

### Matthew 26:57 – 27:37

<sup>26:57</sup> Those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. <sup>58</sup> But Peter was following him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. <sup>59</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put him to death. <sup>60</sup> They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, <sup>61</sup> and said, 'This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.' <sup>62</sup> The high priest stood up and said to him, 'Do you not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?' <sup>63</sup> But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.' <sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see 'the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power,' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.' <sup>65</sup> 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 the blasphemy; <sup>66</sup> what do you think?' They answered, 'He deserves death!' <sup>67</sup> Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists; and others slapped him, <sup>68</sup> and said, 'Prophecy to us, you Christ; who is the one who hit you?' <sup>69</sup> Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' <sup>70</sup> But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' <sup>71</sup> When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' <sup>72</sup> And again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' <sup>73</sup> A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.' <sup>74</sup> Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

<sup>27:1</sup> Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put him to death; <sup>2</sup> and they bound him, and led him away and delivered him to Pilate the governor. <sup>3</sup> Then when Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that he had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, <sup>4</sup> saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself!' <sup>5</sup> And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. <sup>6</sup> 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.' <sup>7</sup> And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. <sup>8</sup> For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup> Then 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 had been set' by the sons of Israel; <sup>10</sup> 'and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.'

<sup>11</sup> Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned him, saying, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' And Jesus said to him, 'It is as you say.' <sup>12</sup> And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?' <sup>14</sup> And he did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed. <sup>15</sup> Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup> At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' <sup>18</sup> For he knew that because of envy they had handed him over. <sup>19</sup> While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, 'Have nothing to do with

that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of him.’<sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.<sup>21</sup> But the governor said to them, ‘Which of the two do you want me to release for you?’ And they said, ‘Barabbas.’<sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, ‘Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?’ They all said, ‘Crucify him!’<sup>23</sup> And he said, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they kept shouting all the more, saying, ‘Crucify him!’<sup>24</sup> When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that 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 that yourselves.’<sup>25</sup> And all the people said, ‘His blood shall be on us and on our children!’<sup>26</sup> Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around him.

<sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.<sup>29</sup> And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’<sup>30</sup> They spat on him, and took the reed and began to beat him on the head.<sup>31</sup> After they had mocked him, they took the scarlet robe off him and put his own garments back on him, and led him away to crucify him.<sup>32</sup> As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear his cross.<sup>33</sup> And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull,<sup>34</sup> they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, he was unwilling to drink.<sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified him, they divided up his garments among themselves by casting lots.<sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they began to keep watch over him there.<sup>37</sup> And above his head they put up the charge against him which read, ‘This is Jesus the King of the Jews.’

### Jesus and the Chief Priests: A Comparison

Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, emphasizes the contrast between Jesus and the Jewish priestly leadership in Jerusalem. Luke and John, writing to a mixed audience – some Jewish and much more Gentile – contrasts Jesus more broadly to other officials. Luke compares Jesus to all other rulers and authorities: the Jewish leaders, Herod the puppet King of Judea, and Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. John contrasts Jesus and Pontius Pilate.

<i>The Function of Priests</i>	<i>The Chief Priests</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
They were supposed to hear people when they confess		
They were supposed to symbolically bear away the sins of the people		
They were supposed to advocate for others before God, and advocate others to return to God, so that the Jewish people would be symbolically and, in that sense, temporarily restored to God until God initiated a full and permanent restoration.		
They were supposed to be performing the Passover ceremony. On this day, they were to sacrifice the Passover Lamb, commemorating the release of Israel from captivity.		

Questions

1. Trace the motif of 'betrayal': Who betrays whom? Who feels betrayed by whom?
  - a. Judas
    - i. Judas betrays Jesus in that Jesus wanted Judas to stay with him.
    - ii. Judas feels betrayed by Jesus in that he was not a successful military messiah. The most natural theory about Judas is that he wanted to force Jesus to play his hand as a military leader. But when this backfired, Judas was totally remorseful.
    - iii. The chief priests betray Judas, in that they say, 'What is that to us?' What kind of priest turns away from a confession?!?
  - b. Pilate
    - i. Pilate betrays his wife and her dream
    - ii. Pilate betrays Rome and his own office
      1. He kills a man he believes is innocent, who is actually innocent. This is a travesty of the Roman justice system, which claimed to be fair and just. The very foundation of the Western system of law and justice is shown to be corrupt.
      2. He releases a known revolutionary, the guerilla soldier Barabbas, a threat to Rome
    - iii. Pilate betrays himself; his conscience told him what was true, but he doesn't go with it
  - c. The Jewish leaders and people
    - i. The chief priests betray the Jewish people, by getting them to call for Barabbas
    - ii. The Jewish people betray Jesus
    - iii. The Jewish people feel betrayed by Jesus in that he was not a successful military messiah
  - d. The soldiers
    - i. The soldiers betray a sense of justice, propriety and their own humanity. They engage in (1) police brutality, a miscarriage of justice; (2) theft; and (3) mockery of Jesus and the Jews as a whole, since they were making Jesus into an example for all the Jews and saying that they have power over 'the king of the Jews.'
  - e. THE KEY QUESTION right off the bat is: So who was right? Who really betrayed whom? On the one hand, if Jesus was wrong, then he really did betray everyone else, and then everyone else acted with excusable anger. On the other hand, if Jesus was right, then everyone else was wrong.
    - i. For non-Christian Jews: Was Jesus innocent? What are the implications of that? Talk through that a little bit, and then work with question #2 about the chief priests, below.
    - ii. For non-Christians generally: What does Jesus reveal about the finest religious system and the finest political system? About humanity in general?
2. What about the chief priests? Compare the chief priests and Jesus, and look at how the chief priests betray their own role as priests. (Fill out the table)
  - a. Well, what were Jewish priests supposed to do? Do they do it? What about Jesus?

<i>The Function of Priests</i>	<i>The Chief Priests</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
They were supposed to hear people when they confess	They got false witnesses against Jesus and treat Jesus' claim to fulfill Daniel 7:13 as blasphemy (26:59 – 65). They refuse to hear Judas; they say instead, 'What is that to us?' (27:4)	Jesus hears the unintentional confession of the Jewish people, 'His blood be on us and our children,' but takes their sin onto himself. He bears the blood and the sin of the Jewish people and their children. WOW!!
They were supposed to symbolically bear away the sins of the people	They force the people to bear the sin of the blood of Jesus, i.e. the responsibility for killing Jesus, since the people say, 'His blood be on us and our children.' (27:25) Note: This statement has been distorted by Gentiles over the centuries to justify the ill-treatment of non-Christian Jews. However, this statement is to be understood only in the immediate sense. The Jewish people would revolt against Rome and incur the invasion of Titus Vespasian and the destruction of Jerusalem. The phrase 'us and our children' only means 1 generation, literally.	Jesus bears the sin of the people, both symbolically and truly. See below.
They were supposed to advocate for others before God, and advocate	They advocate others to sin! They advocate Pilate to murder an innocent man, and they whip up the Jewish people into a mob frenzy and advocate for them to call for	Jesus advocates for others to return to God. Notice that Jesus undergoes what

<p>others to return to God, so that the Jewish people would be symbolically and, in that sense, temporarily restored to God until God initiated a full and permanent restoration.</p>	<p>the death of Jesus! They have no regard for people's standing with God.</p>	<p>the Jewish revolutionaries would suffer in 70 AD at Jerusalem. He literally suffers what they would later. He was warning them not to go this route. And of course, he advocates for others before God.</p>
<p>They were supposed to be performing the Passover ceremony. On this day, they were to sacrifice the Passover Lamb, commemorating the release of Israel from captivity.</p>	<p>Ironically, they do perform the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb, Jesus, on this Passover Day (note the reference to 'the feast' of the Jews in 27:15)</p>	<p>Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, who sets Barabbas free. What does Barabbas' name mean? 'Son of the Father.' Israel was said to be the 'son' of God in Exodus 4:22 and Romans 9:4. Barabbas represents Israel, which is being set free in a new and more profound way by Jesus.</p>

Jesus performs the role of a priest in really and truly, not merely symbolically, bore the sins of the people. How do we see this? Look at what was placed on Jesus.

- i. *A scarlet robe* (literally 'inner tunic'): Note that Mark and John refer instead to a purple robe (literally 'outer garment, cloak'). Why does Matthew point out a different piece of clothing than Mark and John? Because Israel knew that scarlet, or bloodstain red, was the color of sin (e.g. Isaiah 1:18).
- ii. *A crown of thorns*: Where do thorns first appear? In Genesis 3:17 – 19 when God pronounces the curse on the ground because of Adam's sin. Thorns are emblems of the curse on the world.
- iii. *A wooden cross*: Deuteronomy 21:22 – 23 said that anyone who hung on a tree was especially cursed, cut off from the covenant and from God.
- iv. *A terrible death at the hands of enemy Gentiles*: This was the most despicable and humiliating death imaginable to the Jewish mind. It meant that you were exiled and forsaken.
- v. **NOW JESUS ENTERS INTO ALL THE EMBLEMS OF SIN AND DEATH. HE WAS ENGAGING THE FULLNESS OF HUMAN SIN.**
  1. **FROM WITHIN, HE WAS EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF HUMAN EVIL IN HIS HUMAN RESISTANCE TO GOD.** We saw this begin back in Mt.3:13 – 4:10 when Jesus went into the wilderness and withstood the sinfulness of his own humanity. We also saw this heighten in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mt.26:36 – 46 when Jesus wrestled with the desire to not die. From beginning to end, he wrestled with the sinful humanity he was wearing and the reactions of sinful humanity towards him.
  2. **FROM WITHOUT, HE WAS EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF HUMAN EVIL AS IT CAME FROM OTHERS.** Think about all the betrayals, the selfish agendas, the nationalistic agendas, the envy, the lies. When Jesus was demonstrating the depth of his love and character, humanity was demonstrating the depth of its hatred and injustice.
3. (for a more biblically literate audience, especially knowledgeable Jewish folk) So Jesus replaces the chief priests at this moment!!! THE KEY QUESTION here is: Who has *betrayed* their role? And who has fulfilled it perfectly? Who else can advocate for us before God? Who else can mediate?
4. (for a less biblically literate audience) When God was showing us in Jesus what it means to be truly human, humanity was showing us what it means to be truly inhuman. Jesus has perfect integrity, innocence, composure, and compassion, whereas everyone else does not. Their ugliness is revealed, while Jesus stands out with strength and integrity. Who else is like this?
5. (for an evangelism training purpose) When people ask us why Christians observe Good Friday, or what the significance of Jesus' death is, how do we articulate what Jesus has done? Jesus died to make the love of God known. The other centered love of God. But how?
  - a. The ontological understanding: Jesus died to take something in humanity all the way to its death. Like Frodo carrying the Ring of Power all the way to Mordor to be unmade, Jesus carried his own self-centered humanity (which he never gave in to) all the way to die in love for others.

- b. The disease metaphor: Jesus came to acquire our disease in his own body. Then he resisted it and fought it from within and without, to produce the antibodies in himself. He perfected his resistance to our disease by pushing selfishness all the way into death. Then he was raised again and able to share his new humanity with us spiritually so we can be united with him.
- c. An extra illustration: Walter Wangerin draws up a simple, powerful picture of Jesus in his story *The Ragman*.

'I noticed a young man, handsome and strong, walking the darkened, dirty alleys of the city. He was pulling an old cart, filled with clothes, bright and new, and he was calling in a clear, tenor voice, 'Rags! New rags for old!' I wondered about this and so I followed him. The Ragman came to a woman sobbing on her back porch, with her elbows on her knees, wiping her face with a handkerchief. Her shoulders shook with each sob.

'Give me your rag,' said the Ragman, 'and I will give you mine.'

She looked up and he took her old handkerchief and laid a new, clean, white linen one in her hand. Then, as he began to pull his cart again, the Ragman put her handkerchief to her face and began to weep, to sob with grief as she had done, his shoulders shaking. Yet she was left without a tear.

'Rags! Rags! New rags for old!'

In a little while, the Ragman found a girl whose head was wrapped in a bandage. Blood soaked her bandage. Blood ran down in a line down her cheek.

'Give me your rag, and I will give you mine.'

The child stared back helplessly. So he untied the bandage and tied it to his own head. Then he put a brand new bonnet on hers. I gasped at what I saw, for the wound went with the bandage! Against his brow it ran with fresh blood, his own!

'Rags! New rags for old!' cried the sobbing, bleeding Ragman.

The Ragman met a man slumped against a telephone pole.

'Do you have a job?' the Ragman asked.

'Are you crazy?' said the man, showing that the right sleeve of his jacket had no arm in it.

'Give me your jacket and I will give you mine.' He took off his jacket, and I trembled because the Ragman's arm stayed in its sleeve. When the other man put it on, he had two good arms, but the Ragman had only one.

I wept to see the change in the Ragman. He stumbled, weeping, bleeding, exhausted to the garbage pits of the city. He climbed a hill. With clumsy labor he cleared away a little space on that hill. Then he sighed. He laid down. And then he died.

I slipped into a junked car and cried because I had come to love the Ragman. The wonder of this man remained in my mind, and I sobbed myself to sleep. I slept through until Sunday morning when I was awakened by a light. Light slammed against my sour face and I saw him. The Ragman stood there, folding the bandage carefully, a scar on his forehead, but healthy! And all his rags were clean and shined. I lowered my head, trembling, and walked to him.

'Please dress me,' I said. And he put his new rags on me, and I am alive beside him. The Ragman, the Christ. (paraphrased from Walter Wangerin's *The Ragman*)