27:48 And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and he gave him a drink. 27:49 But the rest of them were saying, "Let us see if Elijah comes and saves him."

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* <Psalm 22:1>?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"
15:35 When some of the bystanders heard him, they were saying, "Behold, he is calling for Elijah."
15:36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave him a drink, saying, "Hold on. Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down."

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had been accomplished, so that the scripture could be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty."
19:29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. Therefore, they put a sponge full of sour wine on a branch of hyssop, and they brought it up to his mouth.

Matthew and Mark tell us that it is "the ninth hour," which would be 3 p.m. in the afternoon. And all of a sudden, Jesus cries out "with a loud voice" and speaks the first words of Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Matthew says that he quotes them as, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* (*ηλι ηλι λεμα σαβαχθανι*)?" Mark's first two words are, "*Eloi, Eloi*… (*ελωι ελωι*)." Both expressions mean the same thing, "My God, my God," that Jesus is crying out to his God and to our God and is expressing a sense of abandonment and being forsaken by Him. Matthew's words, "Eli, Eli…"

The Hebrew text of the first line of Psalm 22:1 is, אֵלִ֣י אֵלִ֣י לָמָ֣ה עֲזַבְתָּ֑נִי, which is pronounced "*Eli, Eli, lama 'azavtani*," where the verb *'azav* (עזב) means to forsake or abandon. Matthew's words, "*Eli*, *Eli*…" are a direct transliteration of the Hebrew, "My God, my God…," while Marks words, "*Eloi*, *Eloi*…" are the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew. But we see that both Matthew and Mark quote Jesus as using the Aramaic verb *shavaq* (שבק), when he says, "*sabachthani* (*σαβαχθανι*)." Therefore, they both transliterate the Aramaic into Greek with the letters *σαβαχ*, which we can transliterate into English with the letters *sabaq* (or *sabak*) so that the first letter is a simple "s" (because Greek does not have a "sh" sound) and

the last letter is a “q” (or “k”) sound. While the Old Testament uses the Hebrew *‘azav* (עזב) in 204 verses, the Aramaic verb *shavaq* (שׁבק) with the same meaning of leave, forsake, or abandon is found in only 5 verses, four of which are in the book of Daniel. For example, the Aramaic of Daniel 2:44 can be translated into English as—

> Daniel 2:44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be abandoned (תִּשְׁתְּבֻק, *tishteviq*) to another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

In this passage, Daniel is interpreting a dream that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had around 600 B.C. regarding a statue of a man that symbolizes five kingdoms—first King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire, then Cyrus the Great and the Persian Empire, then Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire, then the Islamic Caliphate of the entrenchment of Islam in the Middle East, and finally the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus the Messiah when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and rules over the rest of the world. In v. 44 above, Daniel is saying that, “in the days” of the Islamic rulers, God will establish His kingdom, the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus, when he returns. Daniel also states that this fifth and final “kingdom will not be abandoned” (forsaken, left) to any other group of people who will conquer it and take it over. Instead, the Kingdom of God “will crush and put an end to all these” other kingdoms,” because “it will itself endure forever.”

The word “forever” is the Aramaic לְעָלְמַיָּא (*le ‘almayya’*), which is synonymous with the Hebrew לְעֹלָם (*le ‘olam*), which I like to translate “into the distant future,” i.e., into the future for a time but not necessarily eternally because it may come to an end. This is to say that something will exist for as long as God wants it to exist, and it could be forever and eternally, or it could be only for a long, long time, and then it comes to an end. For example, in the case of the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus on this earth, we know from Revelation 20 that it will exist “until the thousand years [are] completed” of what we can call the “millennial kingdom,” with Jesus’ ruling over the Jews on the land of Israel and over the Gentiles in the rest of the world. But then God will destroy this earth and the Messianic Kingdom on this earth, after which He will create an entire new and eternal universe in accordance with Revelation 21. It will be on the eternal earth of this new universe that both believing Jews and Gentiles will live forever with Jesus’ ruling over them there.

All this is to say that Jesus uses the Aramaic *shavaq* (שׁבק) to quote the Hebrew verb *‘azav* (עזב) in Psalm 22:1, most likely because the Jewish people of his day spoke Aramaic as their everyday language instead of Hebrew. The difference is similar to American English in comparison to British English. Therefore, and with everyone around him knowing what he means, Jesus probably spoke the colloquial Aramaic of Mark’s rendition, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*,” while Matthew’s words of a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*,” have the same meaning. Clearly, Jesus is crying out to God the Father and claiming that He is abandoning, forsaking, and leaving him as he dies. But what exactly does he mean by this? How is God the Father abandoning and leaving Jesus, the very icon of God in the story of human history, as he is in the midst of dying?

First, we should note, as I have explained in a previous sub-section, that David wrote Psalm 22 about his own anguish and sadness in the face of attacks by his enemies and the effects they are having on him. While he extols God for His greatness, goodness, and faithfulness to His promises, including the fact that someday all the nations will worship Him, David nevertheless feels abandoned by God in the midst of being mistreated by his enemies. This is to say that he understands that God will eventually grant him a life of complete and eternal *shalom*, but at the moment his experience is the exact opposite, which feels to him as though God has rejected and abandoned him. Nevertheless, he knows that God is still with him and will see him through this difficult time, so that he not only survives it, but also eventually triumph over his enemies.

Therefore, if we think of Jesus during his moment of great suffering and dying in the light of David’s thoughts, words, and situation which he is describing in Psalm 22, we can only imagine what it would be like to be nailed to a cross through our hands and feet, hang there for six hours in great pain, and, in our last minutes as we struggle to breathe, finally die. Yes, Jesus was the morally perfect icon of the invisible God (as the apostle Paul calls him in Colossians 1:15), but as such he was as fully human as we are and therefore subject to all the elements of this sinful and pain-filled reality that impinges on our lives and prevents us from being able to go through life carefree. As Paul also says in Hebrews 2:10 and 4:15—

Hebrews 2:10 “It was appropriate for [God], on account of whom everything exists and in light of whom everything exists, while leading many sons to glory, to cause [Jesus], the leader of their salvation, to reach his goal through sufferings [as a real human being].”

Hebrews 4:15 “Certainly, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but [Jesus] has been tested [as a real human being] in all things similarly without sin.”

Consequently, I think that we can interpret Jesus as referring to his human existence where, like David in Psalm 22, he is crying out to God the Father where he is experiencing a sense of abandonment by Him. God had not only kept Jesus alive during all his previous years on earth, but He had also kept him out of danger and away from the clutches of his enemies, the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin, who included the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and elders of Israel. However, for the last eighteen hours, and especially the last six hours, with the nails through his hands and feet, Jesus has been enduring danger, pain, mistreatment, and suffering that are as extreme as a human being could encounter in the 1st century Roman Empire.

And while he knew that this was exactly what God the Father had predestined for him to undergo as the Messiah, it still must have felt as though He was abandoning him into the hands of his enemies—when, as even in David’s case which he describes in Psalm 22, theoretically it could have been otherwise. Plus, Jesus knows that the outcome will be God’s continuing to use him as the key part of the creation for bringing about the restored Kingdom of Israel for the Jews and the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth, which He will create as described in Revelation 21. Therefore, is God really abandoning Jesus? Absolutely not. But, similar to David’s situation, it certainly feels as though He is.

And then some of those who are standing near the cross respond to Jesus’ words, “Behold, he is calling for Elijah?” Why would they think that this is what Jesus means when the words are clear, that he is saying “My God” by either the Hebrew word “*Eli*” (אֵלִי) or the Aramaic word “*Eloi*” (אֱלוֹהִי), along with “Why have you abandoned me?” when he shouts, “*lama shavaqthani*” (לָמָה שְׁבַקְתָּנִי)? My guess is that, even though Jesus is speaking loudly, in his weakened condition his voice is quite distorted, making it difficult to understand exactly what he is saying. The people probably think that all he can say are the first two syllables of Elijah’s name and, since he is a false Messiah, the best he can do is try to summon help from a prophet who did not himself die but who was lifted from the earth supernaturally when his work had finished, as described in 2 Kings 2:1-12 and which we will consider more carefully in a few moments.

Malachi 4:5-6 probably also figures into the people’s conclusion that Jesus is calling out for Elijah. These are the last two verses of the Old Testament, where God says to the Jews—

Malachi 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh.
6 He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

The Jews surrounding Jesus’ cross could very easily be thinking that this would be the perfect time for Elijah to appear and fulfill his mission of the last days, including rescuing Jesus from the cross, if he really is the Messiah, as Matthew and Mark indicate—

Matthew 27:49 But the rest of them were saying, “Let us see if Elijah comes and saves him.”

Mark 15:36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave him a drink, saying, “Hold on. Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

But, obviously, the Jewish leadership have misunderstood Jesus and wrongly accused him of being a criminal. Therefore, the people are probably thinking of two things that Elijah could accomplish in this situation—if the Sanhedrin happen to be wrong. First, Elijah could convince all the Jews that God is restoring the Davidic Kingdom (by His changing their hearts and they become genuinely loving towards both God and one another). Secondly, he could correctly identify Jesus as the rightful king of Israel and

free him from the cross, so that he will help the Messiah to rescue them from the distress of living under the foreign authority of the Romans. Is this, in the people's minds, why Jesus is appealing to Elijah?[98]

John provides a detail that helps make sense of what Matthew and Mark say about the people's response regarding Elijah. After instructing the apostle John to care for his mother in the future, and probably after crying out to God with what were certainly close to his final breaths, Jesus knows "that all things had been accomplished" which the Father had required that he do "so that the scripture could be fulfilled." Indeed, we have briefly explored how the Old Testament prophets and David in his psalms predicted Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return as the Messiah to establish the Kingdom of God. Then, Jesus says in John 19:28, "I am thirsty," and this must have been as clear as a bell to all those who heard it. John adds that "a jar full of sour wine was standing there. Therefore, they put a sponge full of sour wine on a branch of hyssop, and they brought it up to his mouth." This is probably the same sour wine that the Roman soldiers had offered Jesus when they were mocking him immediately after they had nailed him to the cross and set it up in its place, so that it was typical to have the wine available as an aid to dull the pain of those who suffered such a harsh execution.

We notice that Matthew and Mark indicate that "one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and he gave him a drink." John uses the plural "they," so that the combination of Matthew, Mark, and John leads me to conclude that a crowd of people heard Jesus as though he was calling for Elijah. As a result, after he also says that he is thirsty, one of them provides him with a taste of the nearby sour wine to help him in the midst of his pain. And, according to Mark, this person says, "Hold on. Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down" (cf. Mark 15:36). In other words, the man who gives him the sour wine may not be acting so much out of compassion, but instead out of malice, if his heart is as stubborn as the leaders' hearts, because he is hoping to keep Jesus alive long enough to see if Elijah will come and rescue him from the cross.

Also, the little sour wine that the man offers Jesus is certainly not going to quench his thirst. Water would, but not this concoction, which will only dull his senses and the pain, while also prolonging the agony of his death. As I said, this may have been the person's intention who provided it to Jesus—to give Elijah a little extra time to appear. Thus, it is doubtful that Jesus drank very much from the sponge. Indeed, he may have seen this gesture of giving him something to dull his senses as the last act of mockery he would endure from the Jews (and from the soldiers).

The gospels are then quite brief about the next moment—

Matthew 27:50 Then Jesus again cried out with a loud voice and gave up his spirit.
27:51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Mark 15:37 And Jesus let out a loud cry and died.
15:38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Luke 23:45b And the veil of the temple was torn in two.
23:46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit <Psalm 31:5>." And having said this, he died.

John 19:30 When he received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is finished." And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Matthew and Mark quickly state that once again Jesus "cried out with a loud voice," and then he "gave up his spirit" and "died." Luke says first that the curtain which was hanging in the temple of Jerusalem between the outer room and the most sacred inner room that should have housed the ark of the covenant, which disappeared after the Babylonian invasion in 586 B.C., "was torn in two." And Matthew and Mark state that the tear was "from top to bottom." Consequently, we can imagine this curtain of cloth being split into two parts with a vertical tear that allows the inner room to be revealed from the outer one. In this way, God miraculously demonstrated that the place of atonement, appeasing His anger, and forgiveness of sins, where, according to the Mosaic Covenant and Leviticus 16, the high priest would enter once a year to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the ark of the covenant, was now, always had been, and always will be the person of Jesus as both sacrifice and high priest.

The apostle Paul explains this in great detail in his letter of Hebrews in order to convince his Jewish readers not to give up their belief in Jesus as the very human and crucified Messiah, who qualified by his death to intercede before God on their behalf in the light of the uselessness of the sacrifice of bulls and goats in the temple. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant was always intended to point the people of Israel towards the sacrifice and leadership of the coming Messiah. And now it was happening right in front of their eyes—but they could not and would not see it (yet!). Nevertheless, God will move them inwardly to embrace Jesus as their Messiah, king, and high priest when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel.

Matthew also says that "the earth shook, and the rocks were split." There was a sudden earthquake in Jerusalem so that even large rocks in the surrounding area split in two. Of course, God is adding to the drama of this event, the death of the Messiah and Son of God, for His purposes to showcase the forgiveness of sins for His chosen, ethnic people, the Jews (and the Gentiles), and to continue the process of His fulfilling the first promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 to shape his physical, Jewish descendants into the most powerful nation in all human history. And Matthew will provide another dramatic detail in this regard in a moment.

Luke then takes the time to inform his readers of one part of Jesus' cry to God, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Greek text here is the exact same words as in the Septuagint translation of Psalm 31:5, where, once again, David is expressing both his distress in his current circumstances and his trust in God to rescue him from them. The Hebrew word *ruach* (רוּחַ) and the Greek translation *pneuma* (πνεῦμά), meaning "spirit," refer to the plan of God for what David's life and death (and, by extrapolation, Jesus' life and death) are going to be like. David is commending God's plan for him to Him, and he is confident that God, through the activity of His "hands" within the creation, will save his life from his enemies. In Jesus' case, he is confident that God, through the work of His "hands" within the creation, will not cause his death by his enemies to destroy him forever. Instead, God will resurrect him in three days and provide him with a new and immortal existence as Israel's king and high priest.

Then, Luke finishes his explanation like Matthew and Mark, "And having said this, he died." John only indicates that "when he received the sour wine, Jesus said, 'It is finished,'" which is either John's way of summarizing Luke's words which Jesus spoke or his providing three words which he spoke in addition to those recorded in Luke. My guess is that it is the latter, that Jesus said, "It is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And John then says that Jesus "bowed his head and gave up his spirit." With this final moment of Jesus' life, the first part of his existence as a living but mortal human being ends, and the next and eternal part will begin in three days when God raises him from the dead and transforms him into a living and immortal human being. Thus, Jesus' life of thirty or so years, when he boldly and lovingly obeyed God at every moment, taught the people of Israel about the coming Kingdom of God and himself as its Messiah and king, healed people's diseases and infirmities, and enjoyed close relationships with his family and disciples, now concludes with death by crucifixion, so that he passes out of existence for three days while his body lies in a tomb. Fortunately, the pain, both psychological and physical, of the last twenty-four hours, and especially of the last six hours, is finally gone.

Before we finish this sub-section, I realize that my suggesting that Jesus passes out of existence when he dies is different from how people interpret at least two passages, Ephesians 4:1-12, especially vs. 7-10, and 1 Peter 3:8-22, especially vs. 19 & 20. There are a variety of interpretations of what Paul and Peter are saying in these passages, but one popular belief derived from them is that, after Jesus died and was buried, he was still alive as God, i.e., the Son of God and 2nd person of the Trinity, while his human body was dead in the tomb for three days, so that he descended into hell and the spirit world to accomplish two goals. First, he confronted both rebellious human beings, who died during the time of Noah (and, by extrapolation, during any other time in the past), and rebellious angels, who lived during the same time (and other times), to tell them that their eternal punishment was now certain because of his death on the cross. Second, he led former Old Testament believers, who had died, out of their temporary location and into their permanent and eternal home of heaven in the presence of God.

Let us first consider my translation of Ephesians 4:1-13 and especially vs. 7-10, which are in bold text—

> Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner because of the Lord, encourage you to live in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, as you bear with one another with patience. With love 4:3 labor to preserve the unity of the Spirit by means of the mutual bond of *shalom*. 4:4 There is one body and one spirit, just as you were indeed called

because of the one hope of your calling. 4:5 There is one Lord, one belief, one baptism, 4:6 one God and the Father of all, who is over all, throughout all, and in all.

4:7 And grace was given to each one of us in accordance with the measure of the Messiah's gift. 4:8 Therefore, it says,

Having ascended on high, He led captive the captives. He gave gifts in the manner of men <Ps. 68:18 almost>.

4:9 What does it mean that He "ascended" except that He descended into the lower regions of the earth? 4:10 He who descends is also he who ascends far above all of the heavens, in order that he fill out the all.

4:11 And He gave on the one hand apostles, and on the other hand prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers 4:12 for the equipping of those who have been set apart for the work of service, for the building up of the Messiah's body, 4:13 until we all arrive at the unity of belief in and understanding of the Son of God, to be the man who has completed his goal (*telos*) (εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον), to the measure of the extent of the Messiah's fullness.

In vs. 1-6, the apostle Paul begins the larger section of chapters 4-6 and urges his Ephesian readers to conduct their lives in a way that is commensurate with what God has done for them. He has called them to be unified in their understanding of Him, in their belief in Him and Jesus as the Messiah, and in their moral behavior. This means that God through Paul is instructing them to be humble, kind, gentle, patient, and loving towards one another as both an internal and external way to make obvious that they are on the same page as God, who is carrying out His eternal plans and purposes within the creation which He has made.

In v. 7, Paul states that God has expressed Himself towards "each one of us" individuals, by which he means every Ephesian Christian and himself (and all Christians by extrapolation), by giving "us" His "grace," which is His sovereign, committed, unfailing, unstoppable, and eternally beneficial activity to rescue sinful human beings from His justice and condemnation. He also says that this "grace" and unending kindness to sinners from God is of the same quantity and quality as the "Messiah's gift." But what is the "Messiah's gift?" Paul goes on to define it first by quoting Psalm 68:18, but with a slight change—that God gave gifts to Himself, which are men, rather than His receiving these gifts of men.

In the psalm, David is extolling God's wonderful love, mercy, protection, and salvation to His chosen people, the nation of Israel. And he compares the highest mountain associated with the land of Israel, "Bashan," which is the Golan Heights northeast of the Sea of Galilee and includes Mt. Hermon, which itself is definitely the highest mountain, to one of the lowest mountains associated with Israel, Jerusalem and Mt. Zion, where God has chosen to establish the capital of the Kingdom of Israel and to dwell in its temple. David also says in the psalm that God has conquered Israel's enemies and led them captive to His "mountain," to Jerusalem, so that He has "ascended on high." Therefore, David is claiming that Mt. Zion is *symbolically*, not physically, a taller mountain than Mt. Bashan (and Mt. Hermon), because Jerusalem is the most important place in the land of Israel (and on the whole earth). By conquering Israel's enemies and bringing them to Jerusalem, in v. 18, God has "received gifts," who are comprised of foreign captives, so that, in effect, He receives these men from Himself by virtue of His efforts to conquer the enemies of His chosen people, the Jews.

However, in Ephesians 4:8 and for his own purposes, Paul changes the verb "receives" and says that God "gave" Himself gifts who, in similar manner, are men and captives whom He takes to Jerusalem, so to speak. But what does Paul mean by God's giving Himself human beings as gifts instead of His receiving them? He answers this question in v. 9, by indicating that God's ascending to Himself with captives comes after His descending "into the lower regions of the earth." Naturally, it is here that some Bible students conclude that Paul is talking about Jesus, the Son of God, who, in the midst of his own death that has occurred on the cross, goes down into the dark, temporary regions of the earth, so to speak, and gathers Old Testament believers who had died and were awaiting his death and resurrection to free them from their temporary place of dwelling and to take them to heaven.

Therefore, it is at this point in Jesus' existence as the Son of God that he gives these "captives" to God the Father. In addition, Paul says in v. 10 that Jesus ascends "far above the heavens," which must

be a place and status that is much superior to that of these redeemed sinners, so that Jesus, as the Son of God and 2nd person of the Trinity, returns to his original position alongside God the Father in their mutual eternal relationship. This all means that, while Jesus' dead body was in the tomb for three days, he himself was very much alive as the Son of God and acting on behalf of God the Father to lead deceased believers out of their temporary Old Testament location to their permanent and eternal New Testament home in heaven.

However, I suggest that Paul means something different. He is quoting Psalm 68:18 to the effect that God did lead the "captives" of Israel's enemies from the place where He defeated them, somewhere outside Jerusalem, to the place "on high," to Jerusalem, where they will serve Him and no longer do any harm to His chosen people, the nation of Israel. But now, rather than receiving these "captives" to Himself, He is giving them to Himself—by means of Jesus and his role and function as the Messiah. And Paul says in v. 9 that all this has happened because God "descended" and went down "into the lower regions of the earth." But where and what is this place? And how exactly did God from His transcendent position go down into it? First, I think that Paul is referring to the place that David describes about himself in Psalm 139:15—

> Psalm 139:15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought **in the lowest regions of the earth** (רֻקַּמְתִּי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ) (καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασίς μου ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς) (emphasis mine).

The Greek Septuagint translates the Hebrew text with the superlative, "lowest (κατωτάτοι)," which is obviously slightly different from the comparative word, "lower (κατώτερα)," which Paul uses in Ephesians 4:9 above. Nevertheless, I suggest that the meaning is the same, that just as David is using the phrase "in the lowest regions of the earth" as a euphemism to refer to his mother's womb, which is where God "skillfully" made him, Paul is doing the same with the phrase "in the lower regions of the earth" and is referring to Jesus' mother's womb, where God made him. Plus, Paul's purpose is to point out that Jesus was a real human being because he was born in a true, human manner, while he has communicated in other letters which he wrote that he was also uniquely God within the creation and human history.

Therefore, God gave Himself the captives of sinful human beings who have become authentic believers by virtue of all that He did by descending into human history when He caused the baby to grow in Mary's uterus to be born as Jesus of Nazareth, who lived as the Messiah of the Jews. Paul is also implying that Jesus lovingly, graciously, and freely gave himself through death to sinners, in order to lead these redeemed believers to the high place where God dwells, which is initially Jerusalem, the actual city of the coming restored Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20, and then a second Jerusalem, which is symbolic in Revelation 21-22 of the new and eternal earth that God will create. In addition, according to v. 10 of Ephesians 4, Jesus ascends "far above all heavens," which is to say far above anything else in the creation, because, as the king of Israel and eternal Kingdom of God, he is the most important part of the story that God is telling within the creation. Jesus also "fills out the all," meaning that, through his death and resurrection which together become the basis for eternal salvation for sinners, he makes all believers become the full complement of the group of people whom he gives to God and who acquire entrance into the Kingdom of God.

To finish what Paul is saying up to this point, we go back to v. 7, that God has given His grace to each Christian "in accordance with the measure of the Messiah's gift." Jesus' gift comprises both his obediently, lovingly, and graciously giving up his life in order to save sinners from God's condemnation and his leading these same sinners as a gift to God. Clearly, the quantity and quality of Jesus' gift to us is immeasurable when we are talking about our acquiring not only God's forgiveness but also eternal life. And Paul is saying that the quantity and quality of God's grace to us to accomplish all this through Jesus as the Messiah is itself immeasurable. As a result, God has lovingly and graciously given to each sinner all that is needed for each one of them to be rescued from His eternal condemnation and to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

In the last verses above of this passage, Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul then comments further on God's gift of grace to individual sinners by indicating that this includes His providing them with certain people who function as "apostles, …prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers." Their purpose is to assist each Christian in further learning and understanding the message of Jesus as the Messiah as they all pursue the goal of understanding all there is to know about God and Jesus the Messiah in the company

of every sinner in future history who comes to believe authentically in Jesus as their king and high priest and whom he gives to God the Father.

Now let us look at my translation of 1 Peter 3:8-22 and especially vs. 19 & 20, which, too, are in bold text—

1 Peter 3:8 The bottom line is this—everyone be like-minded, compassionate, brotherly loving, tenderhearted, humble, 3:9 paying back neither evil for evil nor insult for insult, but, instead, asking God to grant special favor to them, because you were called to this, in order that you may inherit a special favor.

3:10 As for the one who desires to love life and to see good days,
let him stop his tongue from speaking evil and his lips from speaking deceit.
3:11 Instead, let him turn away from evil and let him do good.
Let him seek shalom and pursuit it,
3:12 because the eyes of the Lord are on the upright,
and His ears are toward their prayers.
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil <Psalm 34:12-16>.

3:13 Indeed, who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 3:14 Nevertheless, even if you suffer on account of righteousness, you are blessed.

Do not fear what they fear, and do not succumb to inward turmoil.
3:15 Instead, set apart the Lord <Isaiah 8:12,13>,

the Messiah, in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you for a statement concerning the hope that is in you, 3:16 yet with gentleness and fear, because you have a good understanding, so that, in that which you are spoken against, those who malign your good way of life in the Messiah may be put to shame.

3:17 It is better, if the desire of God desires, to suffer for doing what is good rather than for doing what is evil, 3:18 because, indeed, the Messiah suffered once and for all on behalf of sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order that he lead us to God, on the one hand having been put to death with respect to his flesh, on the other hand having been made alive with respect to his spirit.
3:19 On the basis of this He also went and announced to the spirits in prison, 3:20 who were disobedient back then when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were rescued in the midst of the water.
3:21 The copy, baptism, indeed now saves you, not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but the appeal to God from a good understanding in view of the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. 3:22 He is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, since angels, authorities, and powers are becoming subordinate to him.

In his letter, Peter's greatest concern is that his readers persevere in their belief in God's eternal plans and purposes through Jesus the Messiah, while they are being heavily persecuted by unbelievers. In vs. 8 & 9 of chapter 3 above, he explains his "bottom line," that the Christians to whom he is writing treat each other with genuine love and kindness and those who are persecuting them with grace, while also requesting that God He grant them the same favor and forgiveness that He is providing them. Peter then backs up this exhortation by quoting Psalm 34:12-16, where David expresses his trust in God who will be faithful to him and grant him life and protection from his enemies, especially Saul, the present king of Israel, from whom he was fleeing. The Psalm sounds like a description of all the Jews in the millennial kingdom who will be protected by God and provided with a life of abundance under the rule of Jesus as their king. But it is also an exhortation to continue to do only what is good in the face of danger and persecution.

Thus, Peter uses David's words to encourage his Christian readers that they will enjoy God's protection of their authentic belief, so that they will acquire eternal life—the ultimate protection from those

who are persecuting them. They will see the "good days" that they desire in the eternal Kingdom of God—but only if they follow David's example and obey Peter's exhortations to hold on to the apostolic message, to treat each other with humility and genuine care, and to be gracious and merciful towards people, including leaders (in government, in master/slave relationships, in husband/wife relationships), whom God requires that they respect but who currently may be hostile to the truth and towards them, while they ask God to change His mind towards the unbelievers in these relationships and rescue them from His eternal condemnation.

In v. 13, Peter asks if it is possible for those who are persecuting his fellow Christians to create great "harm" in their lives? However, he is speaking of eternal harm. Can human beings destroy other human beings' eternal destiny? No. Instead, these followers of Jesus should consider themselves "blessed" for suffering "on account of righteousness" and because of their authentic faith and belief in the good news of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. v. 14). Indeed, Peter says in vs. 14-16 that they should treat their persecutors with "gentleness" in the midst of their proper "fear" of God, while calmly and carefully providing those who ask them about their faith with as clear an explanation as they can give them about why they believe in Jesus and the God of the creation who is in the process of granting them eternal life, which is their "hope" and constant expectation, because of God's faithfulness and promises.

In v. 17, Peter admits that God's desire may very well be that His people, believers in Jesus as the Messiah, suffer persecution in the midst of their pursuing moral goodness. Likewise, this is exactly what happened to Jesus (cf. v. 18). He died on the cross at the hands of his enemies for the purpose of rescuing sinners from God's justice and punishment. The choice for every human being is, would I rather suffer now, at the hands of people who are hostile to God in the midst of my genuine belief and doing what is good, or later, at the hands of God because of my doing evil and avoiding present persecution? Peter is urging his readers to choose the former and to follow the pattern of Jesus. Thus, Jesus died as a real, mortal human being, i.e., "with respect to his flesh," while he also was resurrected from the dead "with respect to his spirit," meaning in regard to God's eternal plans and purposes for him, which was that he, through his death, qualify to intercede before God on behalf of sinful believers. This is to say that Jesus' (and our) "spirit" is not something inherent in him, as we tend to think within Christian tradition. But it is God's plan for him (and us individually) inherent within Him. It is the very story which God has composed in His mind and that He is telling by virtue of Jesus' (and our) existence.

Next, as an example of how important Jesus' death and resurrection are for sinners, in vs. 19 & 20, Peter goes all the way back to the time of Noah and states that God (capital "H" of "He" in v. 19) used Noah's building the ark as a message to the people that He has always been very serious about sin and saving people from His justice and destruction. However, rescuing sinners from His judgment, such as that which He accomplished for Noah and his family by alerting them to the coming flood and instructing them to build an ark, was and is always on the basis of what Jesus did by his death on the cross. In other words, God always planned for Jesus' death and resurrection, which occurred far into the distant future with respect to the time of Noah as a man of faith and the other people of his day as unbelievers, to reach back in time to Noah's day and forward in time to Peter's day (and even beyond it to our day).

Some Bible students interpret "the spirits in prison" of v. 19 as either fallen angels, confined to a dark place whose location no one knows, or deceased, sinful humans in the same place, so that Jesus is alerting them that their eternal punishment has been assured by his crucifixion and resurrection. Instead, I think that, just as Peter commented in v. 18 on Jesus' "spirit," i.e., God's plan for him to be the crucified and resurrected Messiah, he now speaks of "spirits in prison," who were human beings who were imprisoned in their sin during the time of Noah. Thus, Peter is saying that God planned that these other sinners exist on earth as continuous and committed rebels against Him. And as a result, their purpose in the creation was to remain sinners in contrast to Noah, whose heart God had circumcised and changed, so that he became an authentic believer in God and willing to obey His instructions. Obviously, God's instructions to Noah were to build an ark for his family and him to save them from the flood. And by means of Noah's obedience and the ark, God (not Jesus, who came in Peter's day) proclaimed to all the other human beings, who remained unbelievers during the time of Noah, that the judgment of the flood was coming, while salvation was also available. They just needed to believe God's statements and instructions as Noah was doing and build an ark.

In v. 21, Peter declares that the analogy of Noah's ark as a message from God of warning and salvation to the people of his day is water baptism for the Christians to whom he is writing as the same kind of message from God—that immersion in and rising from physical water is an appropriate symbol for how to escape God's judgment, through authentic belief in God and Jesus. Therefore, God, once again,

through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and sinners' response of genuine belief and water baptism in Peter's day, is announcing to human beings, who are imprisoned in their sin according to His eternal design, that the final judgment is coming, while eternal salvation is available. Jesus' death and resurrection are the basis for anyone's eternal salvation, just as they were in Noah's day. Consequently, sinful human beings, who "appeal to God from a good understanding in view of the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah," will obtain eternal deliverance from His wrath and condemnation, because they meet the necessary condition for entering the Kingdom of God that He has placed on all of us. Plus, according to v. 22 (and as Paul declared in Ephesians 4:10 above), having become immortal himself, Jesus has acquired a status within the creation whereby he will rule all reality which the transcendent God has made, including "angels, authorities, and powers."

With these verses 8-21 of chapter 3, Peter mentions explicitly for the third and fourth time in his letter how valuable a proper grasp, i.e., "good understanding," of the concepts of God and His plans and purposes are to the eternally bound sinful human being who believes in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (cf. 1 Peter 2:2,19; 3:16,21). It is "the rational and truthful milk of the message" (2:2), "an understanding of God" (2:19), "a good understanding" (3:16,21), which are all four referring to a biblical understanding of God and authentic belief in this truth that are both fundamental to a person's being rescued from God's eternal condemnation and destruction.

In conclusion regarding these two passages by Paul and Peter, I do not think that they (or any other passages) teach that Jesus was alive after dying on the cross and during the three days that his dead body was in the tomb. Instead, like all other human beings who die, he passed out of existence and left the story that God is telling until He resurrected him from the dead on the third day.

Next, Matthew provides a very interesting detail—

> Matthew 27:52 In addition, the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the ones who were set apart and had fallen asleep were raised, 27:53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the sacred city and appeared to many.

Nothing like the resurrection and reappearance of deceased believers in Jerusalem to make a point. And what is God's point? That life, both restored life and eternal life, through the death (and resurrection in three days) of the Messiah is the most important aspect of the created reality which God brought into existence according to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Therefore, God is highlighting the significance of this central event in human history—Jesus' death and resurrection. And He does so by *bringing back to life* "many" of those "who were set apart and had fallen asleep" and had been buried in various "tombs" around Jerusalem. These were sinful people like you and me, who had been granted authentic belief and obedience by having their hearts changed by God during the course of their previous existences on the earth. But they had died and their bodies were entombed in the ground. Now God brings them back to life and back into existence so that they enter into Jerusalem, the "sacred city" where God dwells in the temple and where the Jews are required to worship Him with the feasts and their offerings and sacrifices. And while walking around the city, they appear to many of the people and probably express who they are and what God has done for them in having promised and now granting them resurrection from their deaths and graves.

This would be quite a shocking experience for those who saw and spoke to them, and maybe they were even relatives and family members, which would be even more astonishing. The wording of v. 52 does indicate that "the tombs were opened," and since these resurrected believers "entered into the sacred city," I think we can conclude that they were previous inhabitants of Jerusalem and not from other places in the Roman Empire—unless they (or at least some of them) were former pilgrims from foreign lands outside Israel who had come to Jerusalem for one of the three Jewish feasts and had died there during their trip.

Matthew also says that this happened "after his resurrection" (μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ), meaning a few (and perhaps more than a few) days later after the three days that Jesus will spend in his grave and tomb and after God resurrects him. Thus, we see Matthew insert details of an event completely out of chronological order to suit his purposes of telling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. While we can be certain that these people were authentic believers because they were "ones who were set apart" (ἁγίοι (*hagioi*), "saints" in other translations), Matthew does not tell us what happened to them after they had entered Jerusalem and "appeared to many." Some options are—

1) They died again soon after and were reburied in their tombs.
2) They continued to live in Jerusalem and are still alive today, perhaps even in other parts of the world.
3) They suddenly disappeared from existence and will reappear when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel.
4) They ascended sometime later, perhaps when Jesus ascended fifty days later at Pentecost, and they are living with him in another part of the creation where he awaits to return to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

We have to remember that God is the transcendent author of the story of all the universe and human history on this earth. Therefore, any one of the options above (or a variation of one of them) is theologically possible for God. In other words, God could cause the reality and existence of these resurrected people to go in a myriad of directions as He would want. My guess is that, a few days after God raised Jesus from the dead, He brought these former sinners back to life, transformed them into eternal and morally perfect beings, and they walked the streets of Jerusalem until Jesus ascended and they ascended from the earth at Pentecost to live with him until he returns. Then, in conjunction with the apostle Paul's explanations in I Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, they will join the believers, who are either resurrected or lifted from the earth, to rule over the new Kingdom of Israel and the earth with Jesus and the Jews of the millennial kingdom. Nevertheless, the Bible simply does not say exactly what has happened to these people once God resurrected them and they walked the streets of Jerusalem after Jesus' own resurrection.

We should also take note that this is not the first time that God raised people from the dead and they interacted with others on the earth. The <u>first</u> time that the Bible talks about this kind of event was in 1 Kings 17 regarding the son of the Gentile woman in Zarephath, near Sidon on the Mediterranean coast and in the area of modern-day Lebanon, that involved the prophet Elijah around 870-850 B.C.—

1 Kings 17:17 Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.
17:18 So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!"
17:19 He said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed.
17:20 He called to Yahweh and said, "Yahweh my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die (לְהָמִית אֶת־בְּנָהּ) (τοῦ θανατῶσαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς)?"
17:21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and called to Yahweh and said, "Yahweh my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him (נָא נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי תָּשָׁב) (ἐπιστραφήτω δὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ παιδαρίου τούτου εἰς αὐτόν)."
17:22 Yahweh heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived (וַתָּשָׁב נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד עַל־קִרְבּוֹ וַיֶּחִי) (καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον).
17:23 Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son is alive."
17:24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth."

The <u>second</u> event like this was in Luke 7 when Jesus raised from the dead the son of a widow in the village of Nain—

Luke 7:11 Next, Jesus went to a city called Nain, and both his disciples and the large crowd went with him.
7:12 As he approached the city's gate, behold, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. In addition, a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.
7:13 When the Lord saw her, he felt compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep."

7:14 Then, he came and touched the bier, and those who were carrying it stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, 'Arise.'"
7:15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak. Thus, he gave him to his mother.
7:16 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited His people."
7:17 And this report about him went out over all Judea and all the surrounding region.

The third person raised from the dead in the Bible was Moses when Jesus met with Elijah and him on the Mt. of Transfiguration in Matthew 17—

Matthew 17:1 Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John his brother, and he led them up onto a high mountain.
17:2 And he was transformed in front of them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.
17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him.
17:4 Peter responded and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."
17:5 While he was still speaking with them, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And, behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My Son whom I love, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him."
17:6 When the disciples heard, they fell on their face and were greatly terrified.
17:7 But Jesus came to them, touched them, and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid."
17:8 When they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.
17:9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

We should also take note that Elijah was one of two men who did not die but were taken from the earth when God determined that they had finished their earthly existences. The account of Elijah's sudden disappearance is in 2 Kings 2, again around 870-850 B.C.—

2 Kings 2:7 Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite [Elijah and Elisha] at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.
2:8 Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.
2:9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."
2:10 He said, "You have asked a hard thing (הִקְשֵׁיתָ לִשְׁאֹל) (ἐσκλήρυνας τοῦ αἰτήσασθαι). Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."
2:11 As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven (הַשָּׁמָיִם אֵלִיָּהוּ בַּסְּעָרָה ׀ וַיַּעַל) (καὶ ἀνελήμφθη Ηλιου ἐν συσσεισμῷ ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν).
2:12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.
2:13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan.
2:14 He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.
2:15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

The other man who was transferred from his existence on the earth before he died was Enoch of the sixth generation of human beings after Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis 5—

> Genesis 5:21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah.
> 5:22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters.
> 5:23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.
> 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him (וְאֵינֶנּוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְהַלֶּךְ חֲנוֹךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים) (καὶ εὐηρέστησεν Ενωχ τῷ θεῷ καὶ οὐχ ηὑρίσκετο, ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός).

Finally, the fourth person who was raised from the dead according to the Bible was Lazarus, Jesus' friend who lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This account is in John 11—

> John 11:38 Therefore, Jesus was again deeply moved within himself, and he came to the tomb. There was a cave and a stone was lying against it.
> 11:39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the one who had died, said to him, "Lord, there is already a bad smell, because it is the fourth day."
> 11:40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"
> 11:41 Therefore, they took the stone away. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that you listen to me.
> 11:42 "And I have known that you always listen to me. But because of the crowd that has been standing around, I said it, so that they may believe that You sent me."
> 11:43 And after saying these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come outside!"
> 11:44 The man who had died came out with this feet and hands having been bound with strips of cloth, and his face had been wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Release him, and let him go."
> 11:45 Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to Mary and observed the things which he did believed in him.
> 11:46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

My guess is that *three* of the above men—the son of the woman in Zarephath, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus—died *again* and have remained dead (as Peter says of David's one and only death in Acts 2:29) until even our own day. But what about the other three—Enoch, Elijah, and Moses? The typical response to this question would be, "They are in heaven." But I have suggested that the place of eternal life for authentic believers is not another location called "heaven" that they inhabit immediately after dying. Instead, it will be first the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth of Revelation 20 and the future eternal earth of Revelation 21—both after Jesus' returns. In addition, the Bible does not say what is the current condition of people such as Enoch, Elijah, and Moses. Two viable options are—

1) They simply do not exist right now, because God took them out of the story of the creation altogether after they transitioned from this world (for Enoch and Elijah) or after he appeared to Jesus with Elijah (for Moses). As a result, God knows that He will cause them to reappear, when Jesus returns and in conjunction with Paul's descriptions of the future reappearance of believers in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

2) God placed them in a special place of the creation after these various events, perhaps the same place where Jesus has been for the last two thousand years, and they will reappear when he reappears at the beginning of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Israel on the present earth. Again, this will be when the events of Paul's descriptions of the future in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 are fulfilled.

And here is how Matthew and Mark finish this subsection of the story and Luke gets close—

Matthew 27:54 Now the centurion and those who were keeping guard over Jesus with him, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.”

Mark 15:39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of him, saw the manner in which he died, he said, “Truly, this man was the Son of God.

Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he was glorifying God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.”

Speaking of strange things, such as God’s raising people from the dead, who then walk around Jerusalem declaring their new lives and probably attesting to the miracle of God’s raising Jesus from the dead, how do we comprehend and interpret this response of not just one of the Roman soldiers, but all of them, who are “keeping guard over Jesus” and observing him die? Mark and Luke speak of just “the centurion,” their leader. He is apparently “standing right in front” of Jesus. And when he “saw what had happened,” which included feeling “the earthquake,” Mark’s words of his response are, “Truly, this man was the Son of God.” Luke writes of the centurion’s saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.” I think that both responses mean the same thing—that he was who he said he was, the final Davidic king of Israel, and he had committed no crime deserving of death and crucifixion (just as Pilate had claimed!). And if we add the fact that Matthew tells us that all “those who were keeping guard over Jesus…became very frightened and said, “Truly, this was the Son of God,” then all the soldiers are explicitly saying to and among one another both that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is innocent.

But this is absolutely remarkable. Do they really understand the terminology, that Son of God refers not only to the king of Israel, but also to the uncreated and transcendent God’s proxy on the earth? Again, they probably picked up some biblical and Jewish theology along the way while being billeted in Jerusalem. But whatever they understand about Jesus’ being the Son of God, they are definitely connecting it to “the manner in which he died” and all the other circumstances, including the earthquake, that they have just experienced. As a result, they are drawing the correct conclusion that Jesus is exactly who he said he was, someone sent by God to be very special in human history, the final Jewish Messiah, and who in no way deserved to be executed and die on a cross.

And if these Roman, Gentile soldiers’ words genuinely reflect their inwardness, then God has just circumcised and changed their hearts, the hearts of men who grew up in homes where their families worshiped pagan gods. And, most likely, these same men originally resented being sent to Jerusalem by their superiors in the Roman army in order to keep the peace among these unruly and odd Jews who worship only one God and who have all sorts of strange, religious customs and traditions, that also involve eating only certain kinds of food.

But if God is working in their hearts this way, then this is about as remarkable and miraculous as it gets—the immediate and complete (we hope) conversion to Christianity of these pagan, Roman soldiers who happen to be the closest eyewitnesses of Jesus’ death (they nailed him to the cross!!) and will, no doubt, be fascinated and appreciative of his resurrection in three days when they hear about it. So, as Mark and Luke certainly would agree, even though they focus on only the centurion, it is not only he who publicly declares that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. It is the entire group of soldiers who do so. Therefore, in addition to the Jewish women, whom we first met in a subsection above and who, as part of a large group of Jesus’ followers, are having their own Christian assembly near the cross after they have watched Jesus die, these soldiers, these Gentile soldiers, these foreign, Roman formerly pagan soldiers are doing exactly the same thing—by the grace of God! In this way, God has begun bringing about the post-crucifixion gatherings and assemblies of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, and the king of Israel. And we, wherever we are and whenever we live during the last two thousand years, are the continuation of these gatherings of followers of Jesus.

Then Luke finishes this episode by writing—

Luke 23:48 And all the crowds who had come together for this spectacle, when they observed these things that happened, they were returning, beating their chests.

“All the crowds” have probably come from within the city of Jerusalem and the outlying villages and towns, including Bethany, the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. They have “come together” to view

"this spectacle," because word has spread, and most people have become aware that the man who has claimed to be their Messiah and who has performed many miracles has now been crucified by the Romans outside the walls of Jerusalem. But what a "spectacle!" (the only use of this Greek word in the New Testament—θεωρία (*theoria*), literally that which a person sees that allows him to come to an understanding of something; and we get our word "theory" from this word).

Probably never before has the crucifixion of a "criminal" attracted so large a crowd and been accompanied first by the sign above his head indicating that he is the "king of the Jews," second by constant and loud mocking by even the Jewish leaders ordering him to prove that he is the Messiah by miraculously coming down from the cross, third by his own words commending a woman (his mother) at the foot of the cross to another man (his disciple) at her side for her care, fourth by darkness descending over the whole area for three hours, fifth by his own words where he cries out to God like David in Psalm 22 for having abandoned him, sixth by an earthquake and the temple curtain splitting in half when he finally takes his last breath and dies, and seventh and finally by the Roman soldiers' themselves acknowledging that he is the Son of God and king of Israel!

The impact of all this on the crowds is that they return to their homes and businesses, "beating their breasts." But what does this mean? What exactly is going through their minds and hearts?

1) Are they proud and even euphoric, because they are convinced that they have done the right thing by executing this man who was obviously a false Messiah?

2) Or are they inconsolable and grieving the death of their Messiah because they, like the soldiers, have suddenly come to believe that he is such, so that now they are afraid that they have missed the opportunity to live on the land of Israel as God had both commanded them through the Mosaic Covenant and promised them through the Abrahamic Covenant?

3) Or are they at least temporarily disturbed and mentally and emotionally distraught by the whole scene without completely understanding who Jesus really is and what is taking place through his death, so that they simply are afraid of all the confusing elements of this historic event?

4) Or is their response (at least for some of them) a combination of both new belief and bewilderment, which is leaving them distressed for the time being, while also wondering what all this means and how God really is going to bring about salvation for them from their enemies, specifically from the Romans, so that they may see His promise fulfilled of their becoming the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant?

My guess is that some of the people are distraught as I describe in the third option and some of them are displaying the combination of belief and bewilderment of the fourth option. It is a mixed crowd of unbelievers and new believers. As several comments in the gospels indicate, during the last three years some of the Jews have hoped and believed that Jesus is the Messiah. And some of them are convinced that he is a liar and false prophet. But all of them cannot deny that the last six hours of Jesus' execution and death have produced a collection of very strange and even disturbing moments as they approach the end of the Passover at sundown in a couple hours.

u. The Witnesses of the Crucifixion[99]

Wednesday about 3 p.m.

Matthew 27:55-56	Mark 15:40-41	Luke 23:49	John
27:55 And many women were there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee while serving him. 27:56 Among	15:40 There were also some women observing from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses, and	23:49 And all those who were known to him, including the women who had accompanied him from Galilee and were seeing	Cf. John 19:25-27 above

them were Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the two sons of Zebedee.[100]	Salome. 15:41 When he was in Galilee, they used to follow him and serve him. And there were many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.[101]	these things, had stood at a distance.[102]	

Explanation of the Above Passages

Previously, in John 19:25-27, in the sub-section where the Roman soldiers carry out their task of crucifying Jesus and Jesus commends his mother to the apostle John's care, his account indicated that there are four women standing "by the cross of Jesus." These are—

1) Jesus' mother, who is Mary
2) His mother's sister, who is probably Salome and the mother of his disciples James and John (cf. Mark 15:40; 16:1)
3) Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had exorcised seven demons (cf. Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2)
4) The wife of Clopas, whose name is also Mary

Now Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us of Jesus' friends and family who are present and observing all that has been happening to him while he is suffering on the cross. Luke speaks of both "all those who were known" to Jesus (*pantes hoi gnostoi auto*, πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ) and "the women who had accompanied him from Galilee and were seeing these things" (*gunaikes hai sunakolouthousai auto apo tays Galilaias horosai tauta*, γυναῖκες αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα). I think that he means that the women are "included" in those who are known to Jesus, which is why I have translated the Greek word καὶ (*kai*) as "including" between the two descriptions. As a result, it is this whole group of men and women, who are close followers of Jesus and who, Luke says in v. 49 above, "had stood at a distance" from the cross.

We will come back to Matthew's and Mark's accounts in a moment, but the question we probably want to ask is, "Who and how large is this group that includes the women?" Since it is Luke who provides us with the above limited information, I wonder if his later description of Jesus' disciples, who gather together at least forty days after this event (and then again on Pentecost) and who then experience the remarkable activity of the Holy Spirit (the tongues of fire sitting on their heads and their speaking foreign languages), helps us. The specific verses in the book of Acts are—

Acts 1:15 In those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers, and he said (by the way, there was a crowd of about a hundred and twenty present),
1:16 "Men, brothers, it was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus, 1:17 that he was numbered among us and received a portion of this work."

We see that, according to Acts 1:15, there is group, who later become filled with the Holy Spirit, and they comprise "a crowd of about a hundred and twenty present." If the group in the book of Acts is made up of the same people and the same number as those near Jesus' cross and who include the women, which I think we can assume it does, then Luke is saying in his gospel in v. 49 above that "all those who were known to him," that included the women, was also around a hundred and twenty persons. This is a fairly large group of both the eleven apostles and other male and female disciples, who are so well-known to Jesus that he can probably name each one of them. They are huddled together at the scene of the cross and the only ones who are not mocking Jesus but are demonstrating great sadness and grief at this turn of events.

But for their own reasons, which is probably that certain women will be featured in the burial, resurrection, and initial appearances of Jesus, Matthew and Mark name only them. Mark, in v. 40, states

that “there were also some women observing from a distance,” and he also names some of them. They are—

1) Mary Magdalene
2) Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses
3) Salome

These three are the same as those listed in John 19:25-27 above, where Salome is probably the sister of Jesus’ mother Mary, who is also there. Matthew says in v. 55 that “many women were looking on from a distance,” and he indicates in v. 56 that among them are—

1) Mary Magdalene
2) Mary, the mother of James and Joseph
3) The mother of the two sons of Zebedee

These three are also the same stated by Mark with Joses’ being the same man as Joseph and Salome’s being “the mother of the two sons of Zebedee,” James and John.

Before he provides the names of these three women, Matthew says that they were those “who had followed Jesus from Galilee while serving him.” Mark says this after he names them, “When [Jesus] was in Galilee, they used to follow him and serve him.” Plus, he writes that “there were many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.” In this way, we see that John, back in 19:25-27, and Matthew and Mark here highlight certain women who are part of a large group, who have either accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover (as required of men according to the Mosaic Covenant) or are fairly local to Jerusalem, such as Lazarus, Martha, and Mary of Bethany, a couple miles east of the city. They all are standing at a distance from the cross, but they certainly are within earshot of Jesus since he was able to commend his mother’s care to the apostle John. They also have been close disciples of Jesus while learning from him and providing for his physical well-being in both Galilee and Jerusalem. Except for Jesus’ mother, it is the women mentioned here, and especially Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (of Clopas), who will figure most prominently in the story involving Jesus’ burial, resurrection, and initial appearances.

It is also striking that, after his resurrection, Jesus will appear first to these women and not to his male disciples and apostles. I think it speaks to God’s and his desire to elevate women to the high status that God has designed for them, the same high status that He has designed for men of sharing equally in the future existence that God has promised in the eternal Kingdom of God for those whose hearts He changes and who thereby manifest authentic belief and the pursuit of loving God and obeying His moral commandments. By Jesus’ appearing first to these women, God will emphasize that the low status to which women were subject in the Jewish culture and the 1st century Roman Empire was simply wrong.

In other words, Jesus is the first person in all human history to initiate a proper feminist movement. I say proper, because as far as I can tell, all other feminist movements, by lacking a fundamental, biblical understanding of the nature of reality, are misguided and end up leading women and societies towards the mistreatment of human beings. Jesus, on the other hand, is leading both men and women towards properly and lovingly treating all human beings, which ultimately results in eternal life for those who are willing to follow him. This is why the apostle Peter encourages husbands to love their wives in a biblical manner, because, by doing so, they accurately consider them to be “coheirs of the grace of life” (cf. 1 Peter 3:7). Therefore, if feminist movements want to do what is right, they will follow Jesus and his teachings of how people should both love God and treat one another with love and respect.

v. The Roman Soldiers Break the Thieves’ Legs and Pierce Jesus’ Side With a Spear

Wednesday about 4 p.m.

John 19:31-37
19:31 Then, the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because the Sabbath was a high day, requested of Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken away. 19:32 So, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first one and of the other one who was crucified with him. 19:33 But, when they came to Jesus, because they saw that he had

already died, they did not break his legs. 19:34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and, immediately, blood and water came out.
19:35 And the one who has seen this has borne witness, and his witness is true. Indeed, he knows that he speaks the truth, so that you also may believe. 19:36 For these things happened in order that the scripture could be fulfilled,

"No bone of his will be broken <Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20>."

19:37 And, again, another scripture says,

"They will look on him whom they pierced <Zechariah 12:10>."

Explanation of the Above Passage

The day of the Passover is progressing towards sundown when the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is also the first of two High Sabbaths of the feast, will begin. It is probably about 4 p.m. in the afternoon, and John in his gospel is the only one who provides us with this particular information, beginning with v. 31—

John 19:31 Then, the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because the Sabbath was a high day, requested of Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken away.

John is saying that the Passover is a "day of preparation" for a Sabbath day, which we know is the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see the chart on pg. 16 of this document). As a result, if the men who are being crucified die after sundown, according to the Mosaic Covenant, it will be a violation of God's Torah and of the Sabbath to leave their dead bodies hanging on the cross during the night. For example, we can consider Deuteronomy 21:22-23—

Deuteronomy 21:22 "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,
21:23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you as an inheritance."

Therefore, even if this day, when Jesus and the two bandits are being crucified, were not the preparation for the Sabbath day and the next day were not a High Sabbath day, it would be a violation of the Mosaic Covenant to leave their dead bodies on the crosses, assuming of course that they will die within the next few hours (which obviously is quite likely). Thus, John is letting us know that the Jews also consider it a violation of the first High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to do so. As a result, they are doubly motivated to ensure that the men die soon, so that they can remove their corpses from the crosses and bury them before sundown when the High Sabbath begins. Consequently, the Jewish leadership request of Pilate, the Roman governor, that the soldiers break the legs of the men so that they will die quickly and they can be buried before sundown.

John continues in vs. 32-34,

John 19:32 So, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first one and of the other one who was crucified with him. 19:33 But, when they came to Jesus, because they saw that he had already died, they did not break his legs. 19:34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and, immediately, blood and water came out.

Pilate complies with the Jews' request, and the soldiers break the legs of the other two men in order to cause them to die soon. But they leave Jesus' legs intact because, by the sovereignty of God of

course, he has already died. Plus, his ordeal during the Jewish and Roman trials must have been so strenuous that he was close to death even before they nailed him through his hands and feet to the cross. Nevertheless, one of the soldiers thrusts his spear into the side of Jesus, just to make sure there is no reaction and that he is dead. And out flows both "blood and water." What does not happen is Jesus' making any sound or movement as a result of the spear in his side. Yes, he is definitely dead, so that fluid from within his body is all that comes from him and the open wound.

Then John writes in vs. 35-37,

> John 19:35 And the one who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true. Indeed, he knows that he speaks the truth, so that you also may believe. 19:36 For these things happened in order that the scripture could be fulfilled,
>
> "No bone of his will be broken <Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20>."
>
> 19:37 And, again, another scripture says,
>
> "They will look on him whom they pierced <Zechariah 12:10>."

John, the gospel author, declares and wants his readers to know that he is an eyewitness to these events, so that he is speaking the truth for a specific purpose. And his purpose is so that his readers may believe that everything he has seen and is writing happened to Jesus. And what does John mean exactly by what he has seen? Is he referring to the entire crucifixion process from the moment the Roman soldiers drove the nails into Jesus' hands and feet? Or is he referring to only the thrust of the soldier's spear into Jesus' side and the flow of blood and water out of it? Or does he mean something in between? I think that it is the second option, because of how John continues in vs. 36 & 37. He wants his readers to know for certain that he was there when Jesus died and the soldier made certain of his death when he thrust his spear into his side and Jesus made no sound in response. John is declaring unequivocally that Jesus, the Messiah sent by God, actually died on a cross, so that the resurrection three days later will be a true rising from the dead. In addition, this makes it all the more significant that the biblical passages quoted in John's next two verses find their fulfillment in Jesus' death.

Parts of the first quote in v. 36, that "No bone of his will be broken," are found in three Old Testament passages—Exodus 12:43-47; Numbers 9:10-13; and Psalm 34:19-20. Here are their translations from the Hebrew texts, and I have emphasized the relevant words—

> Exodus 12:43 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; 12:44 but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. 12:45 A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it.
> 12:46 It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, **nor are you to break any bone of it**. 12:47 All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this."
>
> Numbers 9:10 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If any one of you or of your generations becomes unclean because of a dead person, or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to Yahweh.
> 9:11 In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight, they shall observe it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9:12 They shall leave none of it until morning, **nor break a bone of it**; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.
> 9:13 But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet neglects to observe the Passover, that person shall then be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering of Yahweh at its appointed time. That man will bear his sin.'"
>
> Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
> But Yahweh delivers him out of them all.
> 34:20 He keeps all his bones,
> **Not one of them is broken**.

The pertinent words from the Greek translation called the Septuagint of Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and Psalm 34:20 and from the Greek text of John 19:36, along with their literal translations in the order in which the words were written, are as follows,

Exodus 12:46 – καὶ ὀστοῦν οὐ συντρίψετε ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ
and bone not you (pl.) shall break from it

Numbers 9:12 – καὶ ὀστοῦν οὐ συντρίψουσιν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ
and bone not they shall break from it

Psalm 34:20 – κύριος φυλάσσει πάντα τὰ ὀστᾶ αὐτῶν; ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ συντριβήσεται
Lord guards all the bones their; one out of them not will be broken

John 19:36 – ὀστοῦν οὐ συντριβήσεται αὐτοῦ
bone not shall be broken his

We notice these similarities between the above words of John 19:36 and those of the three Old Testament passages—

1) The Greek text of John 19:36 borrows words from all three Old Testament passages.
2) The words from Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 are exactly the same, except for the second person plural verb in Exodus, "you shall break," and the third person plural verb in Numbers, "they shall break."
3) The word "not" and the noun "bone(s)" comes from all three Old Testament passages of Exodus, Numbers, and Psalm 34.
4) The passive voice verb "shall be broken" in John 19:36 is the same one in only Psalm 34:20.
5) The first two passages of Exodus and Numbers clearly pertain to the Feast of Passover as God ordained it for the nation of Israel when He brought them out of slavery in Egypt around 1500 B.C. Their observance of this feast included that they specifically NOT "break a bone" of the lamb which they killed and ate during their celebration of God's rescuing and saving them from their predicament.
6) In the messianic Psalm 34, David is speaking of God's faithfulness to those who obey Him and pursue righteousness, so that He keeps them alive and prevents their enemies from harming them, even physically, so that "one [bone] out of them shall not be broken." Clearly, this was not always the case for the nation of Israel who suffered invasion, exile, and death by the Assyrians and Babylonians a few centuries later. Yet, David knows that, as God's Anointed One (Messiah and Son of God – cf. Psalms 2 & 89), he will be protected by God from his specific enemies, and *eventually* all authentic believers in God's Anointed One will enjoy complete protection from their enemies by Him when the final Messiah and Son of God appears and restores the Kingdom of Israel.

Obviously, Jesus is not an actual lamb like that of the original Passover, and he is being put to death *physically* by his "enemies," the Jewish leaders and the Romans who are complying with their demand that they crucify him. Therefore, the soldiers are, in a sense, "fulfilling" the Exodus and Numbers passages by not breaking his legs, but not because these verses are directly predicting that this is what would happen. Likewise, Psalm 34 is not an explicit prediction that Jesus' legs will remain physically unbroken by his executioners. Instead, the solders are doing that which is similar to what God required of the nation of Israel in regard to an actual lamb in Exodus and Numbers and that which is similar to what David predicted in Psalm 34 in regard to himself and, ultimately, to both those who follow him as the first Son of God and the Jews who remain committed to the Davidic Covenant. David predicted that God will bring them and him through their afflictions with persevering faith and will grant them life in the Kingdom of God when the final Davidic king rules the whole earth. Similarly, God is bringing Jesus through his afflictions with the same kind of faith in order for him to enter into the Kingdom of God. Plus, the fact that Jesus' death occurs on the day of Passover also results in a sense of "fulfilling" the Exodus and Numbers passages, i.e., that he is the "lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," as John the Baptist said

of him in John 1:29, so that he dies with his legs intact—just as the Israelites kept intact the Passover lamb by not breaking any of its bones.

We can therefore conclude that the Romans soldiers are more "filling out" or "fleshing out" all three Old Testament passages instead of what we traditionally mean by the word "fulfilling." Usually, Christians use the word "fulfill" to refer to an activity, such as Jesus' birth or death, that occurs because an Old Testament verse directly predicts or foretells that it is going to happen. We use the word "prophesy" in the same manner, to speak of something that will definitely take place in the future because God has explicitly declared that it will. However, John is clearly using the word "fulfill" to mean something different. He means that certain Old Testament passages spoke of something particular, such as the lamb that is cooked and eaten at Passover and whose bones are not broken, and that there is a connection between this Old Testament prescribed activity in regard to the lamb and a New Testament activity in regard to Jesus. Just as the Passover lamb is killed and its bones are not broken, so also Jesus is being killed and his bones are not being broken. Therefore, these Roman soldiers (and very *Gentile* Roman soldiers who have no obligation to the Jewish Passover of the Mosaic Covenant) are "fulfilling" the Jewish scriptures simply by doing something similar to what Old Testament instructs the people of Israel to do.

John also says in v. 37 that "these things happened" to fulfill a fourth passage that is part of Zechariah 12:10, which the prophet wrote between 520 and 480 B.C. and when the Israelites have returned from their exile in Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. I will include here all of chapters 12-14 of Zechariah, which comprise a very helpful section of the Old Testament prophets. Is this another situation where the New Testament event is similar to what is being talked about in Zechariah, or is the prophet actually predicting the event? To answer this question, we begin by considering Zechariah 12:1-13:6. We have looked before at portions of this passage, but for the sake of being complete, I present here an extended explanation of it. God is speaking of an event which is in the far distant future of Zechariah and his contemporary Jews—and, I think, is still in our future, too. Indeed, this event, like many others related in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, will involve the return of Jesus as the Messiah, along with the destruction of Israel's enemies at the very beginning of the messianic kingdom, when God fulfills the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to make the Jews a "great nation" on the land of Israel. The message begins in v. 1 with a description of God—

> Zechariah 12:1 The pronouncement of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel.
> Thus declares Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens,
> lays the foundation of the earth,
> and forms the spirit of man within him,

The prophet first declares that he is presenting "the pronouncement of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel." God has a message specific to His chosen people, the Jews. And "thus" He "declares" it through Zechariah. And who is this God? He is the one "who stretches out the heavens," who has created and keeps in existence the vast universe in which our miniscule planet resides, a universe where it is calculated that at least two hundred billion galaxies exist. And if we think of the even greater number of stars and potential planetary solar systems of which all these galaxies comprise, it is hard for our relatively tiny brains to fathom just how vast is the creation which God has made and how vast God is, because He transcends the gargantuan universe by being its uncreated creator outside it.

Plus, God is the one "who lays the foundation of the earth," which means that He has established this planet on which we live and made it exactly the way He wants, with its internal structure of many layers and its outward appearance of both land and seas in the exact proportion which He desires. There is no more land than what God wants, and there are no more seas and bodies of water than what He desires.

The God of Zechariah and the Jews is also the one who "forms the spirit of man in him," who has made each and every human being exactly as He chooses in order that every individual lives out the story which He planned for him from before He brought the universe into existence. Thus, Zechariah is announcing the "word" or message of the person who not only has created everything that exists, but also has designed each human being to play an important role in the story which He is telling, which we know from the Bible is mainly about Himself and His Messiah, the king of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth.

And here are the first two verses of God's message—

> Zechariah 12:2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem
> a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around.

And when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.
12:3 “It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא)
that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples.
All who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth
will be gathered against it (וְנֶאֶסְפּוּ עָלֶיהָ כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ).”

As it should be because God Himself chose it for the location of His temple, the city of Jerusalem will eventually become the center of the world’s attention, especially of those who live close “around” it in the Middle East. It will be like “a cup that causes reeling,” a cup filled with wine that makes people drunk. But the drunkenness of the surrounding Gentile nations will initially be one of excitement and enthusiasm to invade Israel, lay “siege” to Jerusalem, and “be against Judah” and all the Jews—most likely in order to destroy them (v. 2).

However, things will not turn out well for these enemies of Israel. “It will come about in that day” (this last phrase, “in that day” (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) is one that God uses twelve times in this passage and another seven times in the rest of chapter 13 and chapter 14) that God “will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples” who invade the land of Israel. Indeed, the stone will be too heavy to lift for the Gentile armies, because “all who lift it will be severely injured,” to the point that the invaders will be destroyed. It will be as though all the efforts of the Gentile armies to destroy the Jews will backfire on them, so that they instead will be destroyed. Indeed, “all the nations of the earth will be gathered against” the Jews, either physically (the Middle East countries) or just emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and politically (the rest of the world). The whole world will be against the Jews. The whole world will be anti-Semitic. The whole world will hope for the final and ultimate eradication of the Jews from the earth (v. 3).

However, in vs. 4-6 God goes on to say—

Zechariah 12:4 “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh,
“I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness.
But I will watch over the house of Judah,
while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.
12:5 “Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts,
‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem
through Yahweh of hosts, their God.’
12:6 “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will make the clans of Judah
like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves,
so that they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples,
while the inhabitants of Jerusalem
again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.”

God will spread confusion among the invading armies, while He “will watch over the house of Judah” and protect the Jews from the evil intent of these armies (v. 4). In fact, all the Jews who live in areas around Jerusalem “will say in their hearts” with authentic belief that “the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” who are surviving the attacks of the Gentiles, are like “a strong support” for them, because God is protecting not only those in the city, but also those outside it (v. 5). Plus, “in that day,” God will cause the Jews to be “like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves,” so that they will fight against and defeat the Gentile armies to the extent that the latter are completely decimated. The Jews will burn up, so to speak, the Gentile armies just as fire burns up a stack of hay. And this will be “while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell” in their homes in the city without experiencing any damage to them (v. 6).

In vs. 7-9 God continues the description of what He will do on behalf of the Jews—

Zechariah 12:7 “Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first,
so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem
will not be magnified above Judah.
12:8 “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and the one who is feeble among them in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) will be like David,

and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh (כְּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה) before them.
12:9 "And in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will set about to destroy
all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

God will "save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah." God will be faithful to all the surviving Jews, so that even their king "of the house of David," whose "glory" will be in fact tremendous, will not outshine the glory which God will cause all the Jews to experience (v.7). All human history has been proceeding towards the moment when the Jews' Messiah, the final king of the line of David, will finally establish his permanent kingdom on earth, and his glory and awesomeness will be his people's glory and awesomeness. Everyone will stand in wonder and awe of him and of the Jews who now have become the greatest nation in history. This is what the apostle Paul prays that the Ephesian Christians may understand when he says in Ephesians 1:18—

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of [God's] calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

The "glory" of God's "inheritance" is the glory which His people, both Jews and Gentiles, will enjoy when Jesus returns and inaugurates the first stage of the Kingdom of God on earth by ruling over the Jews and the entire rest of the world. Jesus will experience his predestined glory. The Jews (whether mortal and believers or immortal and transformed into morally perfect beings) on the land of Israel will experience this same glory. And the Gentiles (whether mortal and believers or immortal and transformed into morally perfect beings) either on the land of Israel or throughout the rest of the world will also do so. In this way, Jesus will share his glory with his brethren who will spend eternity with him in the Kingdom of God.

Paul speaks of the same thing in Colossians 3:4—

Colossian 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

The "glory" and magnificence of Jesus as the Messiah will also be the "glory" and magnificence of those who "will be revealed with him," because they all will either at that moment when he returns (if they died before he returns or are alive when he returns) or eventually (if they live and die after his return) share his glory as the king of Israel and the world and his immortality and moral perfection.

God goes on in Zechariah 12:8 to say that "in that day," when He destroys Israel's enemies and begins the messianic kingdom, that He will definitely "defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." No one will harm them to annihilate them according to the Gentiles' intent. In fact, the Jew "who is feeble" will be "like David," strong and courageous, capable of fighting against and killing the Goliaths of the Gentile armies who lay siege to Jerusalem. Plus, "the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them," because the Messiah, the final Davidic king, will have appeared and will fight as God's proxy on earth, which is an important detail of the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2 and Psalm 89. The apostle Paul even says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 that there will be theophanies and manifestations of God, His "mighty angels [*angeloi*]," who will fight alongside the Messiah—

2 Thessalonians 1:7 …when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with [God's] mighty angels [*angeloi*] in flaming fire, 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

I think that the "mighty angels" in 2 Thessalonians 1 are like the burning bush of Exodus 3, manifestations of the transcendent God who will combat Israel's enemies as the army of the Messiah, in order to protect the Jewish people. Then, God's final word in Zechariah 12:7-9 is that "in that day [He] will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." It will not pay in the future and it never has paid for people to oppose God's chosen people, the Jews. It is theologically and biblically impossible to remain unscathed by willfully hating and seeking to harm the nation of Israel. For example, even though God used the Assyrians and the Babylonians to judge, discipline, and even kill His people, the

Jews of both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah who were rebelling against Him, He still struck these foreign nations with death and destruction because they had engaged in war against them. God has always carried out and will carry out His vengeance on those who oppose both Him and His people. And through the prophet Zechariah, He warns anyone who may think otherwise.

In Zechariah 12:10-14, that includes v. 10 to which John alludes in 19:37, God describes the Jews' future reaction to Jesus and what he experienced during his first appearance—

Zechariah 12:10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem
the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on me whom they pierced;
and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son,
and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.
12:11 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) there will be great mourning in Jerusalem,
like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.
12:12 "The land (הָאָרֶץ) will mourn, every family by itself;
the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;
12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;
12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves."

There is one member of the "house of David" who will become the final king of Israel. He is the Messiah, whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth. While there will be other members of David's future descendants who will never achieve this status and role, they nevertheless will exist at the time of Jesus' return. God will "pour out" on them "and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication." He will circumcise and change their hearts so that they all become authentic believers. They will also seek God's mercy, but it will not be through offering bulls and goats as prescribed by the Mosaic Covenant (even though we find out from other passages that they will finally obey the Mosaic Covenant properly, even bringing their sacrifices to the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem). Instead, the forgiveness of their sins comes about by looking "on [the one] whom they have pierced," whom they (or really their ancestors in collusion with the Romans) killed as a common criminal on a cross, because they firmly believed that he was falsely claiming to be their Messiah (v. 10). It is this act by the Jews to which John is referring in his gospel.

The Greek Septuagint of the portion John apparently quotes from Zechariah 12:10 and the corresponding Greek text of John 19:37, along with their literal translations, are—

Zechariah 12:10 – ἐπιβλέψονται πρός με ἀνθ᾽ ὧν κατωρχήσαντο
They will look towards me instead of those whom they mocked (literally "danced against")

John 19:37 – ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν
They will look on him whom they pierced

We notice that some of John's Greek words are not at all the same or even similar to the Septuagint of Zechariah 12:10. However, the Hebrew text and the literal translation of this part of the verse is—

Zechariah 12:10 – וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקָרוּ
and they will look towards me, the one whom they pierced

This is one of those situations that arises in comparing the Hebrew text of the Old Testament with its Greek translation in the Septuagint where it is difficult to know why there is such a marked discrepancy. But I wonder if the apostle John was familiar with both and chose to provide his own translation of the Hebrew simply to make the point that, just as God apparently predicted in Zechariah, approximately five hundred years before Jesus' first appearance, the Jews would certainly "pierce" him, i.e., stab and kill him, and also look at him, which is what they did near his cross. Some of these Jews, who are Jesus'

contemporaries and are observing his death, i.e., his family and disciples, are definitely mourning him, which is similar to what the Jews will do when Jesus returns and they believe in him as their king and ruler during the millennial kingdom. However, some of the Jews, who are observing his death on the cross, do not understand the significance of his crucifixion, so that they do not "mourn" it. Indeed, all that they are doing is looking with their eyes "on him whom they pierced" and killed.

Indeed, as Zechariah goes on to say in v. 10 above, the Jews eventually "will mourn" for Jesus "as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." I think that this also is referring to when Jesus returns, that they will mourn for him, because the Jews as an entire nation of God's chosen people, will finally realize that their forefathers committed the greatest sin in all human history when they crucified Jesus. Plus, their awareness of the depth of their own sin and rebellion against God will make them realize that they themselves would have willingly and enthusiastically participated in putting him to death—unless God had changed their hearts and made them believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

God then continues in Zechariah 12:11 to describe the heartfelt remorse of these end-times Jews, that "in that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo." It is not entirely clear how to interpret the "mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo," but I think that God is referring to the Jews' grieving the death of their Davidic king Josiah by Neco, the Pharaoh of Egypt, in 609 B.C., more than ninety years before Zechariah and as recorded in 2 Chronicles 35:20-25—

> 2 Chronicles 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco, king of Egypt, came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.
> 35:21 But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you."
> 35:22 However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him. Nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but he came to make war on the plain of Megiddo.
> 35:23 The archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded."
> 35:24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.
> 35:25 Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah. And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel. Behold, they are also written in the Lamentations.

Loss is always disappointing and grievous, whether it was that of Josiah, the king of the southern Kingdom of Judah, in 609 B.C. or that of Jesus, the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, when he died at the end of his first appearance on the earth. God is therefore telling the Jews of Zechariah's day that there is coming another time of greatly mourning their king, in addition to what and on a scale of what they experienced when the Pharaoh of Egypt killed Josiah.

Then, Zechariah 12:12-14 speak of all the various people among the Jews who will mourn the death of Jesus. This will be a national, as well as an individual, grieving which will take place. As a result, "every family by itself," such as the families of various ancestors, for example David and the prophet Nathan, "and their wives by themselves," along with Levi and his grandson Shimei "and their wives by themselves," and "all the families that remain" will grieve over the death of their Messiah which occurred many years earlier at his first appearance.

However, there will be more to the Jews' sadness as intimated by the first two verses of chapter 13—

> Zechariah 13:1 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.
> 13:2 "It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא)," declares Yahweh of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land (מִן־הָאָרֶץ),

and they will no longer be remembered;
and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land (מִן־הָאָ֖רֶץ).

Zechariah is saying that the people's sin will be included as a focal point of their sadness, which we know from other passages and the New Testament is the reason for Jesus' death. He obeyed God the Father by willingly going to the cross in order to qualify to become the eternal advocate of sinners (cf. Hebrews). He will intercede before God on their behalf at the final judgment and obtain His mercy, salvation, and eternal life for them. Therefore, "in that day [when Jesus returns] a fountain will be opened" not only for "the house of David" and his ancestors, but also "for the inhabitants of Jerusalem," for all the other Jews in this important city and, by extrapolation, on the land of Israel. The purpose of this "fountain" will be "for sin and for impurity," which is to say, in order to provide legal cleansing and forgiveness of sin for God's chosen people, the Jews, who will all finally become circumcised of heart when Jesus returns. They will all genuinely repent of their sins and obey God from their hearts. And their obedience will include their own individual belief in Jesus as their Messiah (v. 1).

The effect in v. 2 of the people's repentance "in that day" will be as if God eliminates all idolatry from the people of Israel, and He will "also remove" all the false "prophets" and the "spirit" of rebellion and disobedience "from the land." For the first time in history, the *entire nation of Israel* will be living on the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant, with each of them having a changed heart that manifests itself in authentic belief and obedience to God. Instead of embracing false ideas and lies about the nature of reality, e.g., that there is no God and Jesus is not the Messiah, which they have done throughout their history in Old Testament times and after Jesus first appearance up to and including our own day, they will finally live as God has always required of them and adhere to the truth of the Bible, even, and most especially, to the extent of acknowledging Jesus as their eternal king and high priest.

Thus, God continues in 13:3-6—

Zechariah 13:3 "And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother,
who gave birth to him, will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken
falsely in the name of Yahweh'; and his father and mother,
who gave birth to him, will pierce him through when he prophesies.
13:4 "Also, it will come about in that day (בַּיּ֣וֹם־הַה֗וּא)
that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies,
and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;
13:5 but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground,
for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.'
13:6 "And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?'
Then he will say, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'"

I think that these statements of vs. 3-6 are hypothetical. If the point of Jesus' return and restoring the Kingdom of Israel is to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 12 to make the Jews a "great nation," so that each of them has a genuine heart of belief, then, as God declared in the previous verses, there will be no more false prophets on the land. Therefore, vs. 3-6 are intended to describe in hyperbole just how committed the Jews will become to God and His Messiah, Jesus, as their king and high priest. Their dedication and loyalty to God will be of such a magnificent quality and quantity that, <u>if</u> (but fortunately it will not happen) a son were to present a false message in regard to God, his own parents would be willing to put him to death in accordance with Deuteronomy 13:6-11—

Deuteronomy 13:6 "If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you
cherish, or your friend who is as your own existence, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and
serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known,
13:7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the
earth to the other end),
13:8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him. Nor shall you spare or
conceal him.
13:9 "But you shall surely kill him (הָרֹ֣ג תַּהַרְגֶ֔נּוּ); your hand shall be first against him to put him to
death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

13:10 “So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from Yahweh your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
13:11 “Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.”

As Zechariah 13:4 says above, if anyone had at some earlier part of his life believed in and spread lies about God, he will “be ashamed” and humbly claim that he has given up all his false beliefs and youthful, sinful pursuits. He will no longer dress like a prophet by putting on “a hairy robe to deceive.” And, in spite of whatever cuts on his arms he may have made in order to present himself as fully committed to his message, he will say that his “friends” urged him to make them, thus indicating that they mean nothing to him now in his new condition of having a changed heart and authentic faith. Indeed, he will admit honestly that he is not a prophet of God in the sense that he always knows what he is talking about and people should listen to him. But he is just a common laborer on the land of Israel, who humbly submits his mind, heart, and person to God in order to gain His blessing of life and forgiveness on the land of Israel and in the eternal Kingdom of God.

After working our way through Zechariah 12:1-13:6, I think that we have the answer to our question of what John means by the soldiers’ determining that Jesus has died (and any possible future ramifications of his death), so that this is a fulfilling of the Old Testament “scripture” found in Zechariah 12:10. The prophet is predicting two events—

1) When Jesus returns to destroy the enemies of the people of Israel who have invaded their land to destroy them, the Jews will look at him with authentic repentance and belief and mourn over their sin, and specifically the sin of their ancestors’ executing Jesus, which they will realize is exactly what they would have done if they had been there—because they too are fundamentally in rebellion against God.

2) When Jesus makes his first appearance, his own people, the nation of Israel, will kill him.

Regarding the first prediction, this is obviously not what is happening when the soldiers ascertain Jesus’ condition on the cross and conclude that he has died. Nevertheless, they are “looking on him whom they pierced,” literally, and on whom they killed. Therefore, they are doing that which is similar to what the Jews will do when Jesus returns. In addition, the Jews nearby the cross are also “looking on him whom they pierced,” i.e., whom their leaders killed. Consequently, they too are doing that which is similar to what their descendants will do when Jesus returns. In this way, the soldiers (and the Jews) are fulfilling the “scripture” of Zechariah 12:10.

Regarding the second prediction by the prophet, this is exactly what God predicts because the soldiers, as instruments of the Jewish Sanhedrin, have “pierced” Jesus and killed him. In this way, the Jews, by means of the soldiers, are also fulfilling the “scripture” of Zechariah 12:10. Indeed, Zechariah is definitely predicting an event, indeed two events that factor prominently in God’s fulfilling His promise to make Israel a “great nation.” The first event chronologically is the death of the Messiah, and the second event will be his return to restore the Kingdom of Israel on their land when he destroys their enemies and God causes all the Jews’ to become authentic in their faith and obedience to Him and to Jesus as their king and high priest.

We see then that God, through Zechariah in 12:1-13:6, is predicting of a time in the far distant future relative to the prophet when He will fulfill His Abrahamic promises to the Jewish people, and even their willful and rebellious rejection and execution of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will not prevent Him from doing so. In accord with this passage, and specifically 12:10, the apostle John refers to it in John 19:37 to say that the future is coming, and indeed it has surely started with Jesus’ death on the cross, the soldiers’ observing this vital and indispensable event in human history, and the Jews’ who are near the cross doing the same.

In other words, John quotes a portion of Zechariah 12:10 in order to say that Jesus’ death is a part of its fulfillment. The Jews will have “pierced” and killed their Messiah, and then they will look at him when he returns, realize what their ancestors did, and repent of their sin as the first Jews of the Kingdom of Israel that Jesus will rule. This Old Testament verse in the context of chapter Zechariah 12 & 13 also predicts that an army will come against Jerusalem immediately preceding Jesus’ return, but God will protect Israel and even bring about a spiritual reformation of the people.

To complete the picture of the future that God is painting and to understand more completely how significant is Jesus' death and the Jews' "piercing" him, we should also look at the rest of chapter 13 and chapter 14 of Zechariah.

Here, first, is Zechariah 13:7-9—

Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the man, My Associate,"
Declares Yahweh of hosts.
"Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.
13:8 "It will come about in all the land (בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ),"
Declares Yahweh,
"That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third will be left in it.
13:9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are My people,'
And they will say, 'Yahweh is my God.'"

This short passage describes the major issues involving Jesus' two appearances. In v. 1, God declares that He is bringing a "sword" against His "Shepherd," the chief pastor of His people, the Jews. He calls him "My associate" in the NAS95, which could also be translated "the man of My community," which I think makes more sense. The Messiah is the man who stands out in God's community, His chosen people, the Jews. And God issues a command to "strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered." And He also says of these sheep that He "will turn [His] hand against the little ones."

Thus, Jesus was struck by his own people and the Romans when they put him to death on the cross. As a result, God turned "against" the Jews and "scattered" them from the land of Israel after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 and killed most of the Jews and deported the rest into slavery in A.D. 135, so that hardly a Jew was present on the land for approximately 1,900 years. It was only after the Zionist movement began in the late 19th century that significant numbers of Jews found their way back to Israel. In this way, God spurned His own people, because they rejected their Messiah and the New Covenant, just as He judged and disciplined them during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., because they had rejected Moses and the Mosaic Covenant.

We also saw that Jesus quoted v. 7 in Matthew 26:31 when his apostles and he were walking to the Mount of Olives after their Passover meal—

Matthew 26:31 At that time, Jesus was saying to [his apostles], "You will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered [in Zechariah 13:7].
26:32 "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Jesus' point was that, just as God will scatter the Jews after they reject him as their Messiah, his apostles will flee him after his arrest and during his crucifixion. Nevertheless, he goes on to say in v. 32 that they will meet up with him again after his resurrection. In this way, the apostles' leaving Jesus briefly as a result of his arrest and death is a foreshadowing of all the Jews' being driven from their land by the Romans over a century later until God brings them back to Himself and to the land to fulfill His promise to Abraham when Jesus returns. In this way, we see that v. 7 of Zechariah 13 directs the reader from the future of Jesus' return in v. 6 to the past and Jesus' death.

Then, in the next two verses of 8 & 9, God directs the reader back to the future of v. 6 up to the moment of Jesus' return. He refers to the promise that most of the Jews, indeed "two parts" of them, "will be cut off and perish," thus experiencing God's judgment and destruction on earth—like the Jews of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. However, "the third part" will continue to exist, and God "will bring [them] through fire, refine them as silver as refined, and test them as gold as tested." I think that God is

referring to the long period of time between A.D. 135 and Jesus' return—that most of the Jews will continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah, but those who are refined and tested with a positive outcome will embrace him as their king and priest who died for them. This will culminate in the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord which the prophet Malachi at the end of his book, Jesus in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:29-31, and John in the visions of Revelation 18 & 19 describe.

And the final result of God's preserving and testing the Jews will be that a remnant will be the first generation of the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns, so that God will say of them, "They are My people." And these believing Jews, "144,000" (symbolic of just the right number) of the book of Revelation, will say of Him, "Yahweh is my God." They will realize that they executed their Messiah, Jesus (the one whom they "pierced"), so that they will mourn over having done so and repent of their sins as God explained in Zechariah 12:10-14 above.

With this short passage of 13:7-9, God summarizes the first and second appearances of Jesus as a way to say that He will be faithful to His promises in the Abrahamic Covenant to make them a "great nation," and the key will be the Messiah, whose death and return to life and to the earth will be the basis of His fulfilling these promises.

Next is Zechariah 14:1-7—

Zechariah 14:1 Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh
when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.
14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle (וְאָסַפְתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם),
and the city will be captured, the houses plundered,
the women ravished and half of the city exiled,
but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.
14:3 Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations,
as when He fights on a day of battle.
14:4 In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
which is in front of Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley,
so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.
14:5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains,
for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel.
Yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.
Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the set apart ones with Him (כָּל־קְדֹשִׁים עִמָּךְ)!
14:6 In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) there will be no light;
the luminaries will dwindle.
14:7 For it will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh,
neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

In this, the last chapter of Zechariah, God goes into more detail on what will happen when He judges and disciplines the nation of Israel for the last time, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and thus establishes the messianic kingdom over the whole earth. The prophet begins his explanation in v. 1 by saying that, if this is "the spoil taken from" the Jews, which seems most likely in the context, and which will afterwards "be divided among" them, then their land has already been invaded and conquered, and they themselves have lost many of their possessions to their captors.

This is what God goes on to describe in vs. 2-3. The picture of devastation for Jerusalem and the Jews is obviously very bleak—the city "captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half the city exiled." Israel's enemies will bring about a major disaster for the Jewish people, and this can only be the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord as I mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, God declares that "the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city," meaning that He will preserve the other half of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and rescue them from any harm that the invading armies will bring to the rest of the people (v. 2).

Plus, God "will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle" (v. 3). He will not hold back in any way and will absolutely crush Israel's enemies. Certainly, no one has the strength and power to defeat God, as these Gentile armies will quickly discover. In vs. 4-5, the description of God's rescuing the Jewish people continues. "In that day," when God battles the enemies of the Jews,

"His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east." Is this a metaphorical description, or does it refer to a theophany of Yahweh like the burning bush of Exodus 3, or could this be a special representation of God on the earth? I think that it is the last option and describes the return of Jesus as the Messiah. It will be he, as God's proxy on earth according to the Davidic Covenant and he as the "icon of God" according to the apostle Paul 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, who will reappear as Israel's champion and savior, descending onto the earth on the top of the mountain that is just east of the city of Jerusalem. This is the Mount of Olives, on the other side of the Kidron Valley across from the Temple Mount, which is the same mountain from which Jesus ascended and left the earth as recorded in Acts 1:9-12—

> Acts 1:9 And after [Jesus] had said these things, he was lifted up while [his disciples] were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight.
> 1:10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.
> 1:11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Zechariah goes on to say that when Jesus returns, "the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south" (v. 4). God will cause this major geological and topographical change in the area east of Jerusalem, so that half of the inhabitants of the city "will flee by the valley" created by these two new mountains. And this "valley…will reach to Azel," whose location is unknown but must also be located east of the mountains (v. 5). God likens this fleeing by the Jews from their enemies to their escaping Jerusalem during a devastating earthquake when King Uzziah reigned around 760 B.C.

Zechariah ends v. 5 with the statement that, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem are escaping through this newly formed valley after their Messiah has touched down on the top of the Mount of Olives when he returns, "Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him." In other words, there will be others who are "holy" and set apart, who will accompany God through Jesus' return in order to fight against and destroy the invaders who are Israel's enemies. This sounds like the apostle Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8,

> 2 Thessalonians 1:7b …when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with [God's] mighty angels in flaming fire,
> 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
> 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power,
> 1:10 when he comes to be glorified in his set apart ones on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

Thus, when Jesus reappears, he does so "with God's mighty angels in flaming fire," which I suggested above in the explanation of Zechariah 12 are most likely manifestations of the transcendent God in the creation, who are arrayed in their most powerful military might to do battle with Israel's enemies and to defeat them. But Jesus will also "be glorified in his set apart ones," meaning that he will be accompanied by all those who have been authentic believers in God and him down through the years, whether God resurrects them from the dead or simply raises them off the earth if they are alive when Jesus returns, as Paul explains in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Next Zechariah says in vs. 6-7 that, "in that day" God will also cause some sort of major astronomic event which will prevent the sun and moon from shining as brightly as they normally do. Indeed, "the luminaries will dwindle," and it will be "a unique day which is known to Yahweh" only. There will be "neither day nor night" as they normally occur with the sun, moon, and stars shining as they do. Nevertheless, "it will come about that at evening time there will be light," because God will reverse what has been happening naturally. Therefore, the Jews will enter the bleak and miserable night of their existence on the land of Israel, the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, but God will soon thereafter bring back to them the bright and wonderful day.

He describes this in Zechariah 14:8-11—

Zechariah 14:8 And in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) living waters will flow out of Jerusalem,
half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea.
It will be in summer as well as in winter.
14:9 And Yahweh will be king over all the earth (עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ).
In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) Yahweh will be the only one,
and His name the only one.
14:10 All the land (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) will be changed into a plain
from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem.
But Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate
as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate,
and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.
14:11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse (חֵרֶם),
for Jerusalem will dwell in security (וְיָשְׁבָה יְרוּשָׁלִַם לָבֶטַח).

Again, "in that day" there will be "living waters," which are probably a single stream that flows out of the ground in the middle of Jerusalem when the Mount of Olives is split. And this stream "will flow out of Jerusalem" toward both "the eastern sea" and "the western sea," the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea respectively. And unlike the arid and hot summers when most of the rivers and streams in Israel dry up, these waters from below the ground "will be in summer as well as in winter" (v. 8). As a result, I think that God is either speaking metaphorically, or this actual stream will be a metaphor for God who has brought about the messianic kingdom with all its fullness, including the constant, physical sustenance of the Jewish people, who will drink this stream's water at all times of the year. They will persistently be ingesting the God's strength and power to live as people of genuine belief and obedience to Him, while also submitting to Jesus as their ruler and high priest.

Plus, "Yahweh will be king over all the earth," where the Hebrew word *'eretz* (אֶרֶץ) more likely does mean "earth," as in the whole world, and not just "land," as in the land of Israel. God will establish His governance through Jesus the Messiah over the whole earth, both over the Jewish people on the land of Israel and over the Gentiles in other nations around the globe. As a result, "in that day Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one" (v. 9). There will be no other gods permitted by God for all the people of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, to worship. Pagan idolatry and other religions will completely disappear from the earth, whether or not some (if not most) of the Gentiles do not have changed hearts. Even if they do not, God through Jesus will not allow them to continue practicing their false religions. Grudgingly they will probably stop worshiping false gods and cease practicing false religions, but they will still have to do so.

Unless He is speaking metaphorically, God will bring about additional topographical changes to the land of Israel as "all the land will be changed into a plain…, but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site," "from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate, as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses" (v. 10). Geba was located approximately six miles northeast of Jerusalem and within the land allocated to the tribe of Benjamin. Rimmon is probably that of the tribe of Simeon in the middle of Judah's territory to the "south of Jerusalem." With these places, God is referring to all the area of the former southern Kingdom of Judah. Benjamin's Gate, the First Gate, and the Tower of Hananel were each a part of the northeastern section of Jerusalem's city wall, while the Corner Gate was at the northwest corner. The king's wine presses were just south of the city. In this way, God is speaking of the whole city of Jerusalem, His city.

Approximately a thousand years earlier, about 1500 B.C., after God had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and cared for them for forty years during their journey through the Sinai desert, so that they were poised on the eastern bank of the Jordan River to cross into the land of Canaan, which He had promised to give to them in the Abrahamic Covenant, Moses made it clear in Deuteronomy 12:1-14 that there would be one place in the land where God Himself would dwell and consider unique for where His chosen people, the Jews, should worship Him—

Deuteronomy 12:1 “These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land (אָרֶץ) (γῆ) which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth (אֲדָמָה) (γῆ).
12:2 “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.
2:3 “You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.
12:4 “You shall not act like this toward Yahweh your God.
12:5 “**But you shall seek Yahweh at the place which Yahweh your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish** (לָשׂוּם) **His name there for His dwelling** (לְשִׁכְנוֹ)**, and there you shall come.**
12:6 “There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.
12:7 “There also you and your households shall eat before Yahweh your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which Yahweh your God has blessed you.
12:8 “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes;
12:9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place (אֶל־הַמְּנוּחָה) (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν) and the inheritance which Yahweh your God is giving you.
12:10 “**When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest** (וְהֵנִיחַ לָכֶם) (καὶ καταπαύσει ὑμᾶς) **from all your enemies around you so that you live in security,**
12:11 **then it shall come about that the place in which Yahweh your God will choose for His name to dwell** (לְשַׁכֵּן)**, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to Yahweh.**
12:12 “And you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.
12:13 “Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see,
12:14 **but in the place which Yahweh chooses in one of your tribes**, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. [emphasis mine]

In addition, after Solomon had built a permanent, stone temple for God around 900 B.C., six hundred years after Moses and four hundred years before Zechariah, he spoke in 2 Chronicles 6:3-11 to his fellow Israelites of how special both Jerusalem and the Davidic king of the Davidic Covenant is—

2 Chronicles 6:3 Then the king [Solomon] faced about and blessed all the assembly (קָהָל) (ἐκκλησία) of Israel, while all the assembly (קָהָל) (ἐκκλησία) of Israel was standing.
6:4 He said, “Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hands, saying,
6:5 ‘Since the day that I brought My people from the land of Egypt, I did not choose a city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man for a leader over My people Israel;
6:6 **but I have chosen Jerusalem that My name might be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.**’
6:7 “Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel.
6:8 “But Yahweh said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.
6:9 ‘Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who will be born to you, he shall build the house for My name.’

6:10 "**Now Yahweh has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in the place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel**.
6:11 "There I have set the ark in which is the covenant of Yahweh, which He made with the sons of Israel." [emphasis mine]

On the basis of previous statements, promises, and actions by God, He is therefore saying in Zechariah 14:8-11 (and really in all the Old Testament) that He will demonstrate by the two elevations, Jerusalem as high and the rest of the land of Israel as low, that the most important place on the whole earth is Jerusalem, and the most important person on the earth is the king of Israel, who is David's descendant. Granted, we are still waiting for the final king of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, to appear again and rule not only the Jews of Israel but also the Gentiles of the rest of world. But, for twenty-five hundred years, God has been declaring throughout the entire Bible that Washington D.C., New York, Moscow, Beijing, London, Paris, Kyiv, Tehran, Istanbul, Cairo, Riyadh, Beirut, and Damascus and their leaders, no matter how powerful they may be today, pale in their importance in comparison to Jerusalem and the Davidic king of Israel. For us to direct most of our attention and energy towards these other cities and the heads of their respective nations is to succumb to the lies of God's greatest adversary, Satan, whose primary goal is to undermine His plans and purposes for the Jews and Jerusalem and to persuade the people of the world to ignore and even reject Him.

God is thus making it clear in Zechariah 14:8-11 that, after Jesus' return, He through the Messiah will rule from this city and will finally fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation." As a result, "people will live" in Jerusalem and "will dwell in security," for "there will no longer be any curse" or threat of judgment hanging over the Jewish people (v. 11). The word for curse is *ḥerem* (חֵרֶם) and refers to not only that which God forbids and bans, but that which He requires be destroyed—whether thing or person. From this time on, each and every mortal Jew will be a sinner of changed heart and authentic belief, so that their city, Jerusalem, and they will never again incur God's judgment and discipline, as He brought about by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans in the past. Therefore, their enemies will never again harm them and cause them suffering and death. The earth will finally have a government—the government of Jesus the Jewish Messiah—that brings peace to the entire world and that rules with no corruption and with absolute power and authority over everyone.

When God fights against these last enemies of the Jews when Jesus returns, His weapon of choice will be something quite unusual as described in vs. 12-15—

Zechariah 14:12 Now this will be the plague with which Yahweh
will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem—
their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet,
and their eyes will rot in their sockets,
and their tongue will rot in their mouth.
14:13 It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא)
that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them.
And they will seize one another's hand,
and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.
14:14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem.
And the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered,
gold and silver and garments in great abundance.
14:15 So also like this plague will be the plague on the horse,
the mule, the camel, the donkey and all the cattle that will be in those camps.

As God did in Egypt at the time of Moses, He will bring about a plague on the armies who have invaded His chosen people's land and who are bringing great devastation in Jerusalem as described above in v. 2. This plague on the Gentile armies will be so extreme that "their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth" (v. 12). In other words, God will destroy and annihilate them completely as their bodies decompose even while they stand alive in readiness to continue their attack on the Jews. Will this be caused by an atomic or nuclear bomb, or is this just the miraculous work of God in the midst of the normal course of events? I

think that it is the latter, so that the only thing that is harmed and destroyed is each individual soldier who comprises Israel's enemies. It will be death by decay and decomposition, which normally happen *after* death.

Also, "it will come about in that day that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them. And they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another" (v. 13). Before their flesh begins to decompose, God will cause these armies to fight against one another. Plus, "Judah will also fight at Jerusalem" (v. 14). In other words, God will bring the Jewish people on the land into the battle, so that they will participate with Jesus, with God's theophanies, and with the transformed believers from the past in the destruction of their enemies (cf. Revelation 19:14). And while the foreign armies lie dead on the ground, "the wealth of all the surrounding nations [of these soldiers] will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance" (v. 14). The implication is that all this great wealth that perhaps has come from or in conjunction with Israel will end up back in Israel and in the possession of the Jews.

Then, v. 15 adds that the same plague which comes upon the soldiers will affect their military gear, their transportation vehicles, and their food. Everything that comprised this army as a viable military machine God will miraculously destroy while rescuing His chosen people, the Jews. Nevertheless, in vs. 16-19, God will also require something special of the remaining people in the surrounding Gentile nations (and in the rest of the world), after their armies are destroyed on the land of Israel—

Zechariah 14:16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations (מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם)
that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year
to worship (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) the King, Yahweh of hosts,
and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (וְלָחֹג אֶת־חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת).
14:17 And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth (מֵאֵת מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָרֶץ)
does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) King,
Yahweh of hosts, there will be no rain on them.
14:18 If the family of Egypt (וְאִם־מִשְׁפַּחַת מִצְרַיִם) does not go up or enter,
then no rain will fall on them. It will be the plague
with which Yahweh smites the nations
who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.
14:19 This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations
who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

Instead of attacking the Jews, people from "all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts," and obviously His proxy, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who has returned and restored the Kingdom of Israel. These Gentiles (or at least a delegation of believers from these countries from around the world) will travel once a year to Jerusalem "to celebrate the Feast of Booths," the feast which God stipulated for the Jews to celebrate for seven days, starting on the fifteenth of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, in memory of His maintaining their existence for forty years in the midst of the harsh conditions of the Sinai Desert, after He rescued them from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses (v. 16). In this way, God will remind both believing Jews and believing Gentiles that He has rescued them from His harsh judgment of eternal condemnation and destruction. They will remember that they are merely clay pots, as the apostle Paul describes human beings in Romans 9, whose existences and rescue from God's judgment, are entirely dependent on their transcendent creator, God.

If the Gentile nations do not send believing representatives from their populations during this feast, then "there will be no rain on them," and they will die of starvation. This will be an additional "plague with which Yahweh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths" (v. 18). This will be their "punishment" if they ignore God's commandment, but He seems to imply here that the Gentile nations surrounding Israel will definitely obey this requirement, because fortunately there will be authentic believers among them, who will have a fundamental desire to carry out God's commandment from hearts which His Spirit has changed (v. 19). This, too, will be part of what it means for Jesus to set up his messianic kingdom over the entire earth and rule with "a rod of iron" as Psalm 2:9 indicates. Certainly even the unbelievers will not want to go against God and His proxy, Jesus, so as to incur their wrath.

Zechariah ends his book with vs. 20-21,

Zechariah 14:20 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses,
"HOLY TO YAHWEH (קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה)." And the cooking pots in Yahweh's house
will be like the bowls before the altar.
14:21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of hosts.
And all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them.
And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא).

The phrase "Holy to Yahweh" is first used in Exodus 28:36 for a plate of pure gold that was attached to the turban of the high priest,

Exodus 28:36 "You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to Yahweh.'

However, when Jesus returns and establishes the messianic kingdom, not only will the high priest be set apart in his heart and thus sanctified and holy to God, but even the most average and mundane things will demonstrate that they are special to God. The "bells on the horses," who are beasts of burden, will be "inscribed" with the words, "Holy to Yahweh." All cooking pots, whether those which cook the offerings and sacrifices of the Jews in the temple or those which they use to prepare their daily meals, will be "like the bowls before the altar" (v. 20). All the Jewish people, too, will be considered as sacred and holy to God, set apart by virtue of their changed hearts, authentic belief, and moral lives (not morally perfect, but finally, inwardly oriented towards and pursuing biblical morality) (v. 21). "There will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day." Zechariah does not mean a literal "Canaanite," a member of the original Gentiles who lived on the land of Israel during the time of Abraham and Moses. He means that there will never again be an unbelieving Jew with an uncircumcised heart who enters in the new temple of the messianic kingdom. According to Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, God will have fulfilled His promise in the Abrahamic Covenant to make the descendants of the first Jew, Abraham, a "great nation" of genuine believers and worshipers of God.

We see from these three chapters of Zechariah that Jesus' death becomes a vital event in the whole process of God's fulfilling His promise to Abraham to mold his descendants into "a great nation," indeed, the greatest and most powerful nation in all human history, when Jesus rules over them after his return and exercises dominion over the rest of the world. To reiterate, the promises of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 are the historical and chronological foundation of all the rest of God's activities towards the Jews, His chosen people on earth, and towards the Gentiles, among whom He has also chosen some to acquire eternal salvation. All that God does towards the Jews and Gentiles find their meaning and fulfillment in the theologically foundational activities of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return to bring about the Kingdom of Israel as it should be (with all the Jews' being firm and authentic believers in God and Jesus as the Messiah) and to establish the eternal Kingdom of God (starting with the millennial kingdom of this earth of Revelation 20 and finishing with kingdom of the new, eternal earth of Revelation 21).

Here is Genesis 12:1-2 again—

Genesis 12:1 Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and
from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;
12:2 and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you
shall be a blessing;
12:3 and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the
families of the earth will be blessed."

In these verses, God makes three promises to Abraham –

1) To mold his descendants into the greatest nation on earth on the land of Israel
2) To bless Abraham with eternal life

3) To make Abraham's name great by having people from all ethnic groups adopt the same kind of faith that he has so that they, too, acquire eternal life

Over the course of time, God works out the fulfillment of these promises during the rest of human history, both in the present realm, which culminates in the Kingdom of Israel (the first stage of the Kingdom of God) and in the eternal realm, which will be the Kingdom of the new Jerusalem (the second stage of the Kingdom of God). The Kingdom of Israel happens within the present universe and on this earth, while the Kingdom of the new Jerusalem will happen within the next universe and on a new earth, on which believers from all time in this realm will dwell with Jesus eternally.

w. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus Bury Jesus in Joseph's Tomb

Wednesday about 5 p.m.

Matthew 27:57-60	Mark 15:42-46	Luke 23:50-54	John 19:38-42
27:57 When evening occurred, there came a wealthy man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had become a disciple of Jesus. 27:58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 27:59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 27:60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. And he rolled a large rock against the entrance to the tomb and went away.	15:42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a respected leader, who himself was also waiting for the Kingdom of God. And he gathered up the courage and went in before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 15:44 But Pilate wondered if he was already dead, and summoning the centurion, he asked him if he had died a while ago. 15:45 And finding this out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 15:46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.	23:50 And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 23:51 (he had not agreed with their plan and action) from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the Kingdom of God, 23:52 this man went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. 23:53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and he laid him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 23:54 It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin.	19:38 After these things, Joseph from Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus and had kept it secret because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. 19:39 Nicodemus, the one who had come to him first at night, also came and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 19:40 Therefore, they took Jesus' body and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 19:41 There was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 19:42 Therefore, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there on account of the day of preparation of the Jews.

Explanation of the Above Passages

Jesus has died, crucified on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem, and it is time to bury his body before sundown when the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened begins after the Passover. But who is going to take care of his body and bury him? We might expect his family (his brothers and his mother) and his close disciples (the apostles) to do so. Instead, the four gospel accounts tell us,

> Matthew 27:57 When evening occurred, there came a wealthy man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had become a disciple of Jesus. 27:58a This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
>
> Mark 15:42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a respected leader, who himself was also waiting for the Kingdom of God. And he gathered up the courage and went in before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
>
> Luke 23:50 And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 23:51 (he had not agreed with their plan and action) from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the Kingdom of God, 23:52 this man went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus.
>
> John 19:38a After these things, Joseph from Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus and had kept it secret because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus.

Matthew and Mark indicate that "evening" (ὀψία) has "occurred," meaning that it is around 5 p.m. between late afternoon and darkness, so that it is still before the actual sundown. Mark also states that "it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath." Normally, we think of Saturday as the only Sabbath day and that Jesus was therefore crucified on Friday, which is called Good Friday. But we have seen from the various Old Testament and New Testament passages that his crucifixion took place on Wednesday and that this particular Sabbath is the first High Sabbath of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, Thursday will be a Sabbath day two days before the regular weekly Sabbath of Saturday. (See the chart on page 16 of this document.)

Next, all four gospels inform us that there is "a wealthy man from Arimathea" (Matthew) whose name is Joseph, and Arimathea is a "city of the Jews" (Luke). Matthew and John say that he is "a disciple of Jesus," but he "had kept it a secret because of his fear of the Jews" (John). John had previously stated in chapter 12, verse 42, that "many of the rulers believed in [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees, they were not acknowledging him, so that they would not be banished from the synagogue." Probably this is why Joseph of Arimathea has kept his belief in Jesus as the Messiah private and a secret. However, now he is about to do something very public and will probably get himself in trouble not only with the Pharisees, but also with most of the other Jewish teachers and priests. Yet, his devotion to Jesus is overriding his fear of social and religious ostracization from his fellow Jews.

Matthew also says that Joseph himself is "a respected leader," which means, according to Luke, that he is a "member of the Council" (literally a "counselor" (βουλευτὴς)). Therefore, most likely he is one of approximately seventy members of the Sanhedrin, the group of men who have the responsibility to govern and rule the Jews in accordance with the statutes of the Mosaic Covenant, but under the authority of the Roman government. It was they who tried and condemned Jesus to death for his supposed false claim of being the Messiah and king of Israel. In fact, Luke describes Joseph as a "good and righteous man," and someone who "had not agreed with their [the Sanhedrin's] plan and action" to put Jesus to death. In addition, he "was waiting for the Kingdom of God" (Mark and Luke), which I assume the other Jewish leaders were also doing. However, Mark and Luke say this of Joseph because his "waiting" is different from the other leaders' who are rejecting Jesus. His is an authentic "waiting" of genuine belief in God, so that his heart has obviously been changed by Him to recognize Jesus according to his claim of being the Messiah and king of Israel. We can only imagine how he has hidden his belief in Jesus during the previous intense hours while rest of his fellow Jewish leaders were questioning, posturing, shouting, and screaming for Jesus' death and crucifixion. And we can only imagine how agonizing it was for him to

watch as the others connived and manipulated Pilate to accomplish their goal of bringing about Jesus' death.

And then all four gospel authors write that Joseph "gathered up the courage" (Mark) to go to Pilate and asks him "if he could take away the body of Jesus" (John). But why does he need such courage to do so? Is he afraid of Pilate? Probably not. Pilate is not the problem for Joseph. As John has said in chapter 12, it is the Jews. Joseph is obviously concerned about what will happen to him if the other members of the Council find out that he has gone to all the trouble of seeking permission from the Roman governor to receive Jesus' body and bury him. Yes, this is something that needs to occur according to the Mosaic Covenant and in obedience to God. But why would someone of Joseph stature within Jewish society take the lead in burying this blasphemer and charlatan who deserves nothing less than to be crucified by the Romans? Is he sympathetic to Jesus and his claims? Well, yes, indeed he is. And something within him is so motivating that he throws caution to the wind and publicly and personally seeks to treat Jesus' body with the respect that he deserves.

Thus, the four authors continue their accounts,

Matthew 27:58b Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

Mark 15:44 But Pilate wondered if he was already dead, and summoning the centurion, he asked him if he had died a while ago. 15:45 And finding this out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

John 19:38b And Pilate gave him permission.

Matthew and John simply say that Pilate complies with Joseph's request that Jesus' body "be given to him" (Matthew). This is to say that he "gave him permission" (John). But Mark adds another detail that shows that "Pilate wondered if [Jesus] was already dead." Was the governor surprised as if all three men would have stayed alive longer on their respective crosses? Or was this just standard protocol, that the chief ruler of the Roman government of the area certainly does not want anyone whom he has condemned to be crucified to survive this ordeal and to continue to live? This would have especially been the case in regard to Jesus since the Jews had gone to so much trouble and effort to pressure him into handing him over to his soldiers to crucify him. The last thing Pilate needs, if Jesus is still alive, is more crowds and more potential riots from those under his rule. Therefore, he needs to make absolutely certain that Jesus is dead and no longer a problem and a cause of disrupting the peace in Jerusalem.

Therefore, Pilate summons "the centurion," and I assume the very centurion who has watched Jesus die and who exclaimed out loud that he is the Son of God, and "he asked him if he had died a while ago." The centurion verifies Jesus' death, so that after Pilate has found this out from him, "he granted the body to Joseph" (Mark), so that the completion of Jesus' burial goes like this,

Matthew 27:59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 27:60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. And he rolled a large rock against the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Mark 15:46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Luke 23:53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and he laid him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 23:54 It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

John 19:38c So he came and took away his body. 19:39 Nicodemus, the one who had come to him first at night, also came and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 19:40 Therefore, they took Jesus' body and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 19:41 There was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 19:42 Therefore, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there on account of the day of preparation of the Jews.

After Pilate gives Joseph permission to take Jesus body and bury him, “he came” (John) and took it both “down” (Mark, Luke) and “away” (John). Joseph also has “bought a linen cloth” and therefore “wrapped” (Matthew, Mark, Luke) Jesus’ body in it. However, John provides another important detail, that “Nicodemus, the one who had come to [Jesus] first at night, also came and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.” John related the story of Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus in chapter 3. Therefore, it is only natural that he would now also mention Nicodemus’ role in Jesus’ burial. Thus, we learn from John that it is together that Joseph and Nicodemus “took Jesus’ body and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.” Consequently, we see that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are interested in informing their readers that Joseph of Arimathea is most instrumental in Jesus’ being buried. But John wants his readers to know that Nicodemus takes part also in burying him. This is not to say that the other authors are wrong or contradicting John. They are simply incomplete in their descriptions of this event—for their own purposes as storytellers. Also, the “linen wrappings” in John must come from the “linen cloth” that Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that Joseph has bought. In other words, Joseph is providing the “linen wrappings” for Jesus’ body, and Nicodemus is providing the “spices” that are part of the “burial custom of the Jews.”

Matthew then tells us that “he” (but we know it is “they,” Joseph and Nicodemus) “laid [Jesus’ body] in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.” Mark and Luke indicate that it was just “a tomb,” while Luke adds that it was one “where no one had ever lain,” because, as Matthew indicates, it belongs to Joseph and is awaiting his dead body before someone will lie in it. John puts it this way, “There was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.” John also says that “because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there on account of the day of preparation of the Jews.” Thus, Joseph has somehow acquired the right to dig into the rock of a garden near the place where criminals are commonly crucified, and it is into this previously formed tomb that Nicodemus and he lay Jesus’ dead body. Like Luke, it is also here in his account where John states that it is the “day of preparation of the Jews,” which means that it was the Passover and the day before the first High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And finally Matthew and Mark indicate that Joseph (and we can assume Nicodemus, too) “rolled a large rock against the entrance to the tomb and went away.” Thus, Jesus has died on the cross, and his body has been carefully laid in a tomb nearby, in a garden, and the two men who have accomplished this latter task, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both members of the Jewish Sanhedrin but believers in Jesus as the Messiah, once they have rolled a large stone against the entrance to the tomb, leave and go their respective ways. And while they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, they probably do not understood completely the Old Testament and that he had to die in order to qualify for his eternal role as king and high priest. Therefore, like the other disciples, they may be leaving the tomb and Jesus’ body rather discouraged and even grief stricken. But as the Psalmist says, “a shout of joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5), so that four mornings from now, they will be able to shout for joy when they hear that Jesus has risen from the dead and will never die again.

x. The Women Observe Jesus’ Being Buried at the Tomb

Wednesday about 5 p.m.

Matthew 27:61	Mark 15:47	Luke 23:55	John
27:61 And Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the grave.	15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were observing where he was laid.	23:55 Now the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

Immediately after describing Joseph of Arimathea’s procurement and burial of Jesus’ body, Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that there are several women who are at the tomb and observing what Joseph

and Nicodemus are doing. Earlier in John 19:25-27, John had mentioned the presence of five people near Jesus' cross and who were watching him go through the last hours of his life. These four women and one man were:

1. Jesus' mother [Mary]
2. Jesus' mother's sister [Salome, the mother of James and John, the two sons of Zebedee]
3. Mary of Clopas [probably the mother of James the Less and Joses, i.e., Joseph]
4. Mary Magdalene
5. The disciple whom Jesus loved [John, most likely]

Later, Matthew, Mark, and Luke write of various witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion. These are according to each author:

Matthew 27:55-56 –
"Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee while serving him, among whom are":

1. Mary Magdalene
2. Mary, the mother of James and Joseph [Mary of Clopas]
3. The mother of the two sons of Zebedee [Salome, Jesus' mother's sister, whose sons are James and John]

Mark 15:40-41 –
"Some women observing from a distance, among whom were":

1. Mary Magdalene
2. Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses [Mary of Clopas]
3. Salome [Jesus' mother's sister and the mother of James and John, the two sons of Zebedee]

Luke 23:49 –
"And all those who were known to [Jesus], including the women who had accompanied him from Galilee and were seeing these things, had stood at a distance."

We concluded earlier that Matthew and Mark are featuring the three women whom they list and/or name, while Luke is indicating that there were actually more than just these three who are near Jesus' cross and watching him die. Indeed, there may have been around a hundred people, both men and women, who are present. Now, during the time when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are burying Jesus, these three authors describe the women who are watching them carry out their task,

Matthew 27:61 And Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the grave.

Mark 15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were observing where he was laid.

Luke 23:55 Now the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

We can list these women according to each author,

Matthew –
1. Mary Magdalene
2. The other Mary

Mark –
1. Mary Magdalene
2. Mary, the mother of Joses [Joseph]

Luke –

"The women who had come with [Jesus] from Galilee"

As in the case of the men who bury Jesus, where Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention only Joseph of Arimathea while John includes Nicodemus, the first two authors name just two women, while Luke seems to allow for other women also to be present. Mary Magdalene is by now a very familiar name. She is the one from whom Jesus exorcised seven demons (cf. Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). The second woman is "the other Mary" in Matthew and "Mary, the mother of Joses" in Mark, where she is most likely the same person. She is Mary of Clopas according to John 19:25-27, the mother of both James the Less and Joses, i.e., Joseph (cf. Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41). However, Luke, as I said, writes in such a way that there are very likely more than just these two women who are at Joseph's tomb and watching both Nicodemus and him as they prepare Jesus' body with the linen wrappings and spices, bury him, and roll the large stone across the entrance to seal it. Indeed, I think that we will see that Luke's story bears out the presence of more than just the two women of Matthew and Mark.

Therefore, we can say that Matthew is featuring Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, Mary of Clopas. But this does not mean that other of the women also are with them watching as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bury Jesus in Joseph's tomb. Then, like Matthew, Mark is featuring the two Marys, but there probably are other women there too as the rest of the story will reveal. Luke does not name any of the women but simply speaks of them in the plural, meaning that there are more than one women there at the tomb. Are these women only the two Marys of Matthew and Mark? Not necessarily, and I think that it is more likely that additional women are present as the rest of Luke's story will reveal.

As a result, Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that the following women are at the tomb when Jesus is buried,

1. Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had exorcised seven demons
2. Mary of Clopas, the mother of James the Less and Joses (Joseph)
3. Some other women, unnamed at this time, who are disciples of Jesus and who have come from Galilee with him to the Passover

We do not know how these women found out about Joseph of Arimathea's and Nicodemus' plans to request Jesus' body from Pilate so that they might bury him in Joseph's personal tomb. But somehow they did, and here they are watching these two men carry out their objectives on Jesus' behalf, so that they know exactly where he is being buried, which will become important four days from now after his resurrection and the weekly Sabbath of Saturday.

4. The Guard at the Tomb

WEDNESDAY sundown - THURSDAY sundown (the 15th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

a. The Jewish Leadership Obtain Permission to Establish a Guard at the Tomb

Thursday during the day

Matthew 27:62-66
27:62 On the next day, which was after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate 27:63 and said, "Sir, we remember that when he was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 27:64 Therefore, order that the grave be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' And the last deception will be worse than the first." 27:65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go and make it secure as you know how." 27:66 And they went and made the grave secure, setting a seal on the stone along with the guard.

Explanation of the Above Passage

We have now moved from Tuesday and the Passover to Wednesday and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In fact, Wednesday is the first High Sabbath of this second feast. Plus, the scene in Matthew

27:62-66 does not take place immediately after sundown on Tuesday, when the High Sabbath actually begins. Instead, it happens during the daytime of Wednesday after the night has come and gone. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Jesus in Joseph's personal tomb the previous evening before sundown, and certain women observed them as they completed this task. And even though this new day is a Sabbath itself when the Jews should not do any "work" *per se*, another issue has arisen in the minds of the Sanhedrin, and they realize that they must take care of it immediately. However, only Matthew provides us with an account of this scene, and he begins it like this,

> Matthew 27:62 On the next day, which was after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate 27:63 and said, "Sir, we remember that when he was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'"

The previous day was the Passover and the "preparation" for the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which will last for seven days. And on this Sabbath, the first day of this feast, "the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate." I think it is safe to assume that, once again, they do not enter into Pilate's residence, but whatever was the setting during his evaluation of Jesus two days earlier, it was the same during this new conversation. But it is imperative in the minds of the Jewish leaders that they speak with Pilate and solicit his additional help on another vital issue, because it has obviously become public knowledge that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have buried Jesus in a closed tomb in a garden.

Thus, they say to him that they "remember that when [Jesus] was still alive," that this "deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'" They have definitely succeeded in having Jesus crucified by the Romans, and we know that Pilate has verified that he is truly dead by asking the centurion who was there at the cross. And now the "chief priests and Pharisees" return to Pilate and inform him that Jesus had claimed that after he died, he would rise from the dead on the third day. However, Matthew does not indicate exactly how the Jewish leaders came by this information, and it is quite curious that they not only know it, but even understand it—at least to the degree that they grasp that Jesus really had said that he would truly rise from the dead.

For example, in the John 2:18-22, we read,

> John 2:18 Therefore, the Jews responded and said to him, "What sign do you show us that you do these things?" 2:19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."
> 2:20 Therefore, the Jews said, "This temple was built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"
> 2:21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 2:22 When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, <u>his disciples</u> remembered that he said this, and they believed the writing and the statement which Jesus spoke [emphasis mine].

Early in the three years of Jesus' ministry, he spoke a metaphor to the Jews in Jerusalem during a Passover feast that if they "destroyed this temple" of his body by killing him, that he would "raise it up in three days" and bring it back to life. But, based upon their response to him, they clearly did not understand the metaphor and thought that he was talking about the actual, stone temple in Jerusalem, so that his claim seemed utterly ridiculous to them. We also can read in the three accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke that at least three times Jesus explicitly tells <u>his twelve disciples</u> that he is going to suffer death at the hands of the Sanhedrin and then rise from the dead three days later, but even they do not fully grasp what he is saying. Here is an example as told by Luke,

> Luke 18:31 Then he took aside the twelve and said to them,
> "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything which has been written about the Son of Man will be completed. 18:32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles and will be mocked, insulted, and spat upon. 18:33 And after they have flogged him with a whip, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise from the dead."
> 18:34 But <u>they understood none of these things</u>, <u>and this statement had been hidden from them</u>. <u>And they did not comprehend the things that were said</u> [emphasis mine].

Here Luke indicates plainly that Jesus' own disciples, including the twelve apostles, are blind to the meaning of his words so that the thought of his rising from the dead "on the third day" escapes them completely. And we saw also earlier in our analysis of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin that false witnesses came forward and testified to Jesus' saying that he would destroy the actual, stone temple in Jerusalem and rebuild it in three days. However, their testimony was inconsistent, and it did seem to everybody that it pertained to the physical building, where they bring their offerings and sacrifices to God, and not to Jesus' body. So who was it that informed the "chief priests and the Pharisees" that Jesus had definitely and categorically stated that he would rise from the dead after three days? And who was it that made it absolutely clear to them that this was the meaning of his words? Unfortunately, we do not know the answer to this question.

Plus, if Jesus' own disciples, who spent three years with him and heard him describe the end of his like this, did not completely "comprehend" what he was saying because (we assume) it "had been hidden from them" by God, then how is it that his enemies are clear on this issue? Thus, the "chief priests and Pharisees" understand what Jesus said, but in no way do they believe that it will actually happen. Like many people down through history, they have an intellectual knowledge and grasp what Jesus said, but their hearts are so stubborn and hard that they are unwilling to believe it.

And now they are concerned about another problem with respect to his claim to be the Messiah and with respect to his death and burial. While they themselves do not believe that Jesus will rise from the dead, according to Matthew they still say to Pilate,

> Matthew 27:64 "Therefore, order that the grave be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' And the last deception will be worse than the first."

The Pharisees understand clearly what his disciples do not yet grasp completely, and yet they, the Jewish leaders, are not exercising authentic belief in God, while the apostles are. We need to let this sink in within us—that people can follow the thoughts and ideas that someone speaks and even understand them, while lacking authentic faith, in the midst of other people hearing what someone says and not understand what they are communicating, while having authentic faith. Such are God's ways sometimes, and it does demonstrate that unbelievers can certainly understand truth. Yet, this does not make them authentic believers. And authentic believers can lack understanding of truth. But this does not make them unbelievers. The apostle Paul makes the fact of the first kind of person unmistakable in Romans 1 where he writes,

> Romans 1:18 For God's wrath is set to be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth with their unrighteousness, 1:19 because what can be known about God is obvious among them, for God made it obvious to them. 1:20 For since the creation of the universe, His invisible qualities, both His eternal power and uncreated-God-ness, have been clearly perceived, because they are intellectually grasped through the things that are created.
> Therefore, they are without any defense, 1:21 because, while they know about God, they neither ascribe worth to Him as God nor thank Him. Instead, they become worthlessly unintelligent in their reasonings, and their clueless heart is darkened. 1:22 While claiming to be wise, they become fools 1:23 and exchange the majesty of the indestructible God for an image that is the representation of destructible man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

Every human being knows and understands that there is a God, a transcendent creator of the reality in which we live. In other words, there really is no one is an actual atheist. The creation teaches people every day that God exists, and people are hearing what the creation is saying, even while they refuse to believe what it is saying, Instead, for most people in human history, their hearts have been and continue to be hard and stubborn, so that they are unwilling to believe the truth of God's presence and existence with authentic faith and to learn from Him and to live before Him according to His instructions and teaching in the Bible. In addition, they make up lies about the nature of the created reality and speak and behave in immoral and sinful ways.

The "chief priests and Pharisees" of Jesus' day are demonstrating this kind of unbelief while understanding that Jesus did claim that he would rise from the dead after three days. They have heard

the truth, but they are unwilling to believe it. Therefore, they request that Pilate set up a guard at Jesus' grave to ensure that his "disciples [not] come and steal him away" and then say to the people, "He has risen from the dead." In the Pharisees' hearts and minds, the only way that Jesus could rise from the dead is if his disciples play a trick on the people of Israel—and this after all the miracles of healing and feeding thousands of people with miniscule food which God performed through Jesus. And, also according to the Pharisees, if Jesus' disciples were to deceive the people in this way, "the last deception will be worse than the first."

In other words, it has been bad enough that the *charlatan* Jesus has claimed to be the Messiah. And they are believing that he is a false Messiah in spite of all the miracles which he performed and in spite of the fact that he did acquire a fairly sizable following among the Jewish people. Consequently, in their minds, Jesus was a master deceiver who was able to deceive the people with his lie. But what if the disciples make his body disappear by robbing it from the tomb and burying it where nobody can find it? Then, they will be able to say that Jesus has risen from dead, just as he said he would, and no one will be able to prove otherwise. And if so many people fell for the first deception, that he is the Messiah, then how many more will fall for the second ruse, that he has risen from the dead? It would be in this way that the second and "last deception will be worse than the first."

However, on this occasion, Pilate wants nothing to do with the Sanhedrin's fears and demands as Matthew writes,

> Matthew 27:65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go and make it secure as you know how."

As far as Pilate is concerned, this is not his problem. No Roman soldiers are going to be involved in the Jewish leaders' paranoia regarding this man, Jesus of Nazareth. He tells them to use their own soldiers, their "guard," who are the Jewish bouncers of the temple and the Sanhedrin. They can order them to "go and make [the tomb] secure as [they] know how."

And Matthew ends this part of his story,

> Matthew 27:66 And they went and made the grave secure, setting a seal on the stone along with the guard.

As a result of their failed conversation with the Roman governor Pilate, the "chief priests and the Pharisees" do exactly what he has suggested, so that they "went and made the grave secure" by stationing their own temple guards at the entrance with the stone that has been rolled in front of it. They also add a measure of security by "setting a seal on the stone," whatever this actually involved. But they must have done something that would show that the stone had been moved by someone else in order for anyone to enter the tomb and do any mischief such as steal Jesus' dead body and bury it someplace else where no one but them would know. If the disciples succeeded in stealing Jesus' body, they could boldly make the false claim that he has risen from the dead.

By the way, speaking of the place where Jesus was buried, how did the Jewish leaders, other than Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, find out where this had occurred? I think that we can be fairly certain that these two men had not let it be revealed to the "chief priests and Pharisees," because the author John said earlier that Joseph (and probably Nicodemus, too) was too afraid of his fellow Jews and had kept secret his plans and actions of burying Jesus' body. Was it, therefore, the women who had observed them entomb the body and roll the stone against the entrance? Probably not. They would not want to provide Jesus' enemies with this information. My guess is that the news of Joseph's request of Pilate for Jesus' body in order to bury it must have spread from Pilate's household and soldiers to the Jewish Sanhedrin by someone who had become sympathetic to or friendly with these leaders. Again, we simply do not know exactly how certain details of this story have unfolded, but what we do know is that the Jewish leaders did their best, without the help of Pilate and the Romans, to make sure that another "deception" like Jesus' false claim to be their Messiah occurred. Thus the stage is finally set for God to make Jesus' claim an authentic one by miraculously raising him from the dead in three days.

And this is all that we know of what takes place between Wednesday sundown and Thursday sundown, which is the first High Sabbath and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But then…

5. The Women Buy Spices and Observe the Weekly Sabbath When the Resurrection Occurs

THURSDAY sundown – FRIDAY sundown (the 16th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

a. Between Their Observing the High Sabbath and the Weekly Sabbath, The Women Purchase Spices to Anoint Jesus' Body

Probably Friday between about 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Matthew	**Mark 16:1**	**Luke 23:56a**	John
No parallel in Matthew	**16:1** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint him.[103]	23:56a Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.[104]	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

In the above verses, Mark and Luke are providing the only recorded activities of Jesus' disciples during the daytime on Friday. Mark says,

> Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint him.

First, let us consider what Mark says about the time of this event. It was "when the Sabbath was over." Normally, people think that he is referring to the Saturday weekly Sabbath, so that this would be after sundown and the evening of this same day, which would be the end of the weekly Sabbath. Instead, we have seen that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, making Thursday the first High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I think, then, that Thursday (or really sundown on Wednesday to sundown on Thursday) consists of the "Sabbath" that "was over." Therefore, we are talking about Friday (again, really sundown on Thursday to sundown of Friday) that is day after the Thursday "Sabbath" is "over." But it is also more likely during the daytime, sometime between about 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday, and the latter would be around sundown, which would bring the beginning of Saturday, the weekly Sabbath. To put it succinctly—

1. Jesus was crucified on Wednesday.
2. Thursday was a High Sabbath and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
3. Friday was a regular day but the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
4. Saturday will be the weekly Sabbath and the third day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
5. Sunday will be a regular day, the first day of the week, and the fourth day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And what happens on Friday, which is a regular day and the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Mark says that three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—buy "spices so that they could go and anoint" Jesus' body in his tomb. Remember that they watched Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wrap his body in linen and anoint it with spices that the latter had brought. And they watched as they rolled a stone in front of the entrance. However, it will become clear that they are not aware of the Jewish leaders' having stationed a group of the temple guards at the tomb and having set a seal on the stone so that no one could secretly roll it away and steal Jesus' body in order to create the subterfuge of his rising from the dead.

It is also probably a good idea for us to keep track of all the women involved in these events. We can start by remembering that, just a few verses earlier, Mark had written,

> Mark 15:40 There were also some women observing [Jesus dying on the cross] from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 15:41 When he was in Galilee, they used to follow him and serve him. And there were many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

And Mark had also said a little later,

> Mark 15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were observing where he was laid.

With this information, we have already concluded (and it still makes sense) that Mark is explicitly saying here in chapter 16 that three women buy spices on Friday in order to anoint Jesus' body whenever they can gain access to it in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. And these women are—

1. Mary Magdalene, the formerly demon-possessed woman
2. Mary, the mother of James and Joses, who is also Mary of Clopas
3. Salome, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee

This is also the second time in nine verses that Mark has used Salome's name. And correlating her with the other gospel accounts, she is the mother of Jesus' two disciples James and John, the sons of Zebedee. And she is also Jesus' mother's sister.

Moving on to Luke's contribution to this subsection, he writes (and I include the previous verse to help understand the context),

> Luke 23:55 Now the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 23:56a Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

We notice that Luke is very quick to switch from describing "the women who had come with [Jesus] from Galilee" and their being at the tomb were Joseph and Nicodemus bury him to the fact that "they returned and prepared spices and ointments." Indeed, this sounds as though both these events took place within just a few hours, i.e., from late Wednesday afternoon to Wednesday evening. Is Luke, in fact, contradicting Mark, who states that these two events are at least twelve and probably more than twelve hours apart, i.e., from late Wednesday afternoon, through Thursday and its sundown, past Thursday evening, and more likely all the way into the daytime on Friday? No, there is no contradiction, just personal storytelling. The word that I have translated "Then" in Luke 23:56a is the Greek word *de* (δὲ), which is a somewhat weak but clear conjunction and connective. It could be just as easily translated "And" or "But." Nevertheless, it certainly does not have to be indicating that the action in verse 56 is taking place immediately after that in verse 55. It is simply showing that the second action of verse 56 followed the first action of 55—sometime later, even two days later. And the only action with respect to the "spices and ointments" that Luke mentions is that the women "prepared" them. For his own purposes he has left out the fact that they bought them on Friday. Again, there is no contradiction here in the two accounts of Mark and Luke, just differences in storytelling by the two authors.

We also see that Luke does not name any of the women. He just calls them "the women who had come with [Jesus] from Galilee." Is he referring to only the three women whom Mark lists—Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome? I do not think so as will become clearer later in the whole story. Matthew and Mark prefer to feature only certain women, while Luke so far wants to widen the circle without providing any names. He will finally refer to only certain women when they excitedly inform the apostles that the tomb is empty and Jesus has risen from the dead.

To summarize, there is a group of women, who include Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome, who wait until Friday after the High Sabbath of Thursday to purchase "spices and ointments" that they plan to place respectfully on Jesus' dead body in the tomb. And, for their own reasons, they will attempt to do this on Sunday morning after the weekly Sabbath of Saturday. Or it may be simply that the daylight hours of Friday did not give them enough time to buy and prepare the spices from the local Jerusalem market and then travel to the tomb and finish their task by anointing Jesus' body. In either case, Sunday morning (after Saturday before sundown) will be a key moment for the history of mankind.

FRIDAY sundown – SATURDAY sundown (the 17th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

b. The Women Observe the Weekly Sabbath Day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Friday evening from sundown until sundown Saturday

Luke 23:56b
23:56b And on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.

Explanation of the Above Passage

Only Luke says this explicitly, that "on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment." After purchasing their spices on Friday, the day between the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, the women do not immediately go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body on Friday. Instead, they all observe the regular, weekly Sabbath of Friday evening until sundown Saturday according to the fourth of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20:8-10; Deuteronomy 5:12-14). This means that they will visit Jesus' grave early Sunday morning.

As I said, Matthew and Mark do not mention this detail. Yet, it is safe to assume that all the women, including the two Marys, observe the Sabbath of Friday evening to sundown on Saturday, resulting in their not visiting the tomb until Sunday morning.

While it is also possible that Luke refers to these women as preparing their spices on Wednesday evening and keeping the High Sabbath of Thursday in order to go to the tomb on Friday morning to anoint Jesus' body, I think it makes more sense that he means that they at least prepare the spices on Friday (most likely by purchasing them that morning) and then keep the Sabbath of Saturday. This is because, like Mary Magdalene and the others with her, there is no time Wednesday evening, and it is not appropriate to buy and prepare the spices then. We must remember that Thursday is a High Sabbath where no work can be done, including the work of buying the spices.

Therefore, I am assuming that Luke does not mean that these women would already have these spices in their possession. Why would they, since none of Jesus' disciples had yet really grasped the fact that he was going to die and by buried? As a result, all the women mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke find it necessary to buy their spices. And this they would have done on Friday after the High Sabbath of Thursday, so that they then end up visiting Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning (and not Saturday night) after the regular, weekly Sabbath of Saturday (from Friday sundown to sundown on Saturday).

I will save the explanation for a few subsections from now, but this "Sabbath" day of Saturday is also the day when Jesus rises from the dead—indeed, before sundown on Saturday.

6. The Empty Tomb and Jesus' First Appearances

SATURDAY sundown – SUNDAY sundown (the 18th day of Nisan, the first month of the year)

a. The First Group of Women at the Tomb

About 6 a.m. on Sunday

Matthew 28:1	Mark 16:2-4	Luke	John 20:1
28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.	16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 16:3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away for us the stone from the entrance to the tomb?"	No parallel (most likely) in Luke	**20:1** On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

	16:4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was extremely large.		

Explanation of the Above Passages

Here and for a few subsections, analyzing the exact sequence of events in these gospel accounts is not altogether straightforward. Therefore, we will proceed slowly and carefully with what the authors are saying. We begin by considering what each of these three—Matthew, Mark, and John—write individually. Thus, Matthew 28:1 says,

> Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

First, to which Sabbath is Matthew referring? The High Sabbath at the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was Thursday after Jesus was crucified? Or does Matthew mean the weekly Sabbath of Saturday, which was also the third day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Based on what we have learned so far, this has to be the weekly Sabbath of Saturday. Mark specifically wrote that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Joses, and Salome bought spices after the Sabbath to anoint Jesus' body, and this was the High Sabbath of Thursday (cf. Mark 16:1). Then Luke said that "the women" rested on the Sabbath, which was the weekly Sabbath of Saturday (cf. Luke 23:56). Now Matthew is stating that, after the weekly Sabbath of Saturday, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," who is most likely Mary of Clopas, the mother of James the Less and Joses/Joseph, "came to look at the grave" of Jesus. And he also indicates that they did so "as it began to dawn towards the first of the week."

In other words, the week has ended with the weekly Sabbath of Saturday, and now it is very early in the morning, probably around 6 a.m. on Sunday, "the first of the week," when these two women arrive at Joseph's tomb where Nicodemus and he laid Jesus' body to rest after he died on the cross. Notice again the key words here—"the first of the week." This has to be Sunday so that it makes all the more sense that the "Sabbath" to which Matthew is referring is that which occurs every week on Saturday (but technically exists between sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday according to the Jewish calendar).

We notice, too, that Matthew is featuring only the two Marys, but like Sam on the plane to Boston in my introduction to this document, there may be more women present at this moment. And I think that it is quite likely that this is the case. In addition, when we look at what Luke has to say about women who visit the tomb, I think that we will find that he is talking about a <u>second</u> group of women who are different from this group whom Matthew and Mark mention. Again, when we get there, Luke 24:10 will be key to our arriving at this conclusion.

Now let us consider what Mark writes at the beginning of this scene,

> Mark 16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.
> 16:3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away for us the stone from the entrance to the tomb?"
> 16:4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was extremely large.

Mark also uses the important phrase "the first day of the week," which is Sunday. And he says that it is "very early," probably around 6 a.m., since he also says that "they came to the tomb when the sun had risen." And who are "they" to whom Mark is referring here? We remember that in the previous verse he wrote,

> Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint him.

Therefore, Mark is stating that these three women "came to the tomb" on Sunday morning. Is he contradicting Matthew who explicitly names just the two Marys who "came to look at the grave"? Not at all. Matthew chooses for his own reasons to speak of these two women only, while Mark is more complete and mentions them in addition to Salome, who we know also is the mother of Jesus' disciples James and John and the sister of his mother Mary.

Consequently, by putting together Matthew and Mark, these three women "were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away for us the stone from ten entrance to the tomb?'" They had been present when Joseph and Nicodemus had placed the stone in front of the mouth of the cave after they buried Jesus, and they also knew that it was rather large and heavy, so that the two men were strong enough to move it. But these three women are now concerned that they will not have the strength to roll away the stone in order to complete their goal of using the spices which they had purchased on Friday (after the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) and anointing Jesus' dead body with them.

We should pause here and take note of the fact that, while these women as close disciples of Jesus had heard him speak multiple times of rising from the dead after three days, they, like his other disciples and apostles, do not yet believe him. They really are counting on finding Jesus' dead body in the tomb, so that they can place the new spices on it as an act of respect towards him. And then, surprise of all surprises (!), Mark next writes, "Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was extremely large." These women still do not know what has happened and that Jesus has risen from the dead. However, their journey towards understanding this miracle begins with the shock of seeing that the mouth of the tomb is open, because the large and heavy stone is no longer covering it and blocking their path into it. Imagine their surprise and confusion. And to reiterate, this is most likely a first group of women who visit Jesus' tomb early in the morning, and Luke will describe a second group who do so soon after them.

Now we consider the one verse which the apostle John writes in this subsection,

> John 20:1 On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

This third author uses the same key words as Matthew and Mark, "the first day of the week." Therefore, based upon what we have analyzed so far, John is also referring to Sunday, the day after the weekly Sabbath of Saturday. In addition, he speaks of its being "early in the morning while it was still dark." Mark had said that "the sun had risen," so that we seem to have a contradiction here. But I think that the situation at this "very early" hour of the day according to Mark is both that the sun is basically in the process of rising and that it is still so low that the condition of the light means a definite level of darkness as the day is dawning. In other words, it is *first light* so to speak and *last darkness* in the same way so that Mark and John are both correct in what they mean.

Then there is the little detail that John mentions only Mary Magdalene as the one who "came to the tomb…, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb." I suggest that John, like the other authors and like any author of a story, is purposefully referring to only this one women, Mary Magdalene, when we know from Matthew and Mark that at least two others are with her, Mary of Clopas and Salome. Thus, we have proceeded from Matthew's two women to Mark's three women to John's one woman—all without contradicting each other, but simply highlighting certain women or woman. Plus, in John's account, Mary Magdalene has the same experience that Mark has already described, that the large and heavy stone is no longer covering the entrance to the cave and blocking her path to see Jesus' dead body within Joseph's tomb.

Therefore, here is another great example of where mentioning one person does not indicate that there is only one person, but simply indicates that the author (or speaker) desires to feature or highlight this one person. We see from Matthew and Mark that there are other women, especially the other Mary and also Salome, who are accompanying Mary Magdalene. Thus, this gospel author, John, is shining the spotlight on Mary Magdalene and telling the story from her perspective. And we will see that what Matthew writes in 28:9-10 figures into considering the importance of noticing in Matthew 27:55-56 that "many women" were near the cross and observing Jesus dying, while he names in this second passage specifically Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph. Thus, we know that at least Salome is with these two Marys. And it is also most likely that there are other women who are on their way to visit the grave early Sunday morning.

As a result, I am assuming that the group of women mentioned here precedes a second group of women who are following close behind. The latter group are likely laden with a hundred pounds of spices and are, therefore, making their way to the tomb more slowly than this first group. It makes sense that this first group is eager to spy out the state of affairs at the tomb. They are, as it were, going on ahead to reconnoiter. We also see that they are particularly concerned with how they will roll the stone away from the entrance. But to their surprise and eventual joy, this has already been done by the time they arrive.

b. The Angel of God Has Rolled Away the Stone and The Soldiers Have Responded With Fear

Before 6 a.m. on Sunday

Matthew 28:2-4
28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for the *angelos* of Yahweh had descended from heaven, and he came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. 28:3 And his appearance was like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow. 28:4 The guards shook for fear of him, and they became like dead men.

Explanation of the Above Passage

Before moving on to what the women at Jesus' grave do next, Matthew takes his readers back to sometime between the chief priests' and Pharisees' stationing the temple guards outside the tomb and the early morning around 6 a.m. He says that "a severe earthquake had occurred." In addition, "the *angelos* of Yahweh had descended from heaven, and he came and rolled away the stone and sat on it." And when he did, "his appearance was like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow." Needless to say, this is quite an event.

Before the arrival the angel, the temple guards may have made a fire and were sitting on the ground in front of Joseph's tomb and chatting about the usual things that Jewish, temple guards discuss. Then, all of a sudden, they feel an earthquake, and it is not just a small rumble. Matthew says it was "severe," literally a *seismos megas* (σεισμὸς…μέγας)—that is, a mega-seismic event! And this earthquake occurs at the same time God Himself appears.

Matthew uses the terminology in Greek ἄγγελος…κυρίου (*angelos kuriou*). We can translate these two words as "the angel of the Lord" or, as I have ,"the *angelos* of Yahweh." The Greek word ἄγγελος (*angelos*) means "one who is sent and announces a message." The word κυρίου (*kuriou*) means "of the Lord," but the Greek Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, uses this word as a substitute for the Hebrew word יְהוָה (*Yahweh*), so that technically we can translate it either as "Lord" or "Yahweh." I have chosen "Yahweh," because I think that Matthew is identifying this being as a human looking manifestation of the transcendent God, like the one who appeared to Abraham at his tent in Genesis 18, and similar to the "the angel of Yahweh" in Exodus 3 when God revealed Himself in the form of a burning bush. Therefore, I think that God Himself, the transcendent author of all reality, is appearing in the form of a man. It is also possible that another angel is present as mentioned by Luke, who is a conventional angel like Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:19,26) or Michael (cf. Jude 9) or two of the "three men" who visit Abraham in Genesis 18. As I said above, the third man in the story about Abraham is a theophany, the "angel [messenger] of Yahweh." And this man of whom Matthew writes is also a theophany and a manifestation of God. Thus, Matthew is telling the story from the perspective of this person who is God and who suddenly appears.

And what a dazzling sight He is this time. When He appeared to Abraham, his appearance was rather subdued, because Abraham did not immediately recognize Him as a theophany. But now He is "like lightening," meaning that He must have been as bright as lightening when it flashes in a summer sky during a thunderstorm. Plus, his clothing (Jewish, first century style, I assume) is "as white as snow." So how could the guards even look at Him? Certainly, only for a moment, and then they would have turned away. Matthew says, too, that the "guards shook for fear" and "became like dead men." Their fear was so great that they became parallelized and could not move—like corpses.

We also have here the answer to the women's question in the previous subsection, "Who will roll away for us the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" The stone may have been too heavy for the women to move. But it is definitely not too heavy for the transcendent Creator who is writing Himself into

the story as a bright, shining human being, this "*angelos* of Yahweh." And by the power of the author of all cosmic history, this theophany of God rolls the stone away from the mouth of the cave. And then he even sits on the stone where it is now off to the side of the entrance of the tomb. And it will be this same "angel" (messenger) who informs the women that Jesus has risen from the dead.

But where are the guards now around 6 a.m. when the women arrive at Jesus' grave to anoint his body with their spices? They must have fled the scene before the women appear. And we will look at nine more subsections, in which just three of them will include verses from Matthew's account, before he relates to his readers what these guards did after God manifested Himself and rolled away the stone in the midst of an earthquake.

c. The Angel of God Remains and Tells the Women of Jesus' Resurrection

About 6 a.m. on Sunday

Matthew 28:5-7	Mark 16:5-7	Luke	John
28:5 Later, the *angelos* responded and said to the women, "Do not fear, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. Here now, see the place where he was lying. 28:7 Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you."	16:5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe, and they were alarmed. 16:6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has been raised from the dead and is not here. See the place where they laid him. 16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee.' There you will see him, just as he told you.'"	No parallel (most likely) in Luke	No parallel in John

Explanation of the Above Passages

As above, we shall analyze each account separately and in order. Thus, Matthew writes,

> Matthew 28:5 Later, the *angelos* responded and said to the women, "Do not fear, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. Here now, see the place where he was lying. 28:7 Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you."

The first thing to notice is that, at the beginning of verse 5, Matthew uses a weak but definite connective, the conjunction *de* (δὲ). I have translated it "Later," because I think he means that after the earthquake and appearance of the theophany of God who moved the stone away from the entrance to the tomb and after the two women, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," arrive there, "the *angelos*" speaks to them. It makes sense that this is the same "*angelos* of Yahweh" who first appeared a few hours earlier and rolled away the stone. In other words, this is a created manifestation of Yahweh Himself who is addressing the women. Again, Matthew is featuring Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, but this does not mean that some other women mentioned in Matthew 27:55-56 are not there also as part of this group

who go to the tomb. Indeed, it is more likely that they are present with Mary and Mary, so that they, too, are hearing the angel speak to them about Jesus' resurrection from the dead and observing that the tomb is empty.

Secondly, most English translations write that this angel of God simply "said to the women." However, there are two verbs here so that I think that the King James Version is correct and writes that God "answered and said to the women." I have used the word "responded" instead of "answered," but I suggest that Matthew is indicating that the theophany of God is actually responding to something the women have said first. Perhaps they simply took a quick breath, or they said something like "Oh my" in Aramaic, as they entered the tomb and saw not only that there was no dead body in it, that Jesus' body was gone, but also that someone else is there instead! This moves the angel of God to respond to them and answer their exclamation of surprise first with, "Do not fear, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified."

The third thing to notice is that the women must be inside the tomb when this conversation with the angel takes place. God encourages them not to be afraid, because certainly fear was their immediate reaction when they saw that Jesus' body was gone and they wondered what in the world had happened to it and who this strange person was who was in the tomb. And then, of course because He is God, He tells them exactly what is on their minds, that they are looking for Jesus who died on the cross—four days earlier. Plus, the "angel" says in v. 26, "He is not here, for he has risen from the dead. Here now, see the place where he was lying." The first Greek word of the second sentence, δεῦτε, which the lexicons and translations indicate should be translated with the English word "Come," more likely means in this context as I have translated it, "Here now," i.e., "Stop your fear for a moment… and observe that Jesus' body is gone, indicating clearly that he has risen from the dead."

And then this "*angelos*" issues a command to the women in v. 27, "Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you." Since they are the first to find out what has happened, Mary and Mary (along with the other women of this first group) are to "go quickly" to wherever Jesus' disciples are and relate to them that the empty tomb means that he "has risen from the dead"—just has he said multiple times to his disciples that he would. No, someone has not come and stolen Jesus' dead body and placed it somewhere else, even in another grave, in order to deceive the people and trick them into believing that he is the Messiah. He really has risen from the dead, so that his body has become alive again and he has escaped the tomb.

The angel of God adds that these women should tell the rest of the Jesus' disciples that he will meet all of them, including these women who are his faithful followers, back in Galilee, in the north of Israel where they spent most of their time together. We saw in Matthew 26:32 that, in the midst of relating how things would be for his disciples as a result of his death, he told them, "After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." And we will encounter this notion again at the very end of Matthew's gospel account. But we also see that God uses a common Old Testament word, "Behold," along with the statement, "I have told you," to emphasize the truth of the information which He has conveyed to the women and to emphasize the importance of their alerting Jesus' other disciples as to what has happened.

Next, we turn to Mark's account,

> Mark 16:5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe, and they were alarmed. 16:6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has been raised from the dead and is not here. See the place where they laid him. 16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee.' There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Note that Mark explicitly indicates that the women enter Jesus' tomb and all they saw was "a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe, and they were alarmed." This is most likely the same "*angelos*" in Matthew who responded to the women's alarm and fear. Plus, Mark has said in 16:1 that there were three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—who had bought spices to anoint Jesus' body. Therefore, we can include Salome here at the empty tomb early Sunday morning, even though the other author, Matthew, features only the two Marys.

We also note in Mark that the angel of God is "wearing a white robe," a detail that he must have obtained from the women. Similarly, Matthew had said in the previous subsection about the earthquake and the removal of the stone from the entrance to the tomb that "his clothing" was "as white as snow."

Now, and of course, the women shift into fear when they do not see Jesus' body and just this brightly shining "young man" in the tomb. And of course He (a theophany of God) encourages them not to be afraid, tells them that He knows that they "are seeking Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified," that they should look directly at where he had been laid (by Joseph and Nicodemus), and that they should leave and tell his disciples *and Peter* (he adds according to Mark) that Jesus will meet them all in Galilee, "just as he told" them (cf. Mark 14:28 & Matthew 26:32). Therefore, we can conclude that this is basically the same information that Matthew relates in his verses of this subsection. Mark informs his readers, too, that the theophany spoke of "Jesus the Nazarene," meaning that he was from the town of Nazareth in northern Israel and west of the Sea of Galilee.

d. The First Group of Women Leave the Tomb and Report Its Being Empty to Jesus' Disciples
About 6:30 a.m. on Sunday

Matthew 28:8	Mark 16:8	Luke	John 20:2
28:8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and they ran to report it to his disciples.[105]	16:8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.[106]	No parallel (most likely) in Luke	20:2 Therefore, she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have placed him."[107]

Explanation of the Above Passages

What is the women's response to seeing and hearing the theophany of God in the tomb and what he relates to them? Matthew, Mark, and John tell us. We begin with Matthew,

> Matthew 28:8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and they ran to report it to his disciples.

Remember that Matthew has mentioned only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, Mary of Clopas, who is also the mother of James the Less and Joses/Joseph. Therefore, here he is saying that these two women (because he is featuring them for his own reasons) leave the site of Jesus' burial with mixed emotions. They are both afraid and joyful. They are afraid probably because not only have they seen this unusual man, whether or not they realize at this point that He is God manifesting Himself as a man with bright white clothing, but also they are quite surprised and shocked by not seeing Jesus' dead body and by hearing from the other man that Jesus is alive. Certainly, Jesus' body is gone from the tomb, and the best explanation for why is that he really was telling the truth that he was going to rise from the dead. Therefore all their efforts of purchasing the spices and going to his burial place early Sunday morning have been for nothing. But the reason for this apparent waste is better than they could have ever imagined. Jesus is alive! Nevertheless, I think that they are struggling to believe that Jesus is risen from the dead, so that the most prominent explanation in their minds is that somebody has stolen Jesus' body and removed it from his grave.`

As a result, they do run away "to report [the news of the empty tomb] to his disciples"—just as the angel of God commanded them. Thus, we see Mark write in the same way,

> Mark 16:8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

We see that Mark in the first sentence is no different from Matthew. The women are "trembling" from fear at the sudden news and obvious evidence that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb, and

"astonishment [has] gripped them" because of the strong possibility that Jesus really has risen from the dead and is alive, just as he said would happen and as the angel of God told them has happened. But we also know from 16:1 above that Mark is referring to Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, AND Salome. He is not contradicting Matthew who speaks of only the first two women. He is only being a little more complete—with the possibility of course that there are some other women there also at this time.

But Mark does seem to contradict Matthew by indicating that the women "said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid"—as if they did not go to the disciples to report what they had seen and heard. But I think that Mark is only saying that they said nothing to anyone else but the disciples, that along the way to wherever they were going to find Jesus' disciples, they were silent to others. In other words, they did not run around Jerusalem shouting at the top of their lungs that their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Sanhedrin and the Romans had crucified, had either been taken out of the tomb as a dead body or had risen from the dead and was now alive and well. Instead, they are intent on finding Jesus' disciples and speaking to only them about the empty tomb.

[Some Greek texts include in this verse, "Now they promptly reported all these instructions to those who were with Peter. And after that, Jesus himself sent forth from the east to the west through them the sacred and incorruptible proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen." As with other verses at the end of Mark's account that are suspect, I am assuming that this addition is not in the original text. It seems too much like something which a later author added that allows Mark's gospel to sound similar to Matthew's and Luke's accounts.]

John helps make the interpretation above regarding the women coherent by writing,

> John 20:2 Therefore, she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have placed him."

We remember that John said in the previous verse,

> John 20:1 On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Thus, John speaks of only Mary Magdalene when we know that Mary of Clopas and Salome (and maybe some other women) are with her "early in the morning" at Jesus' tomb. John also says nothing of their seeing the angel of God and what He says to them. Instead, he skips ahead to their finding Peter and John, "the other disciple whom Jesus loved." But, of course, he mentions that only Mary Magdalene is present and that she speaks to these two men.

We also notice that Mary's statement to these men is somewhat confusing. The theophany of God has categorically told her (and the other women) that Jesus has risen from the dead and that this is why his body is no longer where it had been laid by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. But does Mary and do the other women believe Him and that this is exactly what has happened to Jesus' body? No, not really. She says to Peter and John, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have placed him." By virtue of Mary's using the plural pronoun "we," she is implying that more women than just herself have witnessed the absence of Jesus' body. In other words, somebody or group of people have stolen Jesus' body out of the tomb, taken it somewhere else, and Mary and the others have no idea where it is. This is to say that they think that Jesus is still dead so that what God through His *angelos* declared to them simply has not registered properly in their minds. Therefore, John the author is saying basically nothing other than what Matthew and Mark are offering in regard to this portion of the story.

e. The Second Group of Women at the Tomb

A little after 6:30 a.m. on Sunday

Luke 24:1-7
24:1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. 24:2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 24:3 and when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

24:4 In the midst of being perplexed about this, behold, two men stood near them in dazzling clothing. 24:5 And as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 24:6 He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember how he said to you while he was still in Galilee, 24:7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise on the third day."

Explanation of the Above Passage

Clearly, I am making a fairly radical but important decision here—that Luke is not speaking of these women in the same manner as Matthew, Mark, and John when it appears at first glance as though he is. Instead, I think that he is describing events surrounding a second group of women who then join with the first group and report their findings, including a conversation with some strange men at Jesus' tomb. Luke must be featuring these other women for his own reasons, which he does make obvious to his readers. So let us consider this passage sentence by sentence,

Luke 24:1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.

Similar to the other gospel authors, Luke states that he is talking about "the first day of the week," which would be Sunday, and "at early dawn," which I am guessing is sometime later then 6:30 a.m., because this is after the first group of women have come to the tomb and left. Then he says that "they came to the tomb," but who exactly here are "they"? We notice that he says that these women are "bringing (φέρουσαι – present active participle feminine plural) the spices which they had prepared." While the other authors mentioned that certain women came to the grave in the early morning, only Luke is describing them as "bringing spices which they had prepared." Mark had said that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome had purchased spices in order to anoint Jesus' body with them. And Luke stated that the women who observed Jesus' being laid in his tomb "prepared spices and ointments"—purportedly to do the same thing. But it makes more sense here to interpret Luke as referring to the women who actually bring the spices to the tomb while the other three authors speak of one, two, or three women who arrive earlier at Jesus' tomb in order to assess the situation for the sake of Luke's group. Therefore, Luke's "they" are more likely every woman who is a disciple of Jesus from Galilee other than Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome.

Then Luke continues,

Luke 24:2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 24:3 and when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

This, too, sounds like Matthew, Mark, and John to the effect that the women arrive at the tomb and not only discover that the large and heavy stone has been "rolled away," but also that Jesus' body is gone! The tomb is empty (cf. Matthew 1-7; Mark 16:2-6; John 20:1)! The only part that is missing is the presence of the angel of God inside the tomb and His relating to them that Jesus has risen from the dead, so that they should tell his disciples to proceed to Galilee where he said he would meet with them.

Instead, Luke says,

Luke 24:4 In the midst of being perplexed about this, behold, two men stood near them in dazzling clothing.

Luke, therefore, informs his readers that there are "two men" who "stood near them in dazzling clothing." As is the case in Matthew and Mark, these are angelic beings whereby probably one of them is a theophany and the *angelos* of Yahweh, while the other is simply a conventional angel such as Gabriel. Or they may both be normal angels with neither of them being a manifestation of God. But my guess is that one of them is the same theophany of Matthew and Mark and that they suddenly appear after the women have arrived at the tomb and are probably discussing among one another in a rather confused state why they see the large stone rolled away from the entrance. Plus, the appearance of these men,

according to Luke, is "dazzling," i.e., definitely other worldly, and they are standing *outside* the tomb with the women (not inside as in the situation in Matthew and Mark).

Then Luke indicates that these two men speak to the women,

> Luke 24:5 And as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 24:6 He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember how he said to you while he was still in Galilee, 24:7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise on the third day."

Like Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome, these women are "terrified" by the circumstances and even "bowed their faces to the ground," meaning that they at least bent at the waist or perhaps fell to their knees so that they are looking at the ground. This is certainly out of fear and perhaps out of respect and reverence for the unusually bright shining appearing men in their presence. Speaking on behalf of both of them, one of these angels says to the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" This is an interesting way to start their conversation with these startled women, with a question that implies that Jesus has risen from the dead so that they should certainly not expect his corpse to be lying inert in the tomb as would be the case with any other deceased human being.

Then, they state unequivocally that "he has been raised." He is categorically not dead anymore. Instead, he is very much alive. And they remind the women that this is exactly what Jesus had told them (and all his other close disciples) "while he was still in Galilee," that after being handed over to "sinful men," the Sanhedrin (and the Romans), he would die by crucifixion. Nevertheless, he would then "rise on the third day." The full text of Jesus' saying this earlier in the gospel of Luke is,

> Luke 9:22 "It is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and to be killed and to be raised on the third day."

The problem is that these women and Jesus' other disciples have always struggled with believing what he told them so plainly and personally, and some of them, if not most of them, are still slow to grasp the full meaning of what these two angels are saying to them—that the "Son of Man," i.e., the Son of God, who is a flesh and blood human being, will endure death on a cross in order to qualify to become the king of Israel and high priest before God on behalf of sinners (as explained by Psalm 8, Psalm 2, and other Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 53).

Now that we have looked at the beginning of Luke's account of women who go to Jesus' grave and discover that it is empty because he has risen from the dead, let me suggest that if Luke were talking about the same group as Matthew and Mark, this is how his initial explanation of these verses might read,

> "Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and the other women who are accompanying them arrive at the tomb early in the morning to anoint Jesus with their spices. They find the stone rolled away, so that when they enter the tomb, it is empty. Jesus' body is gone. Inside the tomb they stand together confused and uncertain about what has happened to Jesus' body. Two angels in the form of men dressed in bright white clothing appear to them, terrifying the women so that they bow their faces to the ground in front of them. One of them is the angel of Yahweh, and they question the women as to why they are searching a grave, where a dead person would be found, Jesus, who is now alive. They inform the women that Jesus has risen from the dead and remind them that he had said in Galilee that he would be handed over to sinners, crucified on a cross, and rise from the dead on the third day."

But since Luke describes (and continues to describe) a scene that is rather different from Matthew, Mark, and John, I think that it makes more sense that he has in mind a second group of women who are carrying the spices, some of which Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome bought on Friday. And when they all eventually meet together at the tomb (and somehow roll away the large stone from the entrance which they saw Joseph and Nicodemus place in front of the entrance on Wednesday evening) they plan to place the spices and ointment on Jesus' dead body. But the first three women (and maybe some others) arrived earlier and then left. And now this second group has discovered the same circumstances regarding Jesus' body and heard from *two* angelic beings that he is alive!

And now what will they do?[108]

f. The Second Group of Women Proceed to Report the Empty Tomb to the Disciples

About 7 a.m.

Luke 24:8-9
24:8 And they remembered his words, 24:9 and returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Explanation of the Above Passage

Luke actually tells his readers that the women of this second group do remember what Jesus said in Galilee to all his close disciples, that he would be arrested by the religious leaders and put to death by them. However, God would raise him from the dead on the third day. The question is, though, do these women really believe Jesus' statement about his resurrection? Or are they still slow to grasp the complete significance of his words, so that they agree that he said he would be resurrected, but they are not quite sure that this is what has happened? At this point in their narratives, all four gospel authors are not altogether clear regarding the quality of the women's belief in Jesus' resurrection. They are shocked and surprised at seeing the empty tomb, and they have heard from a messenger from God that Jesus has risen from the dead. But has he really—in spite of his saying several times during the last three years that he would?

Nevertheless, as Luke indicates, they returned "from the tomb" and "reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." Somewhere in Jerusalem, Jesus' eleven apostles and assorted disciples continue to gather periodically and even stay with each other during the last three and a half days since his death and burial. The women are undoubtedly a part of this rather large group, and they easily find the gathering and relate to them all that they have seen and heard at the empty tomb.

Again, if Luke were referring to the same group as Matthew and Mark, this is how I think the explanation of Luke 24:8,9 would read following my suggestion of Luke 24:1-7 in the previous subsection,

> "The women [Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and the other women who are accompanying them] remember what Jesus has said as they have been reminded by the angels, so that they leave the tomb and return to where the eleven apostles and other disciples have been meeting in Jerusalem to report to them what they have observed and been told according to Jesus' own words."

But I am still convinced that we have here a second group of women, and they leave the empty grave to inform the other disciples of their experience just as Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome intend to do after their visit before them.

g. Both Groups of Women Together Report the Empty Tomb to the Disciples

About 7 a.m.

Luke 24:10-11
24:10 And there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the rest of the women with them. They were telling these things to the apostles. 24:11 However, these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they did not believe them.

Explanation of the Above Passage

In line with how Luke has been presenting information about the women visitors to Jesus' tomb early in the morning, he now adds a key statement, to which I have already referred, for our interpreting what he has been saying and for how to relate his account of the women at the tomb to those of Matthew, Mark, and John. The statement is this,

Luke 24:10 And there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the rest of the women with them. They were telling these things to the apostles.

Before we attempt to interpret the whole verse, we should seek to understand who Joanna is? Assuming that Mary, the mother of James, is Mary of Clopas, who is also called the mother of James the Less and Joses/Joseph, Joanna could be another name for Salome. Or she is a fourth woman whom Luke features while the other gospel authors have not even mentioned her. I think that is more likely the latter based upon Luke's mention of her in a previous chapter of his account,

Luke 8:1 And it happened after this that he was going around from one city and village to another [in Galilee] speaking publicly and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 8:2 along with some women who had been healed of evil spirits and illnesses, e.g., Mary, who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 8:3 and Joanna, the wife of Kuza, who served Herod, and Susanna, and many other women, who were assisting them out of their private means.

Because we have concluded that Salome is the mother of James and John, Jesus' disciples, and that she is the wife of Zebedee, Joanna and she are not the same woman, especially since Joanna is the "wife of Kuza, who served Herod." We also remember what Luke had written regarding the crowd near Jesus' cross as he hung there dying,

Luke 23:49 And all those who were known to him, including the women who had accompanied him from Galilee and were seeing these things, had stood at a distance

Therefore, Joanna is a fourth named woman and the "wife of Kuza [Chuza in other English Bibles] who served Herod." She, too, has traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover and is present throughout all these important events. Nevertheless, the whole of Luke 24:10 is difficult to interpret. The Greek text reads,

Luke 24:10 ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς. ἔλεγον πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ταῦτα

A literal translation of it is,

Luke 24:10 "They were and the Magdalene Mary and Joanna and Mary the one of Jacob and the rest [of the women] with them they were speaking to the apostles these things."

We can see that the difficulty is how to relate the three women who are named to "the rest of the women" and to the prepositional phrase "with them." There are at least four ways to translate this verse into English and two ways to interpret them –

1) The first possible translation is,

"And Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and also the rest of the women were with them. They were telling these things to the apostles."

Thus, the interpretation would be—there was another group of women made up of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James (and we need to allow for even some others with them from the first group who visited the tomb). They were with the *second* group of women to whom Luke has been referring up to this point, and they all were explaining to the apostles their experiences at the empty tomb.

2) The second possible translation is,

"And there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and also the rest of the women with them. They were telling these things to the apostles."

Thus, the interpretation would be the same as #1— there was another group of women made up of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James (and we need to allow for even some others with them from the first group who visited the tomb). They were with the *second* group of women to whom Luke has been referring up to this point, and they all were explaining to the apostles their experiences at the empty tomb.

3) The third possible translation is,

"And there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. And the rest of the women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

Thus, the interpretation would be—in the group of women to which Luke has been referring, there were three for whom he now provides their names, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. Together all the women were explaining to the apostles their experiences at the empty tomb.

4) The fourth possible translation is,

"And they were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. In addition, the rest of the women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

The interpretation is the same as #3—in the group of women to which Luke has been referring, there were three for whom he now provides their names, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. Together all the women were explaining to the apostles their experiences at the empty tomb.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this document, the Greek word *sun* (σὺν) is very possibly ambiguous. Does Luke mean that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James (along with possibly some others), constitute a separate group of women and therefore are accompanying the women about whom he has been talking? Or are they of the same group and he is simply naming them to feature them now for his own purposes, saying that the others are with the two Marys and Joanna (similar to what Matthew does in 27:55,56 and Mark does in 15:40,41)? In other words, *sun* (σὺν) is an additive term in the first case or an inclusive term in the second case.

My guess is that the former is correct—that the named women and probably more, are with "the rest of the women" as a separate group, and this is the reason why Luke has not mentioned their names until now. If he had wanted to feature them as part of a large group but somehow more worthy of being named in comparison to the rest of them (an inclusive "with" (*sun* (σὺν)), then it makes more sense that he would have done so at the beginning of introducing the whole group in his story. This is to say that he would have done so when he first mentioned the group in 23:49 in regard to their standing near Jesus' cross and observing him as he was suffering and dying, just as Matthew and Mark named at least Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James (cf. Matthew 27:55,56 and Mark 15:40,41).

At the risk of overwhelming my reader (and me) with information, here is a mini-table (one with a smaller font) of the above pertinent verses in the gospels that I think places the events that we have been exposed to in previous subsections and that includes this subsection in chronological order,

Matthew 27:55-28:8	Mark 15:40-16:8	Luke 23:49-24:11	John 19:25-20:2
27:55 And many women were there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee while serving him. 27:56 Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the	15:40 There were also some women observing from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 15:41 When he was in Galilee, they used to follow him and serve him. And there were many	23:49 And all those who were known to him, including the women who had accompanied him from Galilee and were seeing these things, had stood at a distance…	19:25 His mother, his mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood by the cross of Jesus. 19:26 So, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by her, he said to his mother,

mother of the two sons of Zebedee…	other women who came up with him to Jerusalem…		"Woman, behold, your son." 19:27 Then, he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." Consequently, from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home.
27:61 And Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the grave.	15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were observing where he was laid…	23:55 Now the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.	
	16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint him.	23:56a Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. 23:56b And on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.	
28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.	16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 16:3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away for us the stone from the entrance to the tomb?"		20:1 On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for the *angelos* of Yahweh had descended from heaven, and he came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. 28:3 And his appearance was like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow. 28:4 The guards shook for fear of him, and they became like dead men.	16:4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was extremely large.		
28:5 Later, the *angelos* responded and said to the women, "Do not fear, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. Here now, see the place where he was lying. 28:7 Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you."	16:5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe, and they were alarmed. 16:6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has been raised from the dead and is not here. See the place where they laid him. 16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"		
28:8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and they ran to report it to his disciples.	16:8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they		20:2 Therefore, she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, "They have taken the Lord

	said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.	24:1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. 24:2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 24:3 and when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 24:4 In the midst of being perplexed about this, behold, two men stood near them in dazzling clothing. 24:5 And as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 24:6 He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember how he said to you while he was still in Galilee, 24:7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise on the third day." 24:8 And they remembered his words, 24:9 and returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 24:10 And there were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the rest of the women with them. They were telling these things to the apostles. 24:11 However, these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they did not believe them.	out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have placed him.

Notice that I put Luke's account of the women, who visit the tomb and then return to the other disciples, after all the similar information in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And I think that this makes more sense than concluding that Luke's story of the women is occurring at the same time as the stories of the other three authors. Plus, I finish Luke's column with his statement in this subsection as to how the apostles and disciples are responding to the information from all the women,

Luke 24:11 However, these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they did not believe them.

No one seems to be grasping completely what the *angelos* of Yahweh has said to the women and what the empty tomb means—that Jesus really has risen from the dead and his body has not been

stolen. In fact, Luke states that the whole idea of a living Jesus appears to the apostles and other disciples as utter "nonsense," stupidity, and foolishness. A crucified man, even the Messiah, who has risen from the dead, is beyond imagination as far as they all are concerned—and this after Jesus performed so many miracles in front of the disciples. He raised people from the dead, fed thousands with minimum food, and healed the lame, the blind, and the deaf. But no one so far is making the connection between Jesus' miracles and God's miracle of bringing him back to life after his death on the cross. The apostles and his other disciples are sounding like the Sanhedrin in regard to the level of their belief (or lack thereof) in Jesus.

And let me add something to consider as I did in regard to previous verses in Luke. If he in this subsection were referring to the same group as Matthew and Mark, I think that his explanation might read,

> "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, along with the other women who were with them, arrive and tell the apostles what they all have experienced at the empty tomb. At least Mary Magdalene has still not yet realized that Jesus has truly risen from the dead as will become evident below. The apostles and other disciples also do not believe that the tomb is empty, because it all seems like nonsense and foolishness to them."

Mary Magdalene's unbelief in regard to Jesus' resurrection will become evident a little later when John writes about her surprise when Jesus appears to her in 20:11-17. But in the meantime, I am still convinced that Matthew, Mark, and John talk about an initial group of women who visit the tomb and leave before Luke's group arrives and experiences the same circumstances as a result of God's direct involvement of moving the entrance stone, raising Jesus from the dead, and conversing with the various women to inform them of what has happened.

Therefore, the second group of women, having arrived where the apostles are about a half hour later than the first group, join Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, Salome, and probably some other women in telling the rest of the disciples what they all have experienced at the empty tomb. And at least Mary Magdalene has still not yet realized that Jesus has truly risen from the dead as will become evident below. In addition, the apostles do not believe that the tomb is empty, because it all seems like nonsense to them.

h. Peter and John Run to the Empty Tomb

About 8 a.m.

Matthew	Mark	**Luke 24:12**	**John 20:3-10**
No parallel in Matthew	No parallel in Mark	24:12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, and leaning in, he saw only the linen wrappings. And he went away to his own place, wondering what had happened.	20:3 So Peter and the other disciple went out, and they were going to the tomb. 20:4 And they were running together, but the other disciple ran ahead more quickly than Peter, and he came to the tomb first. 20:5 Bending down, he saw the wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 20:6 Following him, Simon Peter also came, and he entered into the tomb. He saw the wrappings lying there,

			20:7 and the face-cloth, which had been on his head. It was not lying with the wrappings, but was folded in a place by itself. 20:8 Then, the other disciple, who had arrived first at the tomb, also entered, and he saw and believed, 20:9 even though, as yet, they did not understand the scripture that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead. 20:10 So the disciples went away again to their own places.

Explanation of the Above Passages

All the women who have been to the tomb and found it empty, along with the fact that they have spoken with certain angelic beings who have explicitly told them that Jesus has risen from the dead, have related their experience to the remaining eleven apostles and many other disciples. In response to the women's information, only two of the apostles decide to investigate the situation themselves. These are Peter and "the other disciple," who I assume is the apostle John. Let us look first at Luke's passage above where, for his own reasons and purposes, he writes of only Peter and his perspective of what he finds,

> Luke 24:12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, and leaning in, he saw only the linen wrappings. And he went away to his own place, wondering what had happened.

Luke indicates that Peter leaves the women and the other disciples and runs to the tomb. Then, he leans into it, because we know that God has rolled away the heavy stone from the entrance, and all that he sees are "the linen wrappings" that Joseph and Nicodemus used to wrap Jesus' dead body. Now, the wrappings are lying alone on the floor or slab of the tomb, meaning that Jesus' body is no longer in it. But what does this mean? Peter cannot say, because apparently he is just as confused as the women about "what had happened." Consequently, "he went away to his own place." In other words, he went back to wherever he was staying in the Jerusalem area and was obviously pondering the circumstances as best he could.

John's description is similar but longer, and he writes of both Peter and himself and their perspective together. He begins,

> John 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple went out, and they were going to the tomb. 20:4 And they were running together, but the other disciple ran ahead more quickly than Peter, and he came to the tomb first.

Here we find out that another disciple accompanies Peter to the tomb. As I said, I think that this is John, the author and the same person who questioned Jesus at the dinner table about who was betraying him and the same one to whom Jesus commended his mother for care as he hung on the cross and awaited his death. However, John is a faster runner and arrives at the tomb first.

He then continues,

John 20:5 Bending down, he saw the wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

John bends down, because the entrance to the tomb is relatively short, and peers in. But he does not go in. And just as the women has told the rest of them, Jesus' body is gone, but the linen wrappings are lying there, which is all that he sees initially.

And the account continues,

John 20:6 Following him, Simon Peter also came, and he entered into the tomb. He saw the wrappings lying there, 20:7 and the face-cloth, which had been on his head. It was not lying with the wrappings, but was folded in a place by itself.

Luke had said above that Peter, i.e., "Simon Peter" here, only bends down and looks in. Instead, John provides a more complete, but not contradictory, description and indicates that after he bends down, he then enters "into the tomb." But of course all he sees are "the wrappings lying there and the face cloth, which had been on [Jesus'] head." The latter has been "folded" and is lying "in a place by itself." Therefore, the "wrappings" are in one place in the tomb, while the "face-cloth" is in a different location in the tomb. This is the kind of detail we would expect from John, an eyewitness to both Peter's and his visit to the empty tomb.

At what is the result of seeing all this evidence,

John 20:8 Then, the other disciple, who had arrived first at the tomb, also entered, and he saw and believed, 20:9 even though, as yet, they did not understand the scripture that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead.

Luke had intimated that Peter neither understands what has happened to Jesus' body, nor believes that he has actually risen from the dead. In contrast, John declares that he, too, enters into the tomb and sees the linen wrappings and face-cloth, but no body. However, he actually believes that something truly marvelous has taken place. He just does not understand "the scripture that it was necessary for [Jesus] to rise from the dead." I think that John means that while he believes that Jesus is alive, he does not grasp exactly why God has raised him from the dead—that it has to do with his becoming a high priest for sinners so that he can intercede on their behalf before God and obtain His eternal mercy and forgiveness.

And then John ends this scene,

John 20:10 So the disciples went away again to their own places.

As Luke had said about Peter alone, these men leave the tomb and return to where they are staying in the Jerusalem area. Some English Bibles use the word "home" to indicate where they go, but their homes are in the city of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee in the north. Therefore, these are where they are currently staying temporarily during the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, especially since they will be returning to Galilee relatively soon to meet Jesus there—after he appears to them first here in Jerusalem.

Thus, I think that we can conclude that Luke writes his short description of Peter from Peter's perspective. Differently, John writes his account of both Peter and himself from his own perspective. Again, this is all part of the art of storytelling, so that these authors are neither contradicting one another nor saying anything that is false. They mean exactly what they mean, and what they mean is completely true—because they both are writing inerrant and authoritative truth which deserves to be in the Bible.

i. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene Who Has Returned to the Tomb

About 9 a.m.

John 20:11-17
20:11 Now Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down towards the tomb. 20:12 And she saw two *angeloi* in white sitting, one towards the head and the other towards the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

20:13 And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
She said to them, “Because they have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have placed him.”
20:14 After she said these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know that it was Jesus.
20:15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?”
She supposed that he was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have placed him, and I will take him away.”
20:16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”
She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabboni (which means Teacher).”
20:17 Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Explanation of the Above Passage

We probably think that the perfectly logical and theological thing for Jesus to have done was to appear to the women when they first came to the empty tomb in the two groups. If he had, then he would have immediately confirmed the words of the “*angelos* of Yahweh” that he has risen, so that they could go to the eleven apostles and the rest of the disciples and report not only the condition of Jesus’ grave, where the man spoke to them and declared that Jesus is alive, but also that they have seen him as such with their own eyes and heard him with their own ears. It would have been both much more efficient for God to tell His story this way and much more effective in communicating the very important fact that Jesus has risen from the dead after his crucifixion and is now ready to continue his role as Messiah, king, and high priest of all sinners—both Jews and Gentiles.

However, efficiency does not seem to be a priority of God—whether in Jesus’ existence or ours. Instead, He typically chooses a path for history and our own personal stories that is different from what we also consider ideal and much more desirable. The apostle John is pointing this out in this subsection in regard to Jesus’ first appearance to one of his disciples—Mary Magdalene in the garden of the tomb and in a state of deep grief in regard to her crucified and buried Lord, Jesus of Nazareth. It turns out that Mark’s account, which I have not included above, seems to talk very briefly about the same event with the following verse,

> Mark 16:9 Now, after he had risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

However, it is uncertain that this statement is part of Mark’s original text, and I am inclined to think that it, as well as the rest of the verses in Mark after 16:9, is not. But we will see from John’s account that someone familiar with Jesus’ resurrection added correctly to Mark’s gospel that Jesus did rise from the dead, that “he appeared first to Mary Magdalene,” and that Jesus had “cast out seven demons” from her. Plus, if I am translating the verse in Mark 16:9 correctly, the author says that Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday, which I think is wrong. [!!] Jesus rose on Saturday before sundown, which would be late on the last day of the week. Therefore, let us move on to how John begins describing the same event,

> John 20:11 Now Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down towards the tomb. 20:12 And she saw two *angeloi* in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one towards the head and the other towards the feet.

This seems like a rather abrupt change from the previous subsection where Peter and John go to the tomb, discover that it is empty, and then leave. How and when did Mary get to the tomb? It is not possible that John is going back to her initial visit, because he said that she left the area and went to tell Peter and John what she had seen and heard. The most logical answer to how and when Mary got to the tomb after speaking with the two apostles is that she followed them, but she either arrived with them and then stayed in the garden, or she arrived much later after they had been there only a few minutes and then left. Based

upon how John describes her seeing the "two *angeloi*" in the tomb, I think that the latter option makes more sense.

Consequently, we find Mary "standing outside the tomb weeping." We know from Matthew's and Mark's gospels that she has already looked inside the tomb and seen only the linen wrappings and face-cloth where Jesus' body had lain (cf. Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7). As a result, she has no further reason to look inside the cave and initially stands outside it and weeps over probably both the fact that she saw Jesus die on the cross and be buried by Joseph and Nicodemus and the fact that his body is gone and she does not know where it is so that she could demonstrate her respects to him by placing more spices on it. In other words, she is still not believing what the angel of God had said, that Jesus is alive and well because he has risen from the dead.

Even though she has already been in the tomb, "as she wept," Mary bends "down towards" it and beholds another divinely magnificent sight. Now there are "two *angeloi* in white sitting" in Jesus' grave—like the situation that the second group of women experienced when they first arrived at the grave early in the morning (cf. Luke 24:1-7). Now Mary sees one of them towards where his head had lain, "and the other" is "towards his feet." Thus, in their white clothing, they are sitting where Jesus had been and, to reiterate, where Mary had known that he had been because the other women and she had observed the whole scene when he was buried by the two men from the Jewish Sanhedrin.

John then writes,

> John 20:13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"
> She said to them, "Because they have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have placed him."

Either one of the angels on behalf of the other, or the two, each in succession, ask Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Of course they know, but this is a rhetorical question that needs no answer and yet that is intended to get her thinking more deeply about the entire event, including her first encounter with the angel of God who informed her that Jesus had risen from the dead. However, at this point in her understanding of the situation and her belief in God, all she can say is, "Because they have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have placed him." We see that Mary is still thinking that Jesus is dead and not alive, and that someone has stolen his body from the tomb and taken it somewhere else so that she cannot find it. And all this distresses her to no end—as it should if this is actually what had happened in contrast to what Jesus had told his disciples several times, i.e., that he was going to be handed over to the Jewish leaders, put to death by them on a cross, and then rise from the dead in three days.

Thus, all the more surprising for her is the next part of this event,

> John 20:14 After she said these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know that it was Jesus.
> 20:15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?"
> She supposed that he was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have placed him, and I will take him away."
> 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."
> She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni (which means Teacher)."

Mary has only "bent down" and looked in the tomb from the outside. After the "two *angeloi* in white" speak to her, she turns around and whom does she see, the very person who has been causing her grief. However, he is simply "standing there," and she does "not know that it [is] Jesus." He then asks her the same question the angels had posed to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Again, of course he knows why and continues by asking her rhetorically, "Whom do you seek?" It is curious that she does not recognize him. We know from the Bible that Jesus now has his eternal body. Does Mary's not recognizing him mean that his immortal body actually looks different from his previous mortal body, with which of course Mary had been quite familiar since the time several years ago that he exorcised the seven demons from her and she became one of his faithful disciples. Therefore, we are absolutely certain that Mary knew Jesus and exactly what he looked like. So why does she not immediately recognize him now in his newly resurrected body?

Honestly, we do not know precisely. John does not explicitly provide the answer to this question. It could be like the upcoming situation on the road to Emmaus when two disciples of Jesus do not

recognize him while he is talking to them. I think that in their case, God simply does not allow the image of Jesus in their minds to connect with their memories in such a way that they recognize him. Here, though, regarding Mary Magdalene, I think that her not recognizing Jesus is because of her grief, her tears, and probably the posture of her body where she is probably looking down as a result of her deep grief. She notices that there is a man standing there, but she does not look carefully at him through her tears to see exactly who it is. Plus, the last person she is expecting this man to be is Jesus as demonstrated by her request to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have placed him, and I will take him away." John, the author of this gospel, must have heard her whole story and says that she "supposed that he was the gardener." Who else would it be at this early hour of the morning and in this place? Also, she is not saying that she personally will take Jesus' body away by herself. It would be too heavy for her. She must mean that she will acquire the help of her fellow disciples of Jesus, and together they will move Jesus' dead body to a more appropriate spot than wherever the "gardener" has placed him. And why would the gardener break into the tomb and move Jesus' body? This, too, is non-sensical, but none of the disciples is thinking all that rationally or correctly.

Then Jesus speaks one word to her, "Mary." Upon hearing her name, which also must have come as quite a surprise since she thought this man was only the gardener, she turns towards him, meaning that she orients her entire body towards him and probably looks directly at his face and recognizes exactly who it is. It is Jesus himself, risen from the dead. And the first word that comes to mind that she speaks is probably one that she has used repeatedly and very respectfully to address Jesus, the Hebrew word "Rabboni," which means "my Lord." And naturally she flings herself towards him and throws her arms around him because she is so surprised and excited to see him. But John then writes,

> John 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary is literally "clinging" to Jesus, and he urges her to stop doing so. And the reason which he gives is that he has not "ascended to the Father." Why does he say such a strange thing? This woman has grieved tremendously over the possibility that he is dead and that his body has disappeared. Now she knows that he is alive and only wants to demonstrate in a very natural way how much she loves him and the fact that he is alive and well and standing right in front of her. And all he can say is "Stop clinging to me for I have not ascended to the Father." Plus, he goes on to tell her, "But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

With this last exhortation to Mary, he wants her to return once more to the eleven apostles and other disciples so as to inform them of what he has repeatedly communicated to them in these previous passages of John's gospel,

> John 7:33 Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you [the Jews], and I will go away to Him who sent me. 7:34 You will seek me, and you will not find me. And where I am, you will not be able to come."

> John 14:12 "Truly, truly is say to you, the one who believes in me, the actions which I perform, that one will also perform, and he will perform greater actions than these, because I am proceeding to the Father."

> John 14:28 "You heard that I said to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you love me, you would rejoice because I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. 14:29 And now I have told you before it happens, so that, when it happens, you may believe."

> John 16:5 "And now I am going to the One who sent me, and no one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'"

> John 16:8 "And when he comes, that one will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment—16:9 of sin, because they do not believe in me, 16:10 and of righteousness, because I go away to the Father, and you will no longer see me, 16:11 and of judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

16:28 "I came from the Father, and I have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world, and I am going to the Father."

In the first passage of John 7, Jesus is addressing Jews, some of whom are believing in him and some of whom are not, and he is telling them that, as the Messiah, his role is to appear, leave, and "go to the Father," i.e., to another part of the creation where he will reside for a lengthy period of time. Then, he will return in order to complete his role by inaugurating the Kingdom of God and ruling over the Jews when they become the "great nation" that God promised in Genesis 12:1-3.

In the next five passages of John 14 and John 16, Jesus is speaking to only his apostles, minus Judas Iscariot, and informing them that very soon he will leave this earth, which will precipitate the beginning of their responsibility to act as his official apostles and spokesmen while he is living in another part of the creation such that he will return later to usher in the renewed Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God. This means that the apostles and disciples have plenty of information to understand exactly what is happening to and with Jesus during his death and burial, and now in regard to his resurrection that will lead to his ascension from the earth until he returns. And this is what he wants Mary to remind his "brothers," that their God is also his God, who has given him the responsibility of being the crucified Messiah who rises from the dead in order to continue his role within the story which God is telling. In addition, God is their Father as well as his Father as the very origin and source of all their existences, who sovereignly rules over and controls human history for His own eternal purposes.

When Jesus tells her to stop clinging to him and that it is because he has not ascended to the Father, I think all he means is that Mary needs to understand that his story, her story, and the story of his apostles and the rest of the disciples has a long way to go before they can all say, "It is finished." Mary is holding on to Jesus as if she has finally come to the goal of her relationship with him. And he is telling her that they all still have a lot to experience, including his ascension followed by their continuing to be his apostles and disciples in a hostile world before God fulfills His first promise to Abraham to make his descendants, the Jews, the most powerful nation in world history and to complete the task of inaugurating the Kingdom of God. He certainly wants Mary to believe that he is alive, but he also wants her to realize that his resurrection is still only another beginning to the lengthy process of God's completing his eternal plans and purposes.

To end our analysis of this subsection, I would add that while it is possible that Mary Magdalene is not alone so that John is telling the story strictly from her perspective, it seems more reasonable to conclude that she really is alone in this encounter with Jesus because he speaks her name to which she immediately responds, "My Lord." If others had been present with her, Jesus probably would have spoken their names, too. Yet, it is also possible that John relates Jesus' saying only her name. But John's description of this event seems to me to be other than an economical use of language. Instead, he is explaining things only as they really are—two people, Jesus and Mary Magdalene, reacquainting themselves with one another for the sake of providing the next important step whereby Jesus appears to many people over the course of forty days (cf. Acts 1:3).

j. Mary Magdalene Reports Her Conversation with Jesus to the Apostles

About 10 a.m.

John 20:18
20:18 Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and the things that he said to her.

Explanation of the Above Passage

It is certainly appropriate for Mary Magdalene to report to the other disciples that she has seen Jesus and that she can confirm that he is alive. But similar to the previous subsection, there are two verses near the end of Mark's gospel that describe the same thing,

Mark 16:10 She went and reported to those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. 16:11 When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it.

However, I do not think that this text, like Mark 16:9, is original, in spite of the fact it certainly seems to describe the situation correctly—or mostly correctly. Therefore, let us look at what John writes,

John 20:18 Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and the things that he said to her.

Now that Mary Magdalene is convinced that Jesus is alive because she has seen him, she simply returns to where the disciples have congregated and reports to them her encounter with Jesus. She includes his statement to the effect that he will ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, meaning, as I said above, that very soon he will leave this earth, which will precipitate the beginning of their responsibility to act as his official apostles and spokesmen while he is living in another part of the creation such that he will return later to usher in the renewed Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God.

In the light of all these passages which describe Jesus' appearances to his disciples, I also think that only Mary Magdalene has been to the garden immediately after Peter and John and only she has seen Jesus so as to go back and relate her experience to his apostles and disciples.

k. Jesus Appears to Other Women Who Have Returned to the Tomb

About 10:30 a.m.

Matthew 28:9-10
28:9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Rejoice!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and report to my brothers that they should leave for Galilee, and there they will see me."[109]

Explanation of the Above Passage

For the last six subsections we have focused on Luke's and John's accounts. Now we have two verses from Matthew, and the two questions we should ask are, "To whom is Jesus' speaking?" and "When does this conversation take place?" We notice that Jesus is addressing several people since Matthew says that he met "them." This means that Matthew is talking about a different situation from John above who described only Mary Magdalene as seeing Jesus. Also, the fact that this is a group of people (and we will see in a moment that it comprises women) must mean, too, that it is after Jesus' interaction with Mary Magdalene. Otherwise, Peter and John would have gone to the tomb not only to confirm that it is empty, but also to look for Jesus and talk to him as this group had done and had informed them.

To help us further in our analysis of the two verses of Matthew in this subsection, here are the verses of chapter 28 leading up to them,

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for the *angelos* of Yahweh had descended from heaven, and he came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. 28:3 And his appearance was like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow. 28:4 The guards shook for fear of him, and they became like dead men.

28:5 Later, the *angelos* responded and said to the women, "Do not fear, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. Here now, see the place where he was lying. 28:7 Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the

dead. And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you."

28:8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and they ran to report it to his disciples.

I have separated the above verses according to the subsections in which I placed them, and we see that Matthew is featuring two women, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," the latter being Mary of Clopas. Matthew does not name any other women, but we know that Mark includes Salome in this first group who appear at the tomb early on Sunday morning. And there is the possibility that others are there too. Therefore, Matthew means at least Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas when he says that "Jesus met them and said, 'Rejoice!'" But he most likely knows that there were other women there, too. As I have said, he simply wants to feature "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary."

Then Matthew continues in v. 9 of this subsection,

28:9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Rejoice!"
And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

But now we need to ask if Matthew is declaring unequivocally that Jesus meets the two Marys *at the same time*? No, I do not think so. Matthew is being quite economical with his words and is providing the reader with a good summary of what happened, so that he is not contradicting John. John writes that Mary Magdalene went back to the tomb alone following Peter and John. And Jesus meets her alone. Matthew is saying that eventually all the women of the first group, including Mary of Clopas (and Salome, according to Mark), return to the tomb and experience the wonderful surprise of seeing Jesus.

And Jesus says in effect to all of them, "Rejoice!" This is because he is in the process of encouraging them to change their grief and tears into joy and tears of elation, if they want to keep crying. And they all, not just Mary Magdalene when she is with Jesus alone, approach Jesus and they take "hold of his feet and [worship] him" in the midst of their rejoicing as he encourages them to do! Thus, they fall to the ground, clutching his feet and legs while also demonstrating by their posture and their elation that they grant him the proper reverence as the Messiah and image of God that he deserves (cf. Colossians 1:15).

And Matthew finishes this interchange with,

Matthew 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and report to my brothers that they should leave for Galilee, and there they will see me."

John had written that Jesus said to Mary Magdalene that she should stop clinging to his feet and should go back and report to his disciples that he is returning to God. But this was not all that he said to either her probably or to the other women. Matthew informs us that he also said to these women, "Do not be afraid," because this is how they must have looked when they saw him, both because they still were thinking that he is dead and because they are now actually seeing the *risen* Jesus. And besides their telling the eleven apostles and other disciples that he is leaving for "the Father," the women are to encourage the others to "leave for Galilee, and there they will see" Jesus—obviously before he leaves for his place within the creation where he will await his return to earth to inaugurate the Kingdom of Israel, which will be the first stage of the Kingdom of God.

There is also the apparent problem of the close proximity of these verses in the text to Matthew's statement in 28:8 to the effect that the women left the tomb to report to the disciples what they had seen and heard after their first visit to the tomb. Was this encounter with the risen Jesus during the women's initial visit to the tomb and while they are leaving to go back to the other disciples, in which case we have an obvious contradiction? Or was it later after the women had given their first report to the apostles and Peter and John themselves had gone to the tomb. It makes more sense that Matthew is skipping ahead to when all these women return to the tomb and Jesus appears to them. However, in the light of how John tells the story, it also makes sense that Mary Magdalene returns alone. Thus, Jesus first appears to her and then to the other women after she has left and before he appears to his apostles later in the day.

Plus, it will be after these appearances to the women that Jesus will manifest himself to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. And Luke will also mention that Jesus appears to Peter (cf. Luke 24:34). But I think that the fact that the gospel authors do not describe this specifically indicates that his appearance to Peter was after he reveals himself to these women.

I. The Report of the Guards

Sometime Sunday morning

Matthew 28:11-15
28:11 And while they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders and had taken council together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers 28:13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 28:14 And if this becomes heard by the governor, we will persuade him and keep you safe." 28:15 And they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story was widely spread among the Jews up to this day.

Explanation of the Above Passage

Only Matthew provides us with this explanation of what the temple guard, who were stationed at the tomb to guard it, do after the "*angelos* of Yahweh" appears and rolls away the heavy stone, which frightened them to no end. And this makes sense since Matthew is also the only author who describes the scene when God makes the tomb accessible. Again, each storyteller is relating the facts according to his own purposes, and each one naturally has a slightly different purpose.

Thus, at a suitable place in the story for him, Matthew begins this scene,

> Matthew 28:11 And while they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

The events at the empty tomb early on Sunday morning had taken place in quick succession after another. The first group of women arrived, observed that Jesus' body was gone, heard from the angel of God to the effect that he had risen, and left and reported to the apostles and the other disciples what they had experienced. The second group of women do the same. Peter and John run to the tomb and see for themselves that Jesus is gone, and then they leave for their "homes." Mary Magdalene follows them and arrives after they have left, see the two angels in the tomb and Jesus' burial linens, and then encounters the living Jesus, who commands her to go back to the disciples and tell them that he is alive. The same occurs for the rest of the women who return to the tomb. So what happens after the temple guard experience God and His rolling way the stone?

Matthew tells us that they "came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened." Again, imagine this scene. The guards have all observed the same thing. And they have most likely talked among one another and confirmed with each other exactly what they saw and heard. Thus, they know that they are not crazy, and what happened really happened. But now what should they do? Especially since, I assume, this supposed breach of responsibility on the part of the temple guards is not only embarrassing but also deserving of execution for them. Anyone caught sleeping on his watch, which results in the very thing that they are supposed to be guarding against actually happening, deserves the death sentence. This would be true of Roman soldiers, but I am assuming that if Pilate and his military force heard how the Jewish temple guard failed to keep someone from stealing Jesus' body, in order to deceive people into thinking that he had risen from the dead, that they would demand that the Sanhedrin bring these soldiers to them for execution. In other words, since the Romans have obviously permitted the Jews to have their own guards, then they also have probably required that they be held to the same high standard as Roman soldiers.

Consequently, these temple guards have to be half frightened out of their minds. They cannot lie about the *angelos*, the stone, and the empty tomb—although I suppose that they could have rolled the stone back across the entrance to the tomb. But there was this man in shining white clothing sitting on top of the stone, and he looked imposing enough that they dared not challenge him and attempt to move him off it. The guards could have waited around until the "*angelos* of Yahweh" left, but how long was that going to be? And He does not seem to be willing to leave, so that they might as well get the next

embarrassing and potentially fatal step over with. Hence, they decide that they have no choice but to go to the "chief priests" and report exactly what occurred. And maybe the Sanhedrin will believe them, because each of them can corroborate the story exactly as it happened, so that it will be as clear as is humanly possible that they are not guilty of dereliction of duty and are not in any way, shape, or form lying about their experience. In addition, it will be neither wise nor expedient to leave any of the story out, so Matthew correctly writes that they "reported to the chief priests all that had happened (emphasis mine)."

Matthew writes next,

> Matthew 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders and had taken council together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers 28:13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 28:14 And if this becomes heard by the governor, we will persuade him and keep you safe."

The chief priests recognize that they need the consensus of all the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem for what they are going to do in this situation. Therefore, they are "assembled with the elders," referring, I think, to the rest of the Sanhedrin. And as a group, they all put their heads together and decide to give "a large sum of money to the soldiers." Plus, they command the soldiers to lie about what happened and say that Jesus' "disciples came at night and stole him away while [they] were asleep." But how embarrassing. They have the responsibility to guard God's temple in Jerusalem and deter anyone from mistreating it or desecrating it, and they have to admit that one of them could not even stay awake to alert the others when Jesus' measly, powerless disciples sneak past them, roil the stone away, and steal Jesus' dead body out of the tomb. And besides, no one heard or saw anyone, because they were all asleep, and therefore they all just assume that it was his disciples who did this. How could they ever show their faces again in the temple area and have the confidence of the rest of the Jewish people that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibility of guarding the temple of the transcendent Creator?

No wonder, then, the Sanhedrin "gave a large sum of money to the soldiers." It should take such to keep these men silent in regard to the truth and to motivate them to continue doing their regular job while helping to spread such an embarrassing lie with respect to their capability to fulfill the duty that everyone knows that they have been given. Plus, there is the little problem of this lie reaching the ears of the Roman governor Pilate, who, I assume, would demand that these men be executed as if they were his own Roman soldiers. Or at least he would be dismayed that the stealing of Jesus' body had occurred, which would present him with the additional problem of dealing with people who now believe that he has risen from the dead and thereby has been confirmed as their Messiah and king. What kind of trouble for Pilate will result from this event of the stolen body? He may be concluding that it will be a great amount of trouble, even more than the crowd at his home a few days earlier who were close to rioting when he was reluctant to put Jesus to death. As a result, Pilate might very well demand that the temple guards be disciplined by execution just as the people demanded that Jesus be punished for claiming to be their king and Messiah.

Fortunately, the Jewish leaders assure the soldiers that they will do all they can to "persuade" Pilate not to harm them so as to keep them safe. They are just to keep on doing at the temple what they normally do and keep on lying about what happened at the tomb, and no one will know any different.

Matthew concludes here,

> Matthew 28:15 And they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story was widely spread among the Jews up to this day.

What else are the temple guard going to do? They Are facing at least heavy discipline if not death for having slept on the job at the tomb, so that the only choice now, if they want to stay out of harm, is to take the money and do exactly what the Jewish leaders have commanded and persuaded them. They lie about the night's events. And probably not surprisingly their "story was widely spread among the Jews" up to the time when John wrote his gospel. But this also means that there were two stories circulating among the Jews—the false story of the temple guards with their large sum of money and the true account which, for example, Peter will declare on the Day of Pentecost and which the other apostles and disciples likewise will continue to teach. Thus, the gospel does not get squelched by lies in Jesus' and the apostles' day. And fortunately it never does get squelched as long as God is God, which obviously is forever.

To help visualize the sequence of events from the time Peter and John visit to the tomb through the additional visits by the women and the meeting of the temple guards with the Sanhedrin, I provide the table below like the previous one with a smaller font to conserve space.

Matthew 28:9-15	Mark	**Luke 24:12**	**John 20:3-18**
	[It does seem strange, but I think that Mark 16:8 above is the last verse of his account that we can know with any certitude.]	24:12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, and leaning in, he saw only the linen wrappings. And he went away to his own place, wondering what had happened. [This is the last verse in Luke before he relates in Luke 24:13-35 the story of Jesus' appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus, in Luke 24:36-49 the story of Jesus' other appearances, and in Luke 24:50-53 the story of Jesus' ascension.]	20:3 So Peter and the other disciple went out, and they were going to the tomb. 20:4 And they were running together, but the other disciple ran ahead more quickly than Peter, and he came to the tomb first. 20:5 Bending down, he saw the wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 20:6 Following him, Simon Peter also came, and he entered into the tomb. He saw the wrappings lying there, 20:7 and the face-cloth, which had been on his head. It was not lying with the wrappings, but was folded in a place by itself. 20:8 Then, the other disciple, who had arrived first at the tomb, also entered, and he saw and believed, 20:9 even though, as yet, they did not understand the scripture that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead. 20:10 So the disciples went away again to their own places. 20:11 Now Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down towards the tomb. 20:12 And she saw two *angeloi* in white sitting, one towards the head and the other towards the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. 20:13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have placed him." 20:14 After she said these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know that it was Jesus. 20:15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you

[I have placed v. 9 below as if it occurred after John 20:18 in the fourth column, but we should remember that one of the "them" in Matthew 28:9 is Mary Magdalene, whose meeting with Jesus coincides with John 20:14-17. Therefore and similar to the gospel accounts, I am featuring the other women's meeting with Jesus to make the point that the bulk of this event in Matthew 28:9-10 takes place after John 20:18.]			weeping? Whom do you seek?" She supposed that he was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have placed him, and I will take him away." 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni (which means Teacher)." 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 20:18 Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and the things that he said to her.
28:9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Rejoice!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and report to my brothers that they should leave for Galilee, and there they will see me." 28:11 And while they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders and had taken council together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers 28:13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 28:14 And if this becomes heard by the governor, we will persuade him and keep you safe." 28:15 And they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story			

was widely spread among the Jews up to this day.			

m. Jesus Appears to Two Men on the Way to Emmaus and They Report to the Eleven Apostles

About 1 p.m. until about 6 p.m.

Luke 24:13-35

24:13 And behold, two of them on the same day were going to a village named Emmaus, which was about sixty stadia from Jerusalem. 24:14 And they were discussing with one another all these things which had taken place. 24:15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself approached and was traveling with them. 24:16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
24:17 And he said to them, "What are these statements which you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?"
24:18 One of them named Cleopas answered and said to him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened in it in these days?"
24:19 And he said to them, "What things?"
And they said to him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 24:20 and how the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to the sentence of death, and they crucified him. 24:21 But we were hoping that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all these things, it is the third day since these things happened. 24:22 And also, some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning 24:23 and did not find his body, they came, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24:24 And some of those who were with us went away to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they did not see him."
24:25 And he said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken. 24:26 Were these things not necessary—for the Messiah to suffer and to enter into his glory?"
24:27 Then, beginning with Moses and from all the prophets, he explained the things concerning himself in all the scriptures. 24:28 And they approached the village where they were going, and he acted as if he were going further. 24:29 But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is already almost over."
And he went in to stay with them. 24:30 When he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and was giving it to them. 24:31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. But then he vanished from their presence.
24:32 And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was revealing the scriptures to us?"
24:33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 24:34 saying, "The Lord really has been raised and appeared to Simon."
24:35 And they were explaining the things on the road and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Explanation of the Above Passages

If I am right about the gospel of Mark, the following verses 12-13 of chapter 16, like Mark 16:9-11, are not part of his original text,

> Mark 16:12 After that, he was manifested in a different form to two of them while they were walking along to the countryside. 16:13 And they went away and reported it to the rest of them. But they did not believe them either.

Nevertheless, we will see that this information is probably correct, including that the other disciples did not believe the two men that they had really seen Jesus. Therefore, again, we turn to another author, Luke, for his account of this same scene, and he begins it in this way,

> Luke 24:13 And behold, two of them on the same day were going to a village named Emmaus, which was about sixty stadia from Jerusalem. 24:14 And they were discussing with one another all these things which had taken place. 24:15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself approached and was traveling with them. 24:16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

I assume that this event takes place around 1 p.m. on Sunday after Jesus has appeared to the women at the tomb around mid-morning. Two of his disciples are walking down the road which leads west from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. Luke indicates that the village is approximately "sixty stadia from Jerusalem," placing it about seven miles from the capital city. As the men walk, they are discussing the recent events of Jesus' death and reported resurrection. I say "reported," because they will tell Jesus only that some of their friends have been to the tomb and witnessed that it is empty, but that they have not seen Jesus. Therefore, they must have left Jerusalem before the women added the information that they had gone back to the tomb and seen Jesus alive. Now, in his new immortal condition, Jesus happens to be traveling down the same road and overtakes them. Luke does not indicate exactly where on the road Jesus first started walking, but of course this does not matter. What matters is that he is there and catches up with these men, so that he is now "traveling with them."

Luke then states that "their eyes were prevented from recognizing him," meaning I think that Jesus was easily recognizable as he had been with the women at the empty tomb earlier. Therefore, he has not changed form, which is certainly a theological possibility. Instead God is simply not allowing these men to see Jesus in such a way that the image in their brains from their eyes is connecting to their memories. they are seeing Jesus, but they are not really seeing Jesus. It is not registering in their brains it is he who has joined them. Can God cause the men's physiological condition to function this way? Of course. He is the author of the entire story of the creation, and the way He predestined this event to occur is that these two men literally see Jesus with their eyes, but the connection between what their eyes are doing is not resulting in their recognizing someone whom they already know.

Then Luke writes,

> Luke 24:17 And he said to them, "What are these statements which you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?"

As Jesus approaches them from behind, he hears them discussing something, and he probably knows what it is since he recognizes them even though they are not recognizing him. Then, in order to join them in their conversation, he asks them to describe what they are talking about.

Luke says,

> 24:18 One of them named Cleopas answered and said to him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened in it in these days?"
> 24:19a And he said to them, "What things?"

Cleopas, one of the men, responds to Jesus' question by asking him if he really has to guess the topic of their discussion when so much has happened in Jerusalem "in these days." In other words, Cleopas cannot imagine that anyone would be talking about anything else other than the recent events in the capital city. And Jesus asks what are the events to which he is referring? Luke continues,

> Luke 24:19b And they said to him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 24:20 and how the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to the sentence of death, and they crucified him. 24:21 But we were hoping that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all these things, it is the third day since these things happened. 24:22 And also, some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning 24:23 and did not find his body, they came, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24:24 And some of those

who were with us went away to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they did not see him."

Certainly this description of the recent remarkable events in Jerusalem is quite complete. And it demonstrates that these men were present or at least very aware of most of what had happened. First, the events involve "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." This is to say that they believe that Jesus was like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others of the Old Testament in that he did remarkable things, meaning the miracles of healing, etc., and he spoke remarkable things, meaning that he taught the Old Testament clearly and convincingly.

The two men also mention that Jesus was opposed by "the chief priests" and the other Jewish "rulers," referring to the scribes and Pharisees and the entire Sanhedrin, thus implying that they considered him to be violating the Torah of the scriptures in a great and egregious manner. As a result, they sentenced him to death and managed to convince the Roman authorities to put him to death by crucifixion. However, they (all this man's disciples and students) had hoped "that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." This is to say that they had believed that he was the Messiah as described and predicted by the Old Testament and that as such he would fulfill God's first promise to Abraham to put a stop to the Roman occupation and make the Jews on the land of Israel the most powerful nation in all human history. But Jesus was killed by their own Jewish leaders and the Romans, so that initially their hopes were dashed.

And that was three (or so) days ago. Since then, and in fact early this very morning, some women, who are also Jesus' disciples, went to the tomb where his dead body had been buried, and when they arrived, lo and behold they found the tomb empty. His body was gone! And not only that, but they also reported to the rest of them that a couple of God's angels were there in the tomb and told them that Jesus was alive, that he has risen from the dead. No one really believed the women, but two of them went to the tomb to investigate it for themselves. And they actually found Jesus' grave "just as the women had said." Yes, it was empty. However, these two men (Peter and John) did not see Jesus.

We know that this is not the whole story. A group of women went back to the tomb and actually saw Jesus, and then they returned to the apostles and disciples and told them that Jesus was alive—and they knew it because he had truly appeared to them and spoken to them. Therefore, I think that we can assume that these two men, Cleopas and his Emmaus' friend, had left Jerusalem on their journey to their hometown before the women had come back to the group and reported that they had seen Jesus for themselves. These men are still thinking that there is no concrete evidence to indicate that Jesus is alive apart from the empty tomb, the linen wrappings in their place where his body had laid, and the angels' testimony to the effect that he has risen from the dead. And certainly this last piece of evidence, the words of the men in bright, shining, white clothing who were repeating what Jesus had told his disciples during the three years of his ministry, should have been enough to motivate them to believe his resurrection.

Next, Luke provides Jesus' response to the men's explanation of the events in Jerusalem,

Luke 24:25 And he said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken. 24:26 Were these things not necessary—for the Messiah to suffer and to enter into his glory?"
24:27 Then, beginning with Moses and from all the prophets, he explained the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.

I find myself longing for a more detailed written explanation of Jesus' response to these men. Luke gives us his words that he rebukes them gently for their "slow of heart to believe," even calling them "foolish," which is the Greek word *anoaytoi* (ἀνόητοι). We do not have to think that Jesus is saying that these men are evil fools as, for example, the apostle Paul labels sinful human beings who are completely rebellious and hostile towards God (cf. Romans 1, especially v. 14 where Paul uses this same word). Jesus is talking about these men being slow to grasp the truth that they have heard and are seeking to believe, but they simply have not understood it yet as they should. In other words, they are a bit dull-witted and still struggling to comprehend the truth about the Bible, specifically that the Old Testament declares that it was "necessary…for the Messiah to suffer and to enter into his glory" in order to continue his role as the king of Israel and of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Then, Jesus did what I wish Luke had told in its entirety, “beginning with Moses and from all the prophets, he explained the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.” What a wonderful biblical lesson, basically a systematic theology of God’s plans for His Jewish Messiah, this must have been as the three men together strolled down the road from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. I suppose it took quite a while, because Luke then goes on to say,

> Luke 24:28 And they approached the village where they were going, and he acted as if he were going further. 24:29a But they urged him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is already almost over.”

Cleopas, Jesus, and the third man from Emmaus have been walking together while Jesus has been explaining the Old Testament’s teaching on what God required of the Messiah in order for him to fulfill his role as the champion of the Jewish people and the Savior of the world—especially that he had to suffer death and then experience resurrection from the dead by God in order eventually to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. And as the three “approached the village” of Emmaus, the home of Cleopas and the other disciple, Jesus “acted as if he were going further.” However, the two others “urged him” to tarry with them, I assume for the night, because they said that “it is getting toward evening, and the day is almost over.” Yes, the day we call Sunday is ending at sundown, so that the evening will begin the next day. But they do not want this man, whom we know to be Jesus, but they have not yet figured this out, to have to continue his journey in the dark and are asking him to stay the night with them.

So Jesus does stay with them—for a while,

> Luke 24:29b And he went in to stay with them. 24:30 When he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and was giving it to them. 24:31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. But then he vanished from their presence.
> 24:32 And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was revealing the scriptures to us?”

Indeed, Jesus begins the evening meal with the men in the home of one of them. And as “he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and was giving it to them.” It is curious that Jesus is the one who is praying over the meal and distributing the food to the other men when this is the home of one of them, who probably ought to be acting as host and presiding in this way during the dinner. But we hear from Luke that both men are duly impressed with their teacher, as they say, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was revealing the scriptures to us?” Therefore, they probably urged him to do the honors of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving the bread to them and for himself.

And characteristically of God and the surprises that He has been producing during all these recent events, all of a sudden the eyes of Cleopas and the other man “were opened, and they recognized” Jesus as their guest and instructor. “But then he vanished from their presence.” And the men immediately comment to one another that they suspected something unusual was happening while they were walking with Jesus on the road because of the emotional and psychological impact that his words were having on them as he made clear the Old Testament’s message about the Messiah. And where did Jesus go after he vanished? Luke does not say, but soon, after the men hurry back to Jerusalem, he will appear to them again and to the apostles and other disciples.

Thus, Luke continues the story in the meantime,

> Luke 24:33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 24:34 saying, “The Lord really has been raised and appeared to Simon.”
> 24:35 And they were explaining the things on the road and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Cleopas and his Emmaus friend are so excited about having seen Jesus that they immediately, “that very hour,” get up from the table, and they “returned to Jerusalem.” Supposing that in their hurry they covered the seven miles in an hour and a half or so, they find the “eleven” apostles “and those who were with them” still together in the evening. And they tell them, “The Lord really has been raised and appeared

to Simon." The first part of their statement is clear to us, because Luke has just described their experience with Jesus as he says, "on the road and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread." They probably had watched Jesus break bread multiple times during the last couple years, and finally God allows them to make the mental connection between what they are seeing in Emmaus and their memory of Jesus so that they finally are able to recognize him.

Plus, these men take the apostles and the other disciples through what Jesus taught them from the Old Testament about God's plans and requirements for the Messiah—his suffering death, his resurrection, and his role as the revived king of Israel and of the Kingdom of God. In this way, the apostles are receiving their first, post-resurrection, full lesson in biblical, Messianic theology from these two men—relative unknowns in Christian history, but very important nevertheless. By the way, Luke uses the word "eleven" in 24:33 to refer to the apostles as a group, while in this case, as we will find out in a moment from John's Gospel, Thomas called Didymus is not actually with them. Thus, "eleven" is a label just as "twelve" was in various verses. For example, Mark 3:14 says, "And [Jesus] appointed twelve, so that they would be with him and he could send them out to preach… [my translation]" However, God's and Jesus' intention was never that Judas Iscariot would become an apostle. Therefore, at this point in the story in Mark 3 the "twelve" are really only "eleven" just as the "eleven" in Luke 24:33 are really only ten because both Thomas and Judas Iscariot are not present.

The second part of these men's statement, that Jesus really "appeared to Simon" is not so clear, because none of the gospel accounts mentions this event other than Luke's short statement here by these men. Indeed, not even Luke has described Jesus' encounter with Peter after his resurrection. All he mentioned was that Peter went to the tomb after the women had told them about its empty condition and then "went away to his home" or residence during his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Luke 24:12). However, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5 also mentions this fact that Jesus appeared to Peter before he did so to any of the other apostles and even these two disciples, Cleopas and his companion.

> 1 Corinthians 15:1 Now, I make known to you, brothers, the good news that I proclaimed to you, that you also received, on the basis of which you also stand, 15:2 through which you also are being saved, if you hold firmly to that message which I proclaimed to you, unless you believed in vain. 15:3 I delivered to you of first importance what I in turn had received, that the Messiah died for our sins according to the scriptures, 15:4 that he was buried, and that he was raised from the dead on the third day according to the scriptures, 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas [Simon Peter], and then to the twelve. 15:6 Then he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at one time, of whom many are still alive, but some have died. 15:7 Then he appeared to Jacob, then to all the apostles, 15:8 and last of all, as though to an abortion, he appeared even to me. [my translation].

Thus, we have in this story of Jesus and the two men from Emmaus another means by which God tells His story of the Messiah in a somewhat surprising way. Would we not expect Jesus to reveal himself to all the apostles before anyone else, just to emphasize how important they are? Indeed, but God has chosen for him to appear first to Mary Magdalene and some other women and to these two men who are rather obscure figures in the whole story. Therefore, we should not be surprised what God does in history as we approach the end of the present age when Jesus returns. He will tell His story exactly the way He wants to tell His story, and no one will make it otherwise.

n. Jesus Appears to the "Eleven" Apostles (Thomas Being Absent)

About 6 p.m.

Matthew	Mark	**Luke 24:36-43**	**John 20:19-23**
No parallel in Matthew	No parallel in Mark	24:36 While they were saying these things, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Shalom to you."	20:19 When it became evening for that day, the first day of the week, and, for fear of the Jews, the doors were shut where the

		24:37 But they were terrified and became afraid. And they thought they were seeing a spirit. 24:38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 24:40 And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 24:41 And while they still did not believe from their joy and amazement, he said to them, "What do you have here to eat?" 24:42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 24:43 and he took it and ate it in front of them.	disciples were, Jesus came and stood in their midst. Then he said to them, "Shalom to you." 20:20 After he said this, he showed his hands and side to them. As a result, when they saw the Lord, the disciples rejoiced. 20:21 And Jesus said to them again, "Shalom to you. Just as the Father sent me, I also am sending you." 20:22 After he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 20:23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

Explanation of the Above Passages

We are now looking at the third recorded appearance of Jesus to his disciples. The first was to Mary Magdalene and the group of women soon after her. The second was to the Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. Jere is the third when Jesus finally shows up in the presence of his eleven apostles. However, Thomas is absent as will become clear in the next passage of John. Let us consider how both Luke and John begin this scene,

> Luke 24:36 While they were saying these things, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Shalom to you."

> John 20:19 Therefore, when it became evening for that day, the first day of the week, and since the doors had been shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst. Then he said to them, "Shalom to you."

We recall that in the previous subsection, Luke had described Jesus' meeting with Cleopas and the other man on the road to Emmaus and in one of their homes. Once they recognized him and he disappeared (just as suddenly as he is appearing here), the two men went back to the apostles and related their experience of having personally seen their risen Lord. Luke now says that, while Cleopas and the other man "were saying these things, [Jesus] stood in their midst."

We also recall that John had said in v. 18 of chapter 20 that Mary Magdalene had come back to the disciples from her second visit to the tomb and told them that she had seen Jesus alive and well outside

the entrance to his tomb. This was obviously still fairly early on Sunday morning after, John says, she had gone to the tomb, then to the apostles, then back to the tomb while following Peter and John, and then back to the disciples. Now, John skips ahead several hours and writes, "When it became evening of that day, the first day of the week," which is to say Sunday evening.

Next, John comments on the emotional state of Jesus' apostles and disciples, that "the doors had been shut…for fear of the Jews," meaning that there biggest concern at the moment is being arrested, tried, and crucified like Jesus by the Sanhedrin because of their obvious association with him. The eleven apostles were present and had been observed in the garden when he was arrested. Peter and John attended his trial at Caiaphas' home, and John was even known by the high priest. All the apostles were probably near the cross in the crowd of a hundred people or so who stood and watched Jesus die. Consequently, the apostles are thinking that the Jewish leaders are thinking that, in order to snuff out this heretical movement completely, they should find and round up all Jesus' followers who are in Jerusalem and imprison them or even put them to death for being loyal to and deceived by this charlatan. Anytime the governing authorities feel threatened by dissenters, they are tempted to eliminate them all as quickly as possible. And sometimes they actually pursue doing so—as happened to many Christians who dared to disagree with the prevailing church authorities during the last 1900 years and were burned at the stake (as one possible extreme) or were ostracized from institutions (on the other end of the spectrum of responses).

I think, though, that John also adds this detail of the closed doors to highlight the remarkable nature of Jesus' appearance. As Luke mentioned, all of a sudden, he "stood in their midst" without knocking on a door and without going through any doors or windows. But like a ghost, he comes out of nowhere and is standing among them. And then, according to both Luke and John, Jesus says to everyone, "Shalom to you." This was a common Jewish greeting of their day, but with Jesus it probably has a more special meaning than simply, "Hope you are having a nice day." He is the very instrument of God's bringing about eternal shalom, peace, security, and prosperity for the Jews—first, on the land of Israel when they become the most powerful nation in all human history (cf. the Old Testament prophets and Revelation 20) and second, on the new and eternal earth of Revelation 21.

Then, the next verse in Luke is very appropriate by explaining the response of the apostles to Jesus' sudden appearance,

> Luke 24:37 But they were terrified and became afraid. And they thought they were seeing a spirit.

Luke had indicated in the previous subsection that Cleopas and his friend from Emmaus knew that Peter had seen Jesus alive (cf. Luke 24:34). Therefore, Peter and the women, who had seen Jesus at the tomb) must have had a different response to his appearance, while the rest of them "were terrified and became afraid." Thus, in spite of several people's explicit statements about Jesus' resurrection, the rest of the disciples are shocked to see this apparition in their midst, and great fear grips them. They still have not grasped what all the evidence—the angel of God at the tomb, the women and Peter who saw Jesus, and the two men on the road who did the same—means, that Jesus really is alive. Instead, these others are like Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus. They are a bit dull-witted and slow to comprehend the truth completely.

As a result, Luke and John both write,

> Luke 24:38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
> 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
> 24:40 And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.
>
> John 20:20a After he said this, he showed his hands and side to them.

We see that Jesus speaks first as he observes the shock on most of his disciples' faces. So he asks them why they are "troubled" and why they are doubting in their "hearts" that it really is he and not a ghost as if they are all having a dream at the same time. As he did to the men of Emmaus, he calls these followers of his *anoaytoi* (ἀνόητοι), which means dull-witted and slow to understand something that should be clear to everyone. Very good evidence has been presented to them from very reliable sources, and they still have not become fully convinced that he is alive from the dead and moving on to the next

stage of his role as the Messiah, including his appearances to these same disciples during the next forty days (cf. Acts 1:3).

And hopefully to dispel all doubts, both Luke and John state that Jesus points the crowd's attention to his hands and his feet, through which the Roman soldiers drove the nails that fastened him to the cross. Luke also adds that he invites them to use their sense of touch, as they had multiple times when he had healed the lame and raised the dead (cf. 1 John 1:1-4). Therefore, Jesus encourages them to touch him and see the imprint of the nails so that they can become convinced that he is not a "spirit," a ghost, who "does not have flesh and bones." In other words, they can actually see the inside of his body where the nails had been in place. And, of course, they can touch the flesh, the skin, of his human body that God has resurrected. He gladly wants them to use the means available to corroborate what the women, Peter, and the two men from Emmaus have been saying to them—that he truly is alive!

It is not clear whether what Luke writes that Jesus says or what John writes that he says comes next out of his mouth, but I think it makes more sense that Luke's passage is first,

> Luke 24:41 And while they still did not believe from their joy and amazement, he said to them, "What do you have here to eat?"
> 24:42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 24:43 and he took it and ate it in front of them.

Luke is admitting that the crowd of disciples in general are not yet believing that Jesus has risen from the dead. However, I think he means that they are still so dumbfounded from observing and touching his real body, that they can hardly believe their eyes, ears, and hands. Yet, they actually do believe that he is alive, while also still not experiencing the level and settledness of belief which they will soon enjoy once all this information finally sinks in. Consequently, in the midst of their astonishment, they are rejoicing and amazed that everything which Jesus told them would happen up to this point in his existence as the Messiah has happened. He was handed over the Jewish leaders. They did put him to death on the cross. He was buried as a dead man and corpse. And after the third day he has risen from the dead to continue his God-given role as the Jewish Messiah.

Now, for whatever reason of his own, and maybe just to clarify further his existing state of being, that he is truly alive, he says to them, "What do you have here to eat?" Jesus is a genuine flesh and blood human being who has come back to life from the dead. But I think that we can assume that he has also been changed by God the Father into an immortal being. He was and still is morally perfect, while he had been mortal—subject to death so that he did die on the cross. Now, though, he has an immortal and eternal human body that will never die. And yet, he asks for something to eat. Why? Is it because we will all still need food in the eternal Kingdom of God? I suppose so. It is certainly neither implausible (something that cannot be argued as true) nor irrational (does not make sense in the light of God's transforming us believers into immortal being). Because God is the author of this story that will involve eternal human beings, He is also capable of making us just as He desires. And if eating food will be a part of our immortal and eternal human existences, just as it is now, then this is how God will cause this particular part of our eternal reality to work.

In Jesus' case in this scene, the others "gave him a piece of broiled fish." How appropriate in the light of the fact that many, if not most, of them were from the area of the Sea of Galilee which was a major source of fish and food for the Jewish people. Then Jesus "took it and ate it in front of them," and this is how Luke's account of this scene ends.

Now we move on to what John writes in the last verses of his account of Jesus' appearance to his disciples on this occasion,

> John 20:20b As a result, when they saw the Lord, the disciples rejoiced. 20:21 And Jesus said to them again, "Shalom to you. Just as the Father sent me, I also am sending you."
> 20:22 After he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 20:23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

First, John states unequivocally that, as a result of their seeing "the Lord" (and probably while watching him eat the broiled fish that Luke says they gave him), "the disciples rejoiced." He had now given them plenty of time, witnesses, and their own experience to come to the reasonable and true conclusion that he actually had risen from the dead and was standing in their presence—just as he had

declared several times over the last three years that he would. Again, can we imagine the quality and level of their joy and relief that Jesus is alive and among them as he had been before his death. Of course, this should be the same kind of joy and relief that comes upon us as we absorb the significance of Jesus' resurrection (and that he is still alive now!) for our eternal benefit, while we look forward to participating in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Then, Jesus declares, "Shalom to you. Just as the Father sent me, I also am sending you." First, Jesus wants these people to experience the promise of an environment of peace, safety, security, and enjoyment that only God can produce and will produce starting with the restored Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel when he returns. Second, Jesus came into existence in God's story as the very icon and image of the invisible God, i.e., as the personal God in human form to fulfill the role that He gives him for all eternity. Jesus is God's Messiah, who has taught about the Kingdom of God, displayed evidence through his miracles that he is the Messiah and king of God's eternal kingdom, and has died and risen from the dead in order to fulfill God's requirement for him to be the eternal Messiah, king, and high priest of sinners.

Third, Jesus has taught his disciples, and especially the apostles, all the truth from the Old Testament about the Kingdom of God and his role in it. And his purpose for imparting this knowledge and understanding to them is so that they can now act as his authoritative spokesmen, because he will leave soon by ascending from the earth. But he will eventually return—as he made explicit in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 17 & 21. He is therefore "sending" the apostles, with the help of all the other disciples and students of Jesus who are present, just as God the Father created him and "sent" him to fulfill his unique role as the Son of God and Messiah of the Jews. Jesus will fulfill this role for the eternal benefit of both Jews and Gentiles.

Then, "after he said this," John writes that Jesus "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.'" Jesus exhales a breath out towards this crowd of disciples, and again especially towards the eleven apostles. He is thereby symbolizing their special role that they will choose to fulfill in accordance with God's working within them. And His working within them as the author of their individual stories is what Jesus calls "the Holy Spirit." It will be God's invisible activity of creating and marking them for the purpose of their proclaiming the same message, teaching, and instructions that Jesus had presented to them over the last three years from the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament.

Jesus finishes with a seemingly enigmatic statement, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." This sounds as though these apostles specifically will have the power to forgive the sins of those whom they desire and to withhold forgiveness for those whom they desire. However, this does not make sense in the light of the rest of the Bible—that God alone has this power over people's eternal destinies. Therefore, I think that, with dramatic and unforgettable words, Jesus is pointing out just how effective for other sinful human beings the proclamation of his message by these very close associates will be during the course of their lives (and, by extrapolation, during the course of time when their documents, the New Testament, are read, studied, and learned by future, sinful human beings)—that their listeners (and readers) will either obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God by responding with genuine belief to their message or be denied eternal life so as to incur God's condemnation and destruction by responding with unbelief to their message. Another way to state Jesus' meaning is,

> "If, when you, the apostles, declare the gospel, people repent and believe this truth, then their sins are forgiven and they obtain eternal life, because God destined them for this gift as sinners all along. And if, when you, the apostles, declare the gospel, people do not repent and reject the truth,. Then their sins are not forgiven and the obtain eternal destruction, because God destined them to this end as sinners all along. Therefore, be my apostles and declare the gospel, the message of me as the crucified and risen Messiah, with all boldness and confidence that it, by God's sovereign authority, will have its intended effect on the people who hear it."

o. Jesus Appears to the Eleven Apostles (Thomas Being Present)

Eight days later on the following Monday

John 20:24-29

20:24 Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 20:25 Therefore, the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord."
But he said to them, "Unless I see the imprint of the nails in his hands, and I put my finger in the place of the nails, and I put my hand in his side, I will not believe."
20:26 So, after eight days, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors where shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and he said, "Shalom to you." 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger and see my hands. And reach with your hand and place it in my side. And be not unbelieving but believing."
20:28 Thomas responded and said to him, "My Lord and My God."
20:29 Then Jesus said to him, "You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who do not see and believe."

Explanation of the Above Passages

John continues with his account of Jesus' appearances to various people (first, Mary Magdalene, and then, the apostles and other disciples (without Thomas)). Now he describes his reappearance to the same group, and Thomas is with them. He starts by writing,

> 20:24 Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 20:25 Therefore, the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord."
> But he said to them, "Unless I see the imprint of the nails in his hands, and I put my finger in the place of the nails, and I put my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Thomas, whose name in Hebrew is *te'om* (תְּאוֹם), which means "twin," and was called Didymus (δίδυμος, literally "double"), had not been with the other ten apostles when Jesus had first appeared to the group while Cleopas and his Emmaus companion were describing their encounter with him a few hours earlier. John also calls him "one of the twelve," even though there are currently only eleven apostles. This is to say that he is one of the original twelve disciples who had the potential to become apostles, except that Judas Iscariot disqualified himself by betraying Jesus to the Sanhedrin. After Jesus had appeared to them, the apostles and disciples have all been telling Thomas that they have seen Jesus risen from the dead.

However, like everyone else who has struggled to believe the evidence of Jesus' resurrection, Thomas doubts even his fellow apostles with whom he has been students of Jesus for about the last three years. Indeed, he says that he wants to obtain clear, irrefutable, and personal evidence before he will believe. Therefore, he tells them, "Unless I see the imprint of the nails in his hands, and I put my finger in the place of the nails, and I put my hand in his side, I will not believe." We recall that this is exactly what Luke said that Jesus encouraged the other disciples to do,

> Luke 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

In other words, Jesus is not averse to anyone seeking out, pursuing, and carefully considering all the available physical and historical facts in order to come to the reasonable conclusion that something is true—including the truth of his life, death, and resurrection. And Thomas is declaring himself of the same opinion, that his belief in Jesus depends upon seeing him and touching "the place of the nails in his hands" and Jesus' "side" where the Romans soldier pierced his flesh with his sword.

John continues the story,

> John 20:26 So, after eight days, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors where shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and he said, "Shalom to you." 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger and see my hands. And reach with your hand and place it in my side. And be not unbelieving but believing."

It is “eight days” later, on a Monday, and all the disciples are together again, which includes not only the ten apostles of Jesus’ first appearance, but also Thomas, the eleventh. They are inside the same place, the location of which John does not tell us, and as before “the doors are shut.” They are still afraid of harsh disciplinary actions by the Jewish leaders for their close association with Jesus. Plus, John again wants to dramatize how miraculous Jesus’ appearance will be.

He says, “Jesus came and stood in their midst”—without passing through any open doorway or window. But God, the transcendent author of this whole story and the continuous creator of every detail and aspect of the reality in which we exist, simply causes Jesus to be in the room with these disciples by transferring him from wherever he was to where he is now in the presence of these men. We do not know exactly where he came from, but we know that God is in complete control of both Jesus’ existence as His image within the creation and our existences as personal, human beings who are living out our lives according to His sovereign plans.

Again, Jesus says to this group of followers, “Shalom to you,” which is a typical Jewish greeting, but out of the mouth of Jesus it obviously means much more. Jesus wants his apostles and disciples to experience the full and complete gift of God, which He has promised to the physical descendants of Abraham and to people who exercise the same kind of belief and faith as Abraham. This gift will first be participation in the “great nation” of the people of Israel and will second be life in the eternal Kingdom of God, whose location will be on the new and eternal earth as described in Revelation 21.

Then here is the not so surprising next part of the story,

John 20:28 Thomas responded and said to him, “My Lord and My God.”

We definitely get the impression that Thomas did not have to touch Jesus to clear up all doubt about whether or not Jesus was alive. All he did was look at him, seeing “the imprint of the nails in his hands” along with the very familiar features of Jesus’ face, and hear his voice, and he knew that he was in the presence of the living Messiah, risen from the dead. The visual and auditory evidence is enough for Thomas. He foregoes the tactile details and rightly comes to an accurate conclusion regarding the identity of Jesus. Therefore, he correctly and humbly responds, “My Lord and My God.” Thomas is declaring Jesus to be his human champion and savior who has come to fulfill the role of the crucified and risen king of Israel and who is the very image of God in human form on the earth.

Then John finishes his account of this scene,

John 20:29 Then Jesus said to him, “You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who do not see and believe.”

Thus, Jesus affirms the process that Thomas just went through—that he saw and heard Jesus and, as a result, believed him to be exactly who he is, his <u>living</u> Lord, God, Savior, Messiah, and King! And then Jesus says something that we could understand in one of two ways. He is saying either—

1) “Blessed” and well-off spiritually and eternally are people who have no solid evidence and good reason to make them conclude that Jesus is the living Messiah and yet believe in him, i.e., with blind faith, just because they have an unsubstantiated religious feeling;

or

2) “Blessed” and well-off spiritually and eternally are people who do not have Thomas’ <u>direct</u> evidence of seeing and hearing Jesus but who consider whatever clear and plausible evidence that is available to them and draw the rational and correct conclusion that Jesus is the living Messiah, so that they then believe in him, i.e., with mindful and commonsensical belief (and NOT with BLIND faith and only an unsubstantiated religious feel).

I think that the second option is what Jesus means. We might often think or hear from others, even popular Bible teachers, that God wants only our faith, regardless of how nonsensical it may seem to give it to Him—such as the fact that we cannot see God, we were not alive during the time of Jesus, and we should certainly not let our minds get in the way of our faith in Him. But I suggest that faith (or belief) that is neither rational nor makes sense so that it arises simply out of a desire to be religious but not out of

thoughtful consideration of evidence that is the basis for rational truth is not what the Bible is requiring of us human beings. If God is not the most rational being (with a capital R) and if all truth is not rational so that it always makes sense to both God and us as made in His image, then ultimately we do not know what is true and we are free to believe whatever we want, regardless of how much our ideas do not make sense. I have heard some people say that the more irrational and nonsensical our thoughts are about God, the truer they must be—because His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. But this is nothing more and nothing less than encouraging people to be insane. And Jesus is the last person to encourage this. Therefore, option #2 above is the only one which can be rationally correct and therefore is correct.

Consequently, Jesus is looking ahead to people like us who will believe in him with the best evidence we have available and become as "blessed" and assured of eternal salvation and life as Thomas and the rest of the apostles and disciples who are present with him and can see, hear, and touch him physically. The evidence that the apostles had of Jesus' actual resurrected presence is not the only evidence that warrants committed belief. The evidence from the Bible and its bearing witness to the truth about God and Jesus as His Messiah is also valid. This is how and why, twenty centuries after Jesus' first appearance, we should believe.

[1] In Appendix A, I do look at Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:10; Luke 29:28-44; and John 12:1-19 regarding Jesus' arrival in the Jerusalem area to the city of Bethany and his messianic ride on a young colt into Jerusalem the next day, which tradition calls Palm Sunday.

[2] If it were the case that determining the temporal structure of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread from these passages is too difficult to gain a confident conclusion, I would like to suggest that a correct interpretation of these passages is not what is important for analyzing the Passion Week. Instead, it is what the Jews of Jesus' day ***thought*** was the correct interpretation that is. This is to say that the Jews may not have interpreted these passages correctly, *just as they had not correctly interpreted passages in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah*. This latter fact is clear from the Gospels because the Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah *on the basis of their study of the Old Testament*. Therefore, if they misunderstood the Old Testament in regard to the Messiah, it is very possible that they misunderstood the Old Testament in regard to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. This means that, even if *we* interpret the passages in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy correctly, the *Jews of Jesus' day* may not have. We know regarding the passages concerning the Messiah that the Jews misinterpreted them. Therefore, it is just as likely they misinterpreted the passages concerning the Passover and Unleavened Bread, which would be reflected in how the events of the Passion Week took place.

Nevertheless, studying the Old Testament passages regarding the Passover and Unleavened Bread is certainly important, and we should pursue it with the same goal as studying any biblical text—to arrive at the original author's intended meaning as inerrant truth. However, even if we are not so confident that we have arrived at a correct understanding of the Passover and Unleavened Bread from these passages, we hopefully can determine what the Jews of Jesus' day understood was the correct interpretation. This we do by carefully analyzing the Gospel accounts of the Passion Week. There is always the question of whether or not there is enough evidence and details in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to construct an accurate and complete picture of the Passion Week. However, I believe there are both such evidence and such details, which will then allow us to understand what the Jews of Jesus' day believed about the Passover and Unleavened Bread. In turn, I think that their conclusions about the Old Testament passages were correct and were the same as mine.

[3] I am saying here that the two feasts are not concurrent and therefore do not occur at the same time. However, Luke states in 22:1, "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching," which certainly sounds as though they are concurrent. Instead of interpreting Luke this way, I suggest that the Jews interchanged the two names Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover to refer to both feasts which really were in their minds two separate feasts occurring one after the other and which they understood the Old Testament passages to be describing.

[4] In its comments for Leviticus 23:4-5, the Expositor's Bible Commentary points out that "some Arabs today distinguish two evenings—one when the sun sets, the other when it is dark." This makes a lot of sense, that God means sunset or twilight by this phrase because He desires to be quite specific in regard to the time. The other option is that the phrase means between the sunset that begins the day and the sunset that ends the day. But this would mean a twenty-four hour period which is too broad. Therefore, the narrower interpretation makes more sense. And it correlates well with the LXX's translation, literally "towards the evening," which is to say towards the time when the day gets darker and darker. In other words, the Israelites were not supposed to kill the lamb in the dark of night, but during the time when the evening is beginning and the sun is setting. The NAS95's translation "twilight" is also therefore appropriate.

In its comments for Numbers 9:3-4, the Expositor's Bible Commentary says that "in traditional Hebrew practice, this period is regarded as the end of one day and the beginning of the next. The official determination of the precise moment of twilight in Jewish tradition became that point where one could no longer distinguish between a white or a black thread when standing outside in the growing darkness." This, too, means that the phrase is referring to the time of sunset or "towards the evening."

[5] Exodus 11 is most likely parenthetical and describes conversations and events that take place before and after the chapter. This is to emphasize God's intent through the entire process of the plagues as well as the tenth plague itself. Verse 1 is a statement God made to Moses before he speaks with Pharaoh for the last time (cf. Exodus 10:28,29). Verse 2 is God's encouragement for Moses to speak also to the Israelites. Verse 3 states what happens after the tenth plague, along with Moses' reputation among the Egyptians (cf. Exodus 12:33-36). Verses 4-8 state Moses' last words to Pharaoh before he left him in 10:28,29. Verses 9 & 10 summarize God's intent for all the plagues, Moses and Aaron's actions during the plagues, and God's control of Pharaoh's heart and his choices during the first nine plagues. (cf. Exodus 7:3-4).

[6] It is striking that God says that He Himself will perform the killing of the firstborns among the Egyptians, just as it is striking that the whole account indicates 10 times that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He is truly the sovereign ruler of all the universe. God had spoken of this last plague even before Moses first approached Pharaoh in chapter 5. He also made it clear that He would cause Pharaoh's stubbornness until the end of the tenth and final plague—Exodus 4:21 Yahweh said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt [from Midian] see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn."'"

[7] Thus God is the God who makes a distinction between "His people" and "not His people," whether here on more or less a physical descendancy basis, i.e., the Israelites vs. the Egyptians, or later at the final judgment on the basis of whether or not a person has a changed heart.

Cf. Hosea 2:23 "I will sow her [Israel] for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained

compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'" Cf. Romans 9:25,26.
[8] Thus Moses tells Pharaoh that the Egyptians will demonstrate obedience to him after this last plague and the deaths of all the firstborns when they urge him to leave with the rest of the Israelites. And even though Moses knows that God is the sovereign Lord over the people of the earth and has caused Pharaoh to be stubborn and evil towards God, he nevertheless responds with appropriate human anger and frustration in the face of the king's great sin.
Cf. Exodus 10:28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" 29 Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"
[9] The NAS95 translates the first part of this verse, "Then the Lord said to Moses." But it makes more sense to see verses 9 & 10 as a summary of all that has transpired up until the tenth plague and to translate it, "Thus the Lord [Yahweh] had said to Moses."
[10] This is the first mention of the concept of a month in the Bible. The Jewish calendar has twelve lunar months—Abib/Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Marcheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar.
The Expositor's Bible Commentary indicates that Abib was the Canaanite name for the month while Nisan was the Babylonian name.
In the next three paragraphs, Exodus 12:1-20, God provides instructions to Moses and Aaron for the feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. Verses 1-14 pertain to the Passover, and v. 15 begins, "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread." The question is whether these are referring to one feast or two?
[11] While God instructs the Israelites in this verse to choose their Passover lamb on the 10th of the month of Abib, when Moses and Aaron first inform them of these instructions in vs. 21ff., it appears that they are doing so on the 14th so that it will be the following year when the people are able to choose the lamb on the required day, the 10th.
[12] We notice that all the Israelite families were responsible for killing their own lambs/kids. It was not the responsibility of the priests, the Levites—at least not yet, because the priesthood would not come into existence until the Israelites reached Mt. Sinai and God made the Mosaic Covenant with them starting in Exodus 19. Verse 27 of chapter 12 calls the slaughtered lambs a sacrifice, thus indicating for the time being that these families were acting as their own priests. It will be later in their history, when God requires the Jews to celebrate the Passover and Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem, that the Levitical priests take over this responsibility of killing the Passover lamb.
For example, during the reign of Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), king of Judah, the people who lived in the southern Kingdom of Judah and many who were left from the Assyrian exile in the northern Kingdom of Israel came to Jerusalem and celebrated the Passover and Unleavened Bread. And the Levitical priests assisted them in the killing of their lambs. Cf. 2 Chronicles 30:13 Now many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very large assembly. 14 They arose and removed the [pagan] altars which were in Jerusalem; they also removed all the incense altars and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15 Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth of the second month. And the priests and Levites were ashamed of themselves, and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the LORD. 16 They stood at their stations after their custom, according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood which they received from the hand of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves; therefore, the Levites were over the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was unclean, in order to consecrate them to the LORD. 18 For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon 19 everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary." 20 So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.
In the above passage, the author indicates that the Levites killed the Passover lambs for those people who were ceremonially unclean, implying that the Israelites who were clean killed their own lambs, i.e., acted as their own priests in regard to this particular sacrifice of the Passover.
Another example is during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.), king of Judah, where the same things happened. Cf. 2 Chronicles 35:1 Then Josiah celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover animals on the fourteenth day of the first month… 10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood at their stations and the Levites by their divisions according to the king's command. 11 They slaughtered the Passover animals, and while the priests sprinkled the blood received from their hand, the Levites skinned them… 13 So they roasted the Passover animals on the fire according to the ordinance, and they boiled the holy things in pots, in kettles, in pans, and carried them speedily to all the lay people.
Perhaps a difference at this time of the Passover during the reign of Josiah was that the Levites killed all the Passover lambs. By the time Jesus appears among the Jews 600 or so years later, it seems that the priests are killed the Passover lambs for everyone who has come to Jerusalem to celebrate this feast.
[13] It is important to notice that the requirement was to eat the Passover lamb with unleavened bread even though I do not think that this is during the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins the next day, the 15th of Abib. So unleavened bread was and is an important part of both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This will become clearer in v. 18 below.
[14] It makes more sense to interpret God as referring to entrails that have been completely cleaned before roasting the animal instead of unclean entrails.
[15] I do not think that God is saying that the leftovers should be kept until the next morning, but that any that could possibly be kept until then should be burned with fire the same night of eating the lamb.
[16] The Hebrew verb פָּסַח typically means to limp or be lame – cf. 1 Kings 18:21. Here in Exodus 12 and 13 it refers to God's hopping or leaping over the houses of the Israelites so as not to kill their firstborns. The LXX πασχα may appear as though it is

related to the verb πασχω, but probably not since the latter means to experience something pleasant of unpleasant, even to suffer. Therefore, πασχα is probably more of a transliteration of the Hebrew.
[17] Here is a kind of metonymy. Because the god's of the Egyptians are really no gods at all, God is executing His judgments against the people who worship these false and non-gods. The gods have done nothing wrong, for they do not even exist, even if they were represented by the animals whose firstborns were killed. By killing these animals, God showed who is the true God and who has the power of life and death.
Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.
[18] God is saying that as long as there is a Jewish nation, they must commemorate the Exodus by celebrating the Passover at the same time of the event each year.
[19] It appears as though God is speaking of seven days starting with the Passover. But Leviticus 23:4-8 will show that He is now referring to an additional feast, the one of Unleavened Bread, which follows immediately after the day of the Passover.
[20] To be cut off from Israel is to disobey God in such a way as to disqualify oneself from being a member of His chosen people, the Jews as descendants of Abraham who are willing to obey God in the same manner as he and acquire all the promises which He made with him in Genesis 12:1-3.
Cf. Genesis 17:14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
[21] However these seven days are related to the Passover, both the first and seventh days are Sabbaths, meaning that no Jew may do any labor on these days. If the first day is the Passover, then it is always a Sabbath day. But we will see that the first of the seven days of eating unleavened bread as described in this paragraph of Exodus 12:15-20 is the day after the Passover.
[22] The expression "on this very day" is בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. The basic meaning of עֶצֶם is bone or skeleton. It is used in Genesis 29:14 with וּבָשָׂר = "and flesh" to refer to complete kinship with another person. Therefore, it seems to be used here in Exodus 12:17 to refer to the completeness of the day, i.e., the specific day and no other.
But "day" here also is more generally the time of the feast of Unleavened Bread or more specifically the first day of this seven day feast, which will become clearer when we look at Numbers 33:1-4.
[23] This verse is parenthetical where God is establishing the requirement that the Jews are to eat unleavened bread from the 14th of Abib, which is the Passover, until the 21st of Abib, which is the last of seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In other words, God is highlighting the fact that the Passover also includes the eating of only unleavened bread.
[24] In this verse, God goes back to speaking of only the Feast of Unleavened Bread which follows the Passover.
The words "from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or native of the land" (מֵעֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּגֵּר וּבְאֶזְרַח הָאָרֶץ) (ἐκ συναγωγῆς Ισραηλ ἔν τε τοῖς γειώραις καὶ αὐτόχθοσιν τῆς γῆς) show that God considers "Israel" to be comprised of all those sinful and mortal human beings who live on the land of Israel and who desire to receive the fulfillment of all the promises God made to Abraham so that they are also willing to submit to every obligation that God has placed on him and his physical descendants through Jacob, which would include eventually the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, God is saying that anyone who celebrates the Passover on the land of Israel with the Jews is required to obey all the commandments and instructions that He gives the nation of Israel that sets them apart as His chosen people. The rest of the Bible indicates that it will be only during the Millennial Kingdom after Jesus returns that this kind of situation will exist exactly as God is describing here.
Cf. Exodus 12:47 All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it. And he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. 49 The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger (וְלַגֵּר) (καὶ τῷ προσελθόντι (LXX)) who sojourns among you."
Cf. Isaiah 56:6 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; 7 even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." Here in Isaiah 56 God may be speaking metaphorically of Gentiles who end up holding fast the New Covenant through their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, but I think it makes more sense in the context to interpret Him as referring to the millennial kingdom when some believing Gentiles will join believing Jews on the land of Israel and keep the Mosaic Covenant with them. This is how excited the Gentiles will be to worship God right where Jesus will be ruling over the whole earth.
[25] In the next three paragraphs of Exodus 12:21-34, Moses records the events starting with instructing the Israelites to prepare their Passover lambs to eat that night and ending with their leaving after being urged the Egyptians to leave as quickly as possible.
It seems most likely that the beginning of these events is on the 14th day of the month and not on the 10th when they will be required in future years to choose the lamb for the Passover sacrifice.
[26] Implied in this additional requirement while the Israelites celebrate the Passover in Egypt is that they will die if they leave their homes during the night that God passes through the country to kill the firstborns.
[27] There is some question among Bible students as to the exact identity of "the destroyer." Is it Satan, or a conventional angel, or God Himself? I think it is God, who with the label "destroyer" is identifying Himself in a dramatic way as the cause of the death of the firstborn of both humans and animals.
The first verb "pass through" is וְעָבַר and καὶ παρελεύσεται. Then the verb "pass over" is וּפָסַח and καὶ παρελεύσεται, the latter being the same as the first in the LXX.

[28] This is a fairly general instruction that does not indicate any specific location celebrating the Passover every year. Probably the Israelites performed this rite where each family lived. But God does mention the land that they will be entering, a land that He promised to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 12:1-3.
[29] Moses calls the killing of the Passover lamb a sacrifice (זֶבַח) (θυσία).
[30] This would be the same night as that on which the Israelites had slain and eaten the Passover lamb, having spread the blood on the door frames of their homes. According the Jewish time keeping, this is still the Passover and will remain so until sunset the next evening.
[31] The NAS95 translates the first part of the verse, "Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night." But since Moses had told Pharaoh in 10:29 that they would never see each other again face to face, it makes sense to translate it, "Then he sent a message to Moses and Aaron at night."
[32] Here is the Son of God of Ra requesting that Moses' God bless him! Has Pharaoh become a genuine believer in Yahweh, or is he reacting merely out of emotional pain? As the rest of the story indicates, it is more likely the latter. Just as "there are no atheists in fox-holes," so also Pharaoh and most of the Egyptians feared the God of the Jews this night, but not enough to change their hearts and become authentic believers in Him.
[33] We notice that the Egyptians do not ask, "What must we do to find mercy from and become authentic worshipers of your God?" Instead, they merely want the people of this God to leave their country as quickly as possible.
[34] It took time to complete all their preparations so that we find out in Numbers 33:1-4 that the Israelites started their journey the night of the 15th, the day following the Passover and the death of the Egyptians' firstborns.
Because unleavened bread is preserved longer than leavened bread and it takes less time to prepare and bake, God's plan all along for the Israelites to eat only unleavened bread for their Passover meal had a practical reason to it when they left Egypt in such haste. Cf. verse 39 which talks about what the Israelites do with this unleavened bread because it is unleavened.
[35] In the next three paragraphs of Exodus 12:35-42 the narrative provides us with important details about the journey out of Egypt for the Israelites. The first detail is that the Israelites asked of the Egyptians expensive personal items, and God moved the Egyptians to provide them with such.
Cf. this from the parenthetical chapter 11 – Exodus 11:2 Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold." 3 Yahweh gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.
[36] If half of these men are married with at least four children, then the total number of Israelites leaving Egypt is a little over two million.
[37] The mixed multitude are most likely Egyptians and perhaps even other nationalities living in Egypt whom God had touched and were worshipers of Him like the God-fearers of the New Testament times. Cf. Acts 13:16 Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen…" This would be in line with God's promise to Abraham to bless all the peoples of the earth in him (cf. Genesis 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."). Therefore, even with the Israelites experiencing slavery and oppression, there are Gentiles in whom God has worked so as to open their hearts and minds to what the Jews have taught them about Him. And now they are hitching their wagons so to speak to the Jews and following them out of Egypt and are on their way to literally the promised land.
[38] Fortunately the Israelites and the others with them have their MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), the unleavened bread they have brought with them out of Egypt. Cf. verse 34.
[39] Here the narrative provides us with the length of time that the Israelites have spent in Egypt, from when Jacob and his sons moved their during the famine to the day they left—430 years to the day.
The phrase "to the very day" is וַיְהִי בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, but it is missing in the LXX. The wording is similar to Exodus 12:17, the point being that God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham – Genesis 15:13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions." Did God lie or was He wrong by initially saying the time would be 400 and not 430 years? No. We are reading stories where we can allow even God who predicts the future to speak in general and not absolutely precise terms.
"All the multitude of Yahweh" includes both the Israelites and the Gentiles with them to comprise the "mixed multitude" mentioned in v. 38.
[40] Here we are provided with the detail that the Israelites left Egypt during the night. But the question is, was this the night of the Passover after God had killed the firstborn of the Egyptians at midnight? Or was this the following night, which would be the 15th of the month?
And the Jews, as long as there are Jews on this earth and especially on the land of Israel, are required to commemorate and celebrate this momentous night of God's rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.
[41] If we compare this statement with Exodus 12:19, God means that no foreigner, who has not decided to commit himself to all the promises and obligations which God gives to Abraham's descendants through Jacob, may celebrate the Passover.
[42] In other words, someone who becomes an active member of a Jewish household must also obligate himself to all God's instructions to Abraham as a physical human being.
Cf. Genesis 17:14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
[43] As already stated, this is to say that only Gentiles who have basically bought into the entire program for Abraham's physical descendants through Jacob may participate in the requirements of God for His chosen people, the Jews.

[44] This is to say that Gentiles may observe the Passover with the Jews, but they must follow the whole Torah for the Jews, including circumcision. Therefore, to "sojourn among" the Jews is to participate in their entire biblical culture. Cf. Exodus 12:19 above.
[45] The description of the promised land is more detailed here, like that in Genesis 15 – Genesis 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.
The description includes the fecundity of the land, which implies that God will make it so, especially when He fulfills His promise to make the Jews the greatest nation in history when Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.
[46] Metaphorically speaking, the Jews' teaching their children the meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be like something stuck to their hands (which they use for writing) and their forehead (which they use for thinking, i.e., their minds) as that which God has instructed them in order to remind them of His faithfulness to and love for Israel, that they all might rejoice in God.
Cf. Exodus 13:16 "So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt."
[47] Because donkeys were unclean animals and ineligible for sacrifice, their firstborns had to be bought with a lamb. But if the Israelites chose not to buy them, they were required to kill them, because they belonged to God.
Later, the redemption price for a firstborn son was a Levitical priest, who substituted for this son. When the number of priests was not sufficient, the remaining firstborn sons were redeemed by paying five shekels to the priests. Cf. Numbers 3:44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 45 "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites. And the Levites shall be Mine; I am the LORD. 46 For the ransom of the 273 of the firstborn of the sons of Israel who are in excess beyond the Levites, 47 you shall take five shekels apiece, per head; you shall take them in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), 48 and give the money, the ransom of those who are in excess among them, to Aaron and to his sons."
[48] From the Expositor's Bible Commentary – The major feasts are cataloged in Exodus 23:12-17; 34:21-24; [Leviticus 23]; Numbers 28:9-29:39; and Deuteronomy 16:1-17. There are two feasts celebrated by Jews today that do not appear in these Pentateuchal lists because their origin was much later—Purim, which was established in Esther's day, and Hanukkah, which celebrates the rededication of the temple in 165 B.C., after it had been desecrated by the Syrian invaders. Of the five major feasts, three required the presence of all grown men at the tabernacle, later at the temple (Exodus 23:17; 34:23 et al.). These are often called the pilgrimage festivals. They were the special times when offerings would be brought in great numbers.
The reader can see that I am including only the verses in Leviticus 23 that pertain to the Passover and Unleavened Bread. But here is the entirety of Exodus 23:12-17 —
Exodus 23:12 "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves. 13 "Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let them be heard [1]from your mouth. 14 "**Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me**. 15 "You shall observe the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. 16 "Also you shall observe the **Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field**; also the **Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field**. 17 "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD."
[49] God had stated the requirement of this day, the 14th of Abib, as the day of the Passover in the Exodus passage that describes His rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
For example, Exodus 12:1 Now Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you. It is to be the **first month of the year** to you [Abib (Exodus 13:4; Deuteronomy 16:1), Nisan (Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7)]. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the **tenth** of this month they are each one **to take a lamb** (שֶׂה =lamb or kid; πρόβατον (LXX)) for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 4 Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them. According to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be **an unblemished male a year old**. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the **fourteenth day** of the same month (עַד אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה). Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is **to kill it at twilight** (בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם = between the two evenings; πρὸς ἑσπέραν = towards/during the evening (LXX)).'
[50] This is the clearest information so far in the Bible regarding the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that it begins the day after the Passover, in the 15th of Abib, and is therefore different from the Passover.
This verse also makes it clear that this second feast includes the requirement of eating unleavened bread every day. It therefore becomes clear that the Jews eat the Passover meal on the 14th with unleavened bread and then with all their meals during the next seven days of Unleavened Bread. So eating unleavened bread begins with the Passover meal at the beginning, i.e., the sunset, of the Passover, and then it continues without interruption starting with the next evening of the 15th and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
[51] In this verse, Moses provides the important information that the first day of Unleavened Bread is a Sabbath day, called a High Sabbath in line with the statement in the gospel of John, John 19:31 Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be

broken, and that they might be taken away.
Laborious work would exclude everything but preparing their meals that were to be eaten with only unleavened bread.
[52] Moses is clear in this verse too that the seventh and last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is also a Sabbath. And it like the first day is called a High Sabbath.
Consequently, this passage of Leviticus 23:4-8 provides a clear and succinct chronology of both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
[53] Numbers 9:1-14 is a conversation between Yahweh and Moses regarding the Passover and how to treat those who are ceremonially unclean and therefore apparently unqualified for participating in the celebration. God instead permits them to join with their fellow Jews, and He allows also for the alien, the foreigner, to do the same. However, if someone who is ceremonially clean neglects to celebrate the Passover, then he is banned from Israel.
This conversation takes place a year after the first Passover and the actual exodus of Exodus 12ff. God is commanding the Israelites to celebrate the Passover in the wilderness during its appointed time. Presumedly the conversation is early in the month so that by v. 4, the 14th of Abib arrives and Moses instructs the Israelites to celebrate the feast. And "Passover" in this context probably refers to both it and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so that God is talking about a total of eight days of celebrating while the Israelites are journeying through the desert on their way to the land of Canaan.
[54] We notice that God does not mention explicitly the requirement of choosing the lamb on the 10th of the month (cf. Exodus 12:3). This requirement is therefore included in God's saying, "You shall observe it [the Passover] according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances" at the end of the verse.
This is not an error in the Bible but simply a vague description of the Passover, which can happen in any narrative. The point in this conversation between Yahweh and Moses is that the Passover must be celebrated at its appointed time, the 14th of the first month, Abib, and that unclean Jews, clean Jews, and foreigners must follow God's instructions precisely.
[55] After the conversation, Moses speaks to the Israelites that they must celebrate the Passover as God had originally stipulated back in Egypt, and they comply. Again, it is assumed that they choose their lambs on the 10th of the month and followed all the rest of God's instructions, except of course placing any blood from the animal on their door frames since they were living in tents in the wilderness.
[56] Numbers 28-30 describe various rituals and ceremonies that the Israelites are required to obey. Numbers 28 begins, "Numbers 28:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Command the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be careful to present My offering, My food for My offerings by fire, of a soothing aroma to Me, at their appointed time.'" Then Numbers 28:16-25 refer to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
[57] The first three verses of this passage provide the same chronological information of the two feasts as Leviticus 23:4-8. They mention the first day of Unleavened Bread as a High Sabbath, and then refer to the seventh day as such in v. 25.
[58] Here God describes the daily offerings during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is the only work that the Jews were allowed to perform on the first and seventh days, except for preparing their meals.
[59] In Numbers 28:1-5 God had described the daily offerings. He is saying here and in v. 24 that vs. 19-22 are offerings that are in addition to the daily offerings during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
[60] God ends the requirements of the eight days of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread with the necessity of the Jews to treat the last day as a High Sabbath.
[61] Numbers 33:1-49 is a list of the encampments of the Israelites from the day they left Egypt to the day they arrived on the eastern bank of the Jordan River before crossing it to take over the Land of Canaan which God had promised them through Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.
[62] This verse is very important in that it provides the precise information that the Israelites left Egypt on the 15th day of Abib and not on the 14th which would have still been the Passover.
[63] Deuteronomy 16:1-17 lists the three feasts which God requires the Jews to keep each year. He also mentions that they must celebrate them at "the place where [He] chooses to establish His name" (vs. 2,6).
In this first verse of the chapter, God describes the Passover and states that it is commemorative of His bringing them out of Egypt, i.e., of the Exodus. He also says that their journey began at night, which, combined with the information from Numbers 33:1-4, means that they left after sunset on the 15th of Abib, which was the first day of Unleavened Bread and a High Sabbath. We know, therefore, that this day as a High Sabbath was no hindrance to God's expecting them to journey on foot and leave Egypt.
Looking at the rest of the context of Deuteronomy 16:1-8, "Passover" here refers to both the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, a total of eight days.
[64] Based on all the other passages, God means here that along with eating the Passover lamb on the 14th day of Abib, the Jews are required to eat their meals during the following seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread likewise, i.e., with unleavened bread. Therefore, the phrase "seven days" in this and the next verse refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread that follows the day of the Passover.
Moses also calls unleavened bread the "bread of affliction"—that it commemorates the suffering that the Israelites endured at the hands of the Egyptians. This label also refers to the fact that they left Egypt as quickly as possible, and we know from Exodus 12 and 13 that they were forced out of Egypt by its people who were afraid that they would all die after God had killed the firstborn son in every household.
These two feasts are intended to remind the Jews year after year of God's great power and salvation from slavery in Egypt.
[65] This sacrifice refers to that of the Passover on the first of the total of eight days of both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

[66] As the Israelites are poised to enter the land of Canaan, God through Moses indicates here in Deuteronomy that there is a shift in the location of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb/kid and the bulls, etc. of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, from their own homes and the towns in which they live to Jerusalem. But the time of day for the sacrifice is the same, at sunset, which is the same "time" on the 15th, the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Israelites left Egypt. As the 15th turned dark at the beginning of the day, the Israelites gathered all their portable belongings, including the expensive items the Egyptians had given them at their request, and headed out towards the land of Canaan.

[67] The Jews will be living in tents around Jerusalem during these two celebrations of the Passover and Unleavened Bread.

[68] It is only by an Argument from Silence, which is an invalid argument, that someone could claim that Moses is introducing an error into his speech by not mentioning the High Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread. The emphasis in what he is saying has been on the Passover, and he must assume that the Israelites realize that his reference to the second High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is for his own good reasons, which may not be obvious to the reader 3,500 years later.

[69] As mentioned already, Deuteronomy 16:1-8 mentions only the High Sabbath of the seventh day of Unleavened Bread and not that of the first day. Is this an error in the Bible? No, it is another example of the author's being incomplete for whatever reason he has chosen. Should we grant him to be incomplete? Absolutely, the same way we grant such to any speaker or writer—and this in spite of the fact that God was causing the author of Deuteronomy to be inerrant. Thus, inerrancy does not require all the details of an event to be included in its description, but that the author intend what is true, even if he is incomplete or unclear.

[70] For the sake of providing the reader with the opportunity to think more carefully about how to understand the Passover and Unleavened Bread, here are five additional options for putting together all the data from these six passages. The first three options describe the Passover and Unleavened Bread as one feast of a total of seven days, while the last two options see them as two feasts of a total of eight days.

1) The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are one feast, seven days long, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb during the day of the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb after sunset on the 15th, which was also the actual passing over of the angel of God during the night, followed the next morning by the Israelites' leaving Egypt. Thus, the Passover on the 14th is the first day and a High Sabbath, and six days later the 20th is another High Sabbath that ends the feast.
2) The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are one feast, seven days long, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb at sunset on the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb that evening followed by the passing over of the angel of God during the night, resulting in the Israelites' leaving during the day of the 14th and the evening of the 15th. Thus, the Passover on the 14th is the first day and a High Sabbath, and six days later the 20th is another High Sabbath that ends the feast.
3) The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are one feast, seven days long, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb at sunset on the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb that evening followed by the passing over of the angel of God during the night, but the Israelites did not leave until the following day, the 15th. Thus, the Passover on the 14th is the first day and a High Sabbath, and six days later the 20th is another High Sabbath that ends the feast.
4) The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are two feasts, occurring one after the other for a total of eight days, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb during the day of the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb after sunset on the 15th, which was also the actual passing over of the angel of God during the night, followed the next morning by the Israelites' leaving Egypt. Thus, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th, is a High Sabbath and a travel day for the Israelites, and six days later the 21st is another High Sabbath that ends the two feasts.
5) The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are two feasts, occurring one after the other for a total of eight days, beginning with the sacrifice of the lamb at sunset on the 14th of Abib, then eating the lamb that evening followed by the passing over of the angel of God during the night. But the Israelites did not leave until the morning of the following day, the 15th. Thus, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th, is a High Sabbath and a travel day for the Israelites, and six days later, the 21st is another High Sabbath that ends the two feasts.

[71] See the explanation after this paragraph where I say that it is possible that the regular, weekly Sabbath is the same day as the first High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. However, the rest of the paper will make it clear that it was not the case during Jesus' Passion Week.

[72] I want to thank Roger Ruddle for providing me with the original of this chart, which I include in Appendix B and which I modified and am using both here and in the next section entitled "The New Testament on the Timing of Jesus' Death and Resurrection." Roger has also provided an excellent video on this subject which can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmtyYqq11Qc.

[73] Here is a list of other passages in the New Testament besides these five where the three day time period between Jesus' death and resurrection is mentioned [all my translations except the last] –

Matthew 16:21 – 16:21 From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to be killed, and to be raised up on the third day.

Matthew 17:22,23 – 17:22 And while they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. 17:23 And they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised."

Matthew 20:17-19 – 20:17 As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took aside the twelve disciples by themselves, and he said to them on the way, 20:18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death. 20:19 Then, they will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock him, beat him with a whip, and crucify him. But on the third day, he will be raised."

Matthew 27:62,63 – 27:62 On the next day, which was after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate 27:63 and said, "Sir, we remember that when he was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'"

Mark 9:30,31 – 9:30 From there they went out and were going through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know, 9:31 for he

was teaching his disciples and saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he has been killed, he will rise after three days."
Mark 10:32-34 – 10:32 They were on the road walking up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who were following were fearful. And again Jesus took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was about to happen to him, 10:33 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles. 10:34 And they will mock him and spit on him and beat him with a whip and kill him. And after three days he will rise."
Luke 9:20-22 – 9:20 Then, he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "God's Messiah." 9:21 But he strictly admonished them and instructed them not to say this to anyone, 9:22 saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and then be killed and raised up on the third day."
Luke 18:31-33 – 18:31 Then he took aside the twelve and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything which has been written about the Son of Man will be completed. 18:32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles and will be mocked, insulted, and spat upon. 18:33 And after they have flogged him with a whip, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise from the dead."
Luke 24:5-7 – 24:5 And as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 24:6 He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember how he said to you while he was still in Galilee, 24:7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise on the third day."
Acts 10:38-41 – Acts 10:38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. 40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead" [NAS95].
[74] See Appendix C where, with Jack Crabtree's permission, I include his document whose format I have emulated to label the titling and timing of these events of the Passion Week. Jack's analysis has been extremely helpful to me in working through these passages and events.
[75] There are two options for what Jesus means by "after two days the Passover occurs." 1) He is speaking during the day as evening approaches on Sunday, and his death will occur after Monday and Tuesday have gone by, i.e., Wednesday morning and in a little less than 72 hours. Or, 2) he is speaking Sunday evening, and his death will occur after Monday and Tuesday have gone by, i.e., Wednesday morning which will be in a little more than 60 hours.
Notice John 5:1-2, 8-9, "5:1 After these things, there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 5:2 There is among the people of Jerusalem, by the sheep gate, a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches supported by columns… 5:8 Jesus said to him, 'Get up, pick up your cot, and walk.' 5:9 Immediately, the man became well, and he picked up his cot and began to walk. It was the Sabbath on that day [my translation]."
And also John 8:1-2, "8:1 Eventually Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 8:2 Early in the morning, he came again to the temple, and all the people were coming to him. So, he sat down and was teaching them;" along with 9:14, "9:14 Now, it was the Sabbath on the day which Jesus acted on the blind man and opened his eyes [my translations]."
Also Luke 19:47 which refers to this time after Jesus has ridden into Jerusalem on a colt, "19:47 And he was teaching daily in the temple, and the chief priests, the scribes, and the leading men of the people were seeking to destroy him [my translation]."
And Luke 20:1, "20:1 On one of the days while he was teaching the people in the temple and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and scribes with the elders stood opposite him… [my translation]"
Therefore, walking from Bethany to the temple in Jerusalem and teaching the people was standard operating procedure for Jesus. So if we go all the way back in the Gospel of Mark to 11:1-13:37, along with Matthew 21:1-25:46, Luke 19:28-21:38, and John 12:1-19, and use them as a guide, Jesus arrives in Bethany probably on Thursday evening of the previous week and has dinner with Lazarus and his sisters, rides the colt into Jerusalem on Friday (11:1-11a), returns to Bethany that same evening (11:11b) and then to Jerusalem Saturday morning, which would have been the weekly Sabbath (11:12-18), and finally back to Bethany Saturday evening (11:19). Then, he reenters Jerusalem on Sunday morning to teach the people and eventually makes this statement in Matthew to his disciples on the Mt. of Olives as evening approaches near the end of the Jewish day, or in the evening itself. Therefore, either option above works, but my guess is that it is still a little before sundown and Jesus and his disciples are on their way back to Bethany.
And Matthew mentions two other times previously when Jesus told his disciples that he was going to suffer death at the hands of the Jews -
Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
Matthew 17:12 but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."
[76] Psalm 8:4 What is man that You take thought of him, and the Son of Man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.
[77] 2 Samuel 7:12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct

him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

[78] Cf. Luke 24:46 and [Jesus] said to [his apostles after his resurrection], "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day."

[79] This is the same kind of ointment/perfume that Mary used in her home six days before the Passover in John 12. Therefore, the unnamed woman here in Matthew and Mark could again be Mary, but perhaps it is another woman, e.g., Mary Magdalene, who heard about what Mary had done and wants to emulate her demonstration of respect for Jesus.

[80] Cf. Matthew 21:17 And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

[81] Assyria is the ancient area of northern Iraq with its capital at Nineveh. Egypt is the same as the modern country, while Pathros is probably the southern portion of Egypt up the Nile River (cf. Genesis 10:14 and the mention of the Pathrusim, i.e., the inhabitants of Pathros who are descendants of the founder of Egypt). Likewise, Cush is further up the river and is Ethiopia. Elam is probably the Iranian plateau, while Shinar is the area of Babylon (cf. Genesis 10:10). Hamath was a city in central Syria, north of Damascus. The islands of the sea probably refer to remote parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

[82] For example, this excerpt from the *Catholic Dictionary*, "A medieval doctrine on the relation of Church and State, as explained by Pope Boniface VIII (reigned 1294- 1303): "We are taught by the words of the Gospel that in this Church and under her control there are two swords, the spiritual and the temporal . . . both of these, i.e., the spiritual and the temporal swords, are under the control of the Church. The first is wielded by the Church; the second is wielded on behalf of the church. The first is wielded by the hands of the priest, the second by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the wish and by the permission of the priests. Sword must be subordinate to sword, and it is only fitting that the temporal authority should be subject to the spiritual" (Unam Sanctam, Denzinger 873). This doctrine was not defined by the Pope but reflected the mentality of the age, when both "priests and kings" were members of the same Catholic Church in whose name Pope Boniface was speaking."
https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=36967

[83] John 14:1-17:26 are unique to the Gospel of John and are not included here.

[84] λέγει οὖν ⸂τῷ Πέτρῳ ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ θυρωρός⸃· μὴ καὶ σὺ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν °εἶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου; λέγει ἐκεῖνος· οὐκ εἰμί – Denial #1.

[85] Is Jesus referring to this same distinction in John 10:16 when he says, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd"? Probably not. I think that he is attempting to expand the Jews' minds to grasp that he is not only their Messiah, but also the Savior of believing Gentiles.

[86] See, for example, Othmar Keel's book The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms, 1997, page 255

[87] Works of Love, by Soren Kierkegaard, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, pgs. 168-171. I have taken some liberty in presenting the quote from the book by changing it slightly in order to make it more understandable.

[88] We could also ask if Luke is using the adverbial phrase "in the middle" to refer to the middle of the field or the middle of Judas' body? The Greek word *mesos* (μέσος) means simply "in the middle." Did Judas' internal organs spill out "in the middle" of the field, or did his internal organs "in the middle of his body" spill out when he took his own life? Obviously, it does not really matter to the story, but I think that the second option is correct, so that Judas takes his own life, and the evidence from his internal organs of the violent manner that he used becomes visible to anyone who sees it. And it may be that his dead body lay where it was long enough that it naturally expanded and burst open, thus causing much of what was inside him to spill out. Plus, it becomes common knowledge in Jerusalem that Judas had sold and betrayed Jesus, whose blood was spilled on the cross, to the Sanhedrin for the price of thirty pieces of silver. In addition, Judas' death was both psychologically and physically tragic and involved the spilling of his own blood, even though obviously Jesus' death by crucifixion was more tragic since he is God's Messiah and did not deserve to die. But the fact that Judas both had acquired blood money for his part in executing Jesus and killed himself in such a tragic way led the priests and the people of Jerusalem to label the field *Hakeldama*, which means Field of Blood in Aramaic.

[89] This is not the Seder dinner of the previous evening but a second Passover meal during the day of the feast and which has become important and sacred to the Jews. In addition, this meal does not involve the lamb which was eaten the previous evening, because God had commanded them to burn it the next morning (cf. Exodus 12:10).

[90] See Bill O'Reilly's book Killing Jesus.

[91] This fits well here because Jesus is wearing the thorn of crowns and the purple robe that the soldiers have put on him after Pilate initially handed him over to them to crucify him.

[92] This statement of handing Jesus over to be crucified is after the soldiers mock him as opposed to the statement by Matthew, Mark, and Luke which precedes the soldiers' mocking him.

[93] Concluding Unscientific Postscript to *Philosophical Fragments*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, Jew Jersey, Soren Kierkegaard, translated by Howard and Edna Hong, 1992, page 242

[94] Jack Crabtree has suggested this interpretation of John's system of describing time. It seems highly likely that, in Jesus' day, there were different schemes for indicating the time of day. For example, the Romans may have used one scheme while the Jews used another. Therefore, in the case of how John is indicating time, there are 10 watches starting at sunset (approximately 6 p.m.), so that the "sixth hour" occurs 6 x 2.4 hours later, or during the time period of 6 a.m. and just before 8:30 a.m. This places this event about in the middle of the sixth watch at 7:30-8:00 a.m.

[95] The Point Of View From My Work As An Author: A Report to History, Harper & Row, Publishers, Soren Kierkegaard, Translated by Walter Lowrie, Edited by Benjamin Nelson, 1962, pages 114,115

[96] For an account of the siege and fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, consider https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/the-fall-of-jerusalem-in-70-ce-a-story-of-roman-revenge/
[97] Jack Crabtree has suggested that Jesus' statement, "Today you will be with me in paradise" is equivalent to what we modern Christians mean when we say, "Today my friend who has died is in heaven." Perhaps we actually believe that "heaven" exists right now, or we may believe that the person has died and will be resurrected by God when Jesus returns to enjoy eternal life from that moment on. It is the latter which I think that the Bible teaches.
Furthermore, the Persians believed there were two intermediate places for a person after he dies and before the judgment. If a person's eternal destiny was going to be a good one, he went to the intermediate place labeled paradise (= enclosure, park, garden) and awaited resurrection. If it was going to be a bad one, he went to another intermediate place. Jesus' use of the word paradise does not require that he believes in the concept of an intermediate or holding place. Instead, it is likely that this is just a stock way in the Jewish culture of saying that a person's eternal destiny will be a good one. Thus, he is merely assuring the criminal that he will gain eternal life with him.
[98] Expositor's Bible Commentary, Note for Matthew 27:47.
[99] I originally encountered the correlation of the passages of this long section that comprises Matthew 27:55-28:15 in Jack Crabtree's document entitled Accounts of the Witnesses to the Empty Tomb: Parallel Accounts of the Discovery of the Empty Tomb, November 20, 2011. It was Jack who first suggested to me that not one, but two, groups of women visit Jesus' tomb, so that Matthew, Mark, and John will refer to the first group (or just one individual of this group), while Luke will refer to the second group. Again, each author is presenting his material for his own reasons and purposes, but none of them is contradicting the others. The details are different, but we will see that the stories fit together coherently.
[100] Matthew 27:55 ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ γυναῖκες πολλαὶ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι, αἵτινες ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, διακονοῦσαι αὐτῷ 27:56 ἐν αἷς ἦν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσὴφ μήτηρ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ τῶν υἱῶν Ζεβεδαίου –
We see here that Matthew says that there are many women from Galilee who are observing Jesus on the cross, and he specifically names Mary Magdalene and another Mary (the mother of James and Joseph, i.e., the mother of James the Less, one of Jesus' disciples), along with mentioning the mother of James and John ("the mother of the two sons of Zebedee"), because later, during Jesus' burial, resurrection, and initial appearance, he is going to feature more prominently the first two—Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James the Less.
However, I think that we will see later in Matthew 28:9-10 that he also refers to the other women when it may seem as though he is referring to only these two Marys.
[101] Mark 15:40 ἦσαν δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι, ἐν αἷς καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ καὶ Σαλώμη 15:41 αἳ καί, ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ, ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ, καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα –
Like Matthew, the gospel author Mark says that there are many women from Galilee who are standing nearby and observing Jesus on the cross, but he also is going to feature prominently the two Marys, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas.
We also notice that Matthew identifies the second Mary as "the mother of James and Joseph," while Mark calls her "the mother of James the Less and Joses," but she is the same woman to whom I will refer as "the other Mary." She is Mary of Clopas. In addition, Mark names Salome, who is the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.
[102] Luke 23:49 εἱστήκεισαν δὲ πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ γυναῖκες αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα –
Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke does not name any of the many women who are there near the cross and watching as Jesus is crucified and dies. However, he will later refer specifically to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary in Luke 24:10 in regard to all the women who are reporting to Jesus' apostles that his body is gone from the tomb and that he has risen from the dead according to at least one angel who has spoken to them. Thus, I think that Luke 24:10 will be key, because translating it and interpreting it answers the question as to whether Luke, by naming the two Marys and Joanna, ends up talking about a second group of women who visit Jesus' tomb different from the group whom Matthew and Mark mention, or is Luke talking about exactly the same group as Matthew and Mark (see below). As I say in the explanation regarding Luke 24:10, my hunch is that he ends up talking about a second group.
[103] Mark 16:1 καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν –
Mark, but not Matthew, mentions and features the two Marys and Salome as purchasing spices with which to anoint Jesus' body in the tomb. As above, does this mean that only these two Marys and Salome are buying and preparing spices? Not necessarily, and I think it much more likely that there are many women who do the same with them.
[104] Luke still does not name any of these women. Is it only the two Marys, or are more women involved? I think that it is more than just the two Marys as I will explain in the endnote of Luke 24:10. Thus, Luke leaves out the fact that the women buy spices on Friday after the High Sabbath of Thursday and says simply that they prepare them to anoint Jesus' body on Sunday morning.
[105] Again, this probably involves more than just Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, even though Matthew is not explicit about this fact, and it may even involve another angel at the scene.
[106] Like Matthew, Mark is featuring Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, but we find out from Mark 16:1 that Salome is with them. And maybe there are other women present, too. While Mark says specifically that they are too afraid to say anything about this to anyone (even though the angel has encouraged them not to be afraid), it makes sense that Mark means anyone outside the group of disciples and apostles to whom both Matthew and John mention their describing the situation. Therefore, Mark means that they speak to no one but Jesus' apostles and disciples about the empty tomb.

[Some Greek texts include in this verse, “Now they promptly reported all these instructions to those who were with Peter. And after that, Jesus himself sent forth from the east to the west through them the sacred and incorruptible proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.” As with other verses at the end of Mark’s account that are suspect, I am assuming that this addition is not in the original text.]

[107] John skips the part of the story where Mary Magdalene and any other women who are accompanying her hear what the young man, a theophany, says to them, and he moves immediately to the part where she goes to the disciples and reports that the tomb is empty. She does not yet believe what God has said about Jesus’ having risen from the dead, but she implies that more women than just herself have witnessed the empty tomb when she says, “We do not know where they have placed them.” Thus, John the author is saying basically nothing other than what Matthew and Mark are offering in regard to this portion of the story.

[108] Let me add some questions with which I invite the reader to think more deeply and which help demonstrate how complicated Bible study can be in the midst of the art of storytelling. The interpretation of this being another group or the same group mentioned in Matthew and Mark turns on not only Luke 24:10 as I have already said, but also on this verse, Luke 24:4 καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἀπορεῖσθαι αὐτὰς περὶ τούτου καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς ἐν ἐσθῆτι ἀστραπτούσῃ = [literally] “and it happened in their perplexing concerning this and behold two men stood among them in flashing clothing.”

Is the appearance of the two men as angels actually the same as Matthew’s description in 28:5 and Mark’s description in 16:5 of how the women come about encountering the *angelos* or “young man” respectively? If so, then this could easily be the same group as in Matthew and Mark.

Or is Luke saying definitely that the first time these women encounter the two angels is after they have entered the tomb and have recognized that it is empty? If so, then this could easily be a second group.

In line with the above two questions, in Matthew and Mark is the angel already sitting there as the women enter the tomb (or outside and then he invites them to enter the tomb), while in Luke the two men are not initially present but suddenly appear after the women enter the tomb. If so, then we definitely have two groups of women who come to anoint Jesus’ body with spices?

Or, in Matthew and Mark do the women enter the tomb, notice Jesus’ body is gone, and then the young man either suddenly appears sitting to the right, and he stands up to address them, or he was outside and then invites them in with him, while in Luke either the two men are not initially present but suddenly appear after the women enter the tomb, or they are first outside and invite them in with them (and Luke describes them only as standing)? If so, then we are back to thinking that there is only one group of women who come to anoint Jesus’ body with spices.

However, because of Luke 24:10, which we will look at in a moment, I still think that these authors are talking about two groups of women.

[109] In spite of the close proximity of these verses in the text to Matthew’s statement in 28:8 to the effect that the women left the tomb to report to the disciples what they had seen and heard after their first visit to the tomb, it makes the most sense to see Matthew as skipping ahead to when all these women return to the tomb and Jesus appears to them. However, in the light of how John tells the story, it also makes sense that Mary Magdalene returns alone. Thus, Jesus first appears to her and then to the other women of her group after she has left and before he appears to his male apostles.

Later Cleopas and his companion who encounter Jesus on the road to Emmaus will mention that Jesus appears to Peter. But I think that the fact that the Gospel authors do not describe this specifically indicates that his appearance to Peter was after his revealing himself to these women.