

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 95, Chapter 27 Continued 2

As we are nearing the end of our extensive study of Matthew's Gospel and all that has been revealed about Jesus's life and teachings along the way, we have arrived at the epic Redemption History milestone that had its beginning in the Garden of Eden and now rests at the foot of a Roman cross around 30 A.D. Let's re-read a short section of Matthew chapter 27.

#### RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 27:45 - 54

At 3 in the afternoon, during the hours on Passover Day that the Passover lambs were being slaughtered, the sky (and it seems all the atmosphere) turns dark and ominous. Darkness in the Bible is always symbolic and it projects the presence of evil and just as often of God's impending wrath. Yeshua finds sufficient breath as He hangs suffocating on the death stake to shout out in Aramaic, "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?" Even in death He is speaking prophetically from one of the most profoundly messianic Psalms in the Bible: Psalm 22.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Psalm 22:2 *My God! My God! Why have you abandoned me? Why so far from helping me, so far from my anguished cries?***

In those words, some onlookers thought they heard Jesus calling for Elijah. This is another one of those conundrums that has baffled scholars for ages; why would anyone think He said such a thing? Modern language scholars have offered a solution that probably resolves it.

It is better known today that there were multiple Aramaic dialects in use then, and was used so widely in the Middle East in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, that if one were to list

the languages that everyday Jews in the Holy Land spoke, it would likely be in order: Hebrew, Aramaic, and then Greek. In one of the Aramaic dialects that seems to have been common in the Galilee, what Christ is recorded to have said moments before His death may have sounded to the ear like: “**Elahi, Elahi, lema sebaqtani**”, as opposed to “**Eli, Eli, lama azabatani**”. In other words, Elahi sounds very much like Elijah. From the dry mouth and parched lips of the dying Messiah, and to the ears of a Judean, the two words might have been indistinguishable. So, in English what some thought they heard Him cry out was “Elijah, Elijah, why have you deserted me?”. Yeshua’s call for Elijah would have made sense to a Jew because Elijah was expected to return on Passover, which is why to this very day at the Passover seder Jews will symbolically leave an empty seat at their table along with a goblet of wine for Elijah.

Not only does the Aramaic dialect matter help resolve the issue, but what further bolsters the argument for it is that next we read that a bystander immediately thinks to offer Yeshua something to drink. In other words, the bystander thought that Yeshua’s dry lips and parched throat, and lack of lung power at this point, caused whatever Jesus said from the cross to not be entirely intelligible. So, the hope was that some liquid would help Him to speak more clearly.

What was offered to Yeshua wasn’t really vinegar (as we usually read it). Who would drink vinegar no matter how thirsty they might be? The Greek word is **oxos** and it is no doubt referring to a cheap low- quality wine that the poorer parts of society drank. Why offer wine and not water to a thirsty man? Because of the alcohol content of wine, the goal was mainly to help dull the pain while providing a little bit of relief for thirst.

Christ is now dead; His spirit has left Him. We MUST ask ourselves: what has just happened here on the cross? How are we to understand it’s ramifications? What was Yeshua intending by pushing out the dying words about God, His Father, abandoning Him?

Christians often go no further in attempting to understand exactly what transpired on that cross than to repeat well-worn phrases like “Jesus atoned for our sins”, or “His blood paid for our sins”, or “He was a sacrifice for our sins”. Those phrases are spoken millions of times over in Churches worldwide every week; but those simple thoughts don’t explain how or on what premise Yeshua accomplished those things. Let’s attempt to go beyond those traditional sayings and see if we can put together a coherent, understandable, biblically based

explanation. I want to say in advance that whatever you may think you hear coming from me in no way repudiates or challenges the notion that in some mysterious and marvelous way, Christ suffered and died so that we can have eternal life.

Repeatedly during His ministry Yeshua appealed to the Jewish people to pay attention that He was fulfilling the centuries-old biblical prophecies about Israel's Messiah. Few Prophets present such amazing predictions about the Messiah and details of his death as Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 53. We've read it a few times (sometimes in small portions) but I'll again draw on a couple of its verses to make my point.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Isaiah 53:4-5** *<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was our diseases he bore, our pains from which he suffered; yet we regarded him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises\* we are healed.*

To understand what Yeshua set out to accomplish we must focus at least as much on His humanity as on His divine nature. This is because just as Adam is biblically representative of all humanity since Creation... humanity as a fallen and sinful race... so Christ carried a similar burden upon His human shoulders. Every person is responsible to God for our sin nature that is unavoidably passed down to us from Adam, but also for our own personal sins of misbehavior and immoral thought. God being just and always true to His word had to punish us collectively as a race of created creatures for our rebellion and disobedience to His commandments. He could not behave as a kindly grandfather, looking the other way, going against His own ordinances. So, the Father more or less consolidated all the sins of the world and placed them onto Jesus. On the cross Yeshua was divinely crushed under the unbearable weight of God's wrath that had been building up for millennia.

It would have been nice if in the Gospel accounts a fuller understanding of what Yeshua experienced and accomplished from a spiritual perspective had been pulled together into a single narrative and carefully explained in detail for the benefit of posterity; unfortunately, that's not what happened. Instead, it seems to have fallen mostly to the learned Paul, 3 decades later, to think it through, assemble and order the many elements and data points, and to give us a better explanation. But even his exposition of the matter is somewhat confounding

because the premise of it is so contrary if not illogical to our modern, Western human manner of thinking; and also because it is not organized into a nice, neat, Greek-style systematic theology. We can read Paul's words, yet it can still be hard to make sense of them, because it is not presented in a form we're used to hearing from a pulpit. In his Book of Romans, we read the following in regard to that fateful Passover day and the transaction that occurred on the cross.

**CJB Romans 5:12-19** <sup>12</sup> *Here is how it works: it was through one individual that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned.* <sup>13</sup> *Sin was indeed present in the world before Torah was given, but sin is not counted as such when there is no Torah.* <sup>14</sup> *Nevertheless death ruled from Adam until Moshe, even over those whose sinning was not exactly like Adam's violation of a direct command. In this, Adam prefigured the one who was to come.* <sup>15</sup> *But the free gift is not like the offence. For if, because of one man's offence, many died, then how much more has God's grace, that is, the gracious gift of one man, Yeshua the Messiah, overflowed to many!* <sup>16</sup> *No, the free gift is not like what resulted from one man's sinning; for from one sinner came judgment that brought condemnation; but the free gift came after many offences and brought acquittal.* <sup>17</sup> *For if, because of the offence of one man, death ruled through that one man; how much more will those receiving the overflowing grace, that is, the gift of being considered righteous, rule in life through the one man Yeshua the Messiah!* <sup>18</sup> *In other words, just as it was through one offence that all people came under condemnation, so also it is through one righteous act that all people come to be considered righteous.* <sup>19</sup> *For just as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the other man, many will be made righteous.*

I'll try to expound on this using modern terms and language. One man caused the problem; a long while later another man solved it. Adam created sin and the consequences of it that extend to every human ever born; Yeshua bore those sin consequences for every human ever born. Since the consequence for sin is to bear the wrath of God that includes both physical and spiritual death, that is what Jesus bore on the cross (it could have been no less). And for Him, and for us all, besides the tangible consequences that come from sin, so God's wrath necessarily begins with Him abandoning us. For Yeshua that meant that the Holy Spirit...the God spirit... that lived within Him... the unique and incomparable divine aspect of His being... left Him for a time as He hung from the execution stake.

Especially because of who He was... and who He KNEW He was... that had to have been the greatest of the many agonies He felt. When the Holy Spirit left Him, He was no longer whole. He knew in advance this was going to happen; He knew He was going to bear all of His Father's wrath as the sole and collective representative of sinful humanity. This is why on the Mount of Olives He prayed and pled with His Father only a few hours before His ordeal:

**CJB Matthew 26:37-39** *Grief and anguish came over him, <sup>38</sup> and he said to them, "My heart is so filled with sadness that I could die! Remain here and stay awake with me." <sup>39</sup> Going on a little farther, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet- not what I want, but what you want!"*

It was the cup of wrath from His Father that Christ feared most. We also cannot just race-by another uncomfortable aspect of His ghastly ordeal. Christians commonly speak of Jesus as a sacrifice; a sacrifice for us. So, was He literally a human sacrifice in all its grisly senses? Isn't God **against** human sacrifice? Are we to understand that God made an exception in this one case? This is an issue that has caused many Jews to run the other direction from Christianity because it certainly seems that human sacrifice that is deplored as pagan and wicked by the Church, is also the way that Christianity has always framed what Christ did and was. And there are New Testament passages that seem to support the notion.

**CJB Romans 8:3** <sup>3</sup> *For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one [but without sin]. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature,*

**CJB Hebrews 10:26-27** <sup>26</sup> *For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies.*

The Hebrews' verse starts to tip-toe into the issue of Jesus as a blood sacrifice, but then we get this:

**CJB 2 Cor. 5:21 <sup>21</sup> God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God's righteousness."**

How, then, do we **not** frame what happened on that cross as a human sacrifice? This is the very thing God averted when He asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but then stopped him and substituted a ram. In reality, the way 2Corinthians 5 is worded in the Greek is NOT the way the CJB presents it. While the CJB says that this "sinless man" was made a "sin offering" on our behalf, in fact the word "offering" isn't there. The Greek says only that He was made "sin" on our behalf. There is a wide gulf between the intent and effect of the terms sin and sin **offering**; the first term describing the problem, the second a solution. That said, most Bible interpretations of this verse heavily imply (if not outright state) the same meaning that the CJB dares to say out loud: that Yeshua was a human sacrifice... a human sin offering... for us.

**CJB Hebrews 10:11-12 <sup>11</sup> Now every cohen stands every day doing his service, offering over and over the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But this one, after he had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, sat down at the right hand of God,**

The CJB wording of this verse is very much in line with most of the other standard English Bible versions. So how do we **not** see Jesus as a human sacrifice; it's just that He was sacrificed on a Roman death stake as opposed to a Temple altar? Hopefully you're seeing where this creates all kinds of uncomfortable theological, if not moral, issues that painless denominational doctrines gloss over, but don't actually address.

It is critical to observe that the simple theme underlying every one of these passages is that Jesus became the object of God's wrath. Therefore, the problem with trying to equate Christ's death with the death of animals as Torah-prescribed Levitical animal sacrifices of atonement for humans, starts to diverge. God does NOT pour his wrath out on the sacrificial animals. Rather the death of the animals is what provides the legally required atonement mechanism so that God forgives the human sinner and any form of God's wrath is averted. However, in Jesus's case God's wrath was **not** averted. He indeed experienced the full weight of God's wrath, which is entirely uncharacteristic of an altar sacrifice. This is because Yeshua was somewhat different from animals who died to atone for sin; rather for a few moments Yeshua represented the sin of all humanity and bore the ultimate punishment. As 2Corinthians 5:21 says (when

properly translated), Yeshua became sin. He became the personification of sin; and God punished the sin of mankind through the wrath He imparted on His only Son, Yeshua, as He hung on the cross.

Therefore, since Jesus's death cannot be precisely equated to a Temple altar sacrifice, what about Him being our Passover lamb? One of the most quoted New Testament passages in this regard occurs in 1 Corinthians.

<sup>CJB</sup> **1 Corinthians 5:7** *Get rid of the old hametz, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed.*

One problem: the word "lamb" doesn't actually appear in this passage in the Greek. The KJV and some others renders it literally and correctly.

<sup>KJV</sup> **1 Corinthians 5:7** *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*

Notice that here Christ is our Passover... not the Passover lamb. How are we to understand this strange statement? The Passover is the totality of the event when, in Egypt, death passed over God's set apart people who loved and obeyed Him, but it didn't pass over those who worshipped other gods. Back when Israel was in Egypt and preparing to escape Pharaoh's grip, each Israelite family was instructed to kill a lamb. They were to use its blood to paint on the doorposts of their homes as a sign to God that they trusted in Him. And, they were to roast and eat the lamb. It was not described as a ritual sacrifice; the lamb was a meal with its blood a symbol and a sign... a sign of protection... not as a substitute. So, the Passover event was completely unlike the Levitical sacrifices because the Passover lamb's blood was not used for atonement or forgiveness but rather it signified obedience to the God of Israel and thus the households with blood of their doorposts were identified as one of His own. Bottom line: while there are indeed similarities (and lessons to be taken) between Yeshua's death on the cross and what went on at the Temple altar with the Levitical sacrificial system, there are also significant differences. We find the same thing true with the Passover and the Passover lamb. So, Christ was not just a higher form of animal sacrifice so-to-speak; higher than bulls and goats. Nor, of course, was He the literal centerpiece of a ceremonial meal. Rather we are to take these statements about Him being a sacrifice and the Passover (or Passover lamb) as

approximations and comparisons for which we have similar earthly representations.

With this transcendent matter of Yeshua's death somehow averting our spiritual death, the divine transaction was unlike anything that had ever happened before and we must not make the comparisons to Levitical altar sacrifices or to the Passover lamb too strong or take them too far. Even the use of the term "sacrifice" regarding His crucifixion, while appropriate, cannot be held in the strictest technical or ritual sense of it, but rather in the sense of Yeshua selflessly doing something for us that we couldn't do for ourselves. God finally brought to fruition His ancient plan to deal with sin; He poured out His wrath on His Son who had taken on the sin and sins of the entire human race and virtually became sin. Thus, the wages for sin (which is death) was finally indeed meted out by God and no longer held back. Let me frame this in a way that might make a better impact (just, please, don't take this illustration too far because it is not meant to be precise in all its aspects). Let's use a familiar word for a person who disobeys the laws of their society: a criminal. In God's eyes a person who disobeys His laws and commands is a criminal (a sinner). Thus, in God's justice system a "criminal" must pay the price for his or her crimes. Thus, in that sense Christ died not as a sacrificial animal, or as a human sacrifice... but rather as the universal sinner... the universal criminal. Remember what Paul said in Romans 8?

<sup>CJB</sup> **Romans 8:3** <sup>3</sup> *For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one [but without sin]. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature,*

God executing punishment on sin is a far cry from having sin atoned for and thus His wrath being avoided. According to Paul, God DID execute His wrathful judgment on sin by executing it upon Jesus. All the world's sin was consolidated into one big pot, and placed into Christ. It was as though Christ had Himself not only become the universal sinner, but was also sin itself, and God dealt with it in that way. It involved elements of the Levitical sacrificial system and of Passover but wasn't precisely either. This re-shapes our concept of the word "atonement" because the main way we have understood it over the centuries is that He was a substitute in the same way a sacrificial animal is a substitute. While true in some ways, it's also a scripturally incomplete definition.

Jesus was not a human sacrifice. Rather for a most mysterious moment in time He was divinely deemed the universal human **criminal** bearing the responsibility within Himself for all the crimes (the sins) of mankind. God punished Him horribly for it. Further, the irony of the 2 criminals flanking Jesus on the cross is not to be missed. They were guilty criminals in reality; but Yeshua was only a guilty "criminal" because God imputed their guilt, and ours, upon Him. The ironic comparison for us to see between Christ and the 2 men hanging beside Him is intended. So, what does this mean for us? Assuming you have sincere faith and trust in the God of Israel and in His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, as your Lord and Savior, it means that in a mysterious way you didn't really escape your punishment; in God's eyes you've already suffered it and (assuming you maintain that trust) will never have to suffer it again. This is why we are told that as Believers we are to identify with Christ's death and His resurrection. Your sins and mine were poured into Him and so the wrath He suffered for sin, we suffered vicariously through Him. It's already happened. Our punishment has already occurred. It's finished. Again: this only applies to those who have and maintain faith and trust in what God did for us. Why wouldn't everyone want this for themselves?

Now let's step back and get real. How can this be? How can my sins in the 21<sup>st</sup> century retroactively become Yeshua's sins in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? In some ways it sounds preposterous. Because it is, for lack of better words, a happy fiction. Or better, a happy LEGAL fiction that God accepts as true within His legal system... His unique justice system... that doesn't operate like human, earthbound justice systems. God has simply determined or ordained that as part of His justice system He will inflict upon one man all the punishments and wrath for all the sins of all the humans who agree to subscribe to His justice system; a system consisting of 2 separate elements for 2 separate purposes: Jesus Christ and The Law of Moses. The first is for redemption; the second is our guide for living the redeemed life. Subscribing begins with acknowledging the God of Israel and trusting in His Son as our Lord and Redeemer. God's infliction of His wrath upon one man (Jesus) for all the world's sins, actually reflects divine proportional justice that blames the origination of all sins upon one man: Adam.

This is why the anonymous writer of Hebrews can say that if we won't accept the death of God's Messiah as our own death and thus our suffering God's wrath right along with Christ on that cross, then there's nothing more that is available to pay for our sins. Since the redeeming event of the cross there is no amount of blood that can be spilled on the Temple altar that will suffice. The Levitical

sacrificial system for sins isn't replaced per se; it's simply no longer relevant. In fact, since the cross, the term "sin offering" has become an oxymoron.

So, does that mean that the Torah and all the Law of Moses have also become irrelevant? Yeshua directly answered that question several months before His death.

CJB **Matthew 5:17-19** <sup>17</sup> *"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete.* <sup>18</sup> *Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.* <sup>19</sup> *So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Yeshua makes it clear that the Torah continues to be relevant and in force until the present earth and Universe are obliterated and re-created. Why? Because sin and sins didn't die on the cross; it's easily observed that both certainly continue to exist. Rather it is the sinners that have committed sins that died; but only certain sinners... the ones we call Believers. If we don't look to the Torah and the Law of Moses as our guidebook for what sin is, what moral behavior is, what right and wrong is, what evil and good is, then how will we have any common standard by which to judge our own behaviors and thoughts? Even more, how will we know God's standard for all those things?

Now we get to deal with yet another interesting issue. Verse 51 explains that "at that moment" (at the moment Yeshua expired), the veil of the Temple tore from the top to the bottom, and at the same time there was an earthquake so powerful that rocks broke. Many Bibles (such as the CJB) will call this Temple veil the **parokhet** or say something about the "inner veil". Neither of those translations is an actual **translation** but rather both are traditional Christian interpretations and doctrines that came much later. The Greek word used is **katapetasma**; it simply means "veil". The Temple had 2 veils; an inner and an outer. The inner veil separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. These were 2 separate chambers that served 2 different purposes and were restricted to use by 2 different sets of people. The Holy Place... the less "holy" of the 2 chambers... was the front chamber where regular priests could enter and operate, and in fact they had a number of duties to perform there on a daily basis. On the

other hand, the innermost chamber... the holiest of the 2... was where in more ancient times the Ark of the Covenant sat (but no longer since after the Babylonian exile the Ark went missing). Only one man, the High Priest, could enter that chamber, and only 1 time per year on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). This wasn't Jewish tradition; it was Torah Law.

The front chamber had a veil that separated it from the Temple courtyard where the Temple Altar was located. Herod's Temple in Christ's era was considered one of the wonders of the world. Its enormity that some said looked like a white, so-capped mountain, was enhanced by the presence of a thick veil that stood perhaps 8 stories high. It could be seen from miles away. The veil's weight probably could be measured in tons. It hung from a specially constructed stone lintel. So, the question is: which veil tore? The inner veil or the outer veil?

Another phenomenon that happened at the moment of Christ's death was that several dead people that were considered holy (righteous) came alive in their graves. Then AFTER Yeshua arose from His tomb, these newly alive folks walked out of their tombs and into the city of Jerusalem and it was attested to by many people who saw them and must have known them. So, it seems to be that at Christ's death they awoke, but not until Yeshua awoke 3 days later did they walk out of their tombs. This is hard to explain and I don't think I have a good explanation that goes beyond what others have attempted. There is much suspicion among Bible scholars that over time something got lost in the transmittal of this portion of Matthew. For one reason, it begs the question if these people now remained alive forever, or they died again? For such an enormous miracle as the dead being resurrected, there is nothing more than a simple mention of it and all ramifications seem to be left to the minds of the readers. What supplies us with some interesting information (that is all too short on details) is that the Roman centurion (and some others as well) that were there overseeing Christ's crucifixion experienced the earthquake and "saw what was happening". They were so overcome by what they witnessed that Matthew has them saying "He really was a son of God".

Now let's get back to the matter of the veil. Wherever exactly the crucifixion took place it was a) not far from the Jerusalem city walls and b) up on a relatively high place with plenty of access for people to walk by and gawk. I believe that place had to be somewhere on the side, near the top, of the Mount of Olives. Further, the renting of the veil and other things that happened were witnessed by the Roman soldiers. Plainly put, there is no way that the Romans standing at the foot

of the cross (or anyone else for that matter) could have seen or even known about the condition of the inner veil of the Temple. But, they did have a plain view of the enormous and highly visible outer veil.

It is theorized (rightly so) that since the monumental outer veil was hung from a rock lentil, and there is specific mention of rocks splitting due to the violence of the quake, that the lentil cracked and broke under the terrific weight of the veil. It necessarily would have split from the top down. It is my opinion that it indeed was the outer veil that split, opening up a view into the front chamber where the regular Temple priests could enter. Almost all of Christianity asserts that it was the inner veil to the Holy of Holies, and this is assumed because of some words Paul, Peter and others say about Believers being priests.

**CJB 1 Peter 2:3-5 <sup>3</sup> For you have tasted that ADONAI is good. <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by people but chosen by God and precious to him, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be cohanim set apart for God to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him through Yeshua the Messiah**

There are a few other passages as well that describes Believers as priests, which has led to a Church Doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers. However, we also read this:

**CJB Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great cohen gadol (High Priest) who has passed through to the highest heaven, Yeshua, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we acknowledge as true.**

Here's the thing: if as Believers we, as a result of Yeshua's death, are allowed into the Holy of Holies (as represented by the tearing of the inner Temple veil, if that was indeed the case), then we don't become mere priests, we become High Priests because only the High Priest could venture beyond that inner veil. However, Yeshua is seen as our spiritual High Priest and there can only ever be one. Otherwise, the term "High" Priest loses all its meaning. Bottom line: it was NOT the inner veil that tore. It was not the Holy of Holies that became symbolically open to Believers. Rather it was the outer veil that tore, which did symbolically invite Believers into it as servants (priests) of God in His Kingdom. Paul, Peter and other Jews thoroughly understood this and thus called us "priests" and never "High Priests".

Let's read some more of Matthew 27.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 27:55 – end**

We haven't read of women disciples of Christ until now. Two of them are introduced and they were both named Miriam. Mary of Magdala (better known to most Christians as Mary Magdalene) we are familiar with; but the Miriam who is said to be the mother of Jacob (better known to us as James) and of Joseph is a bit uncertain. In the listing of Yeshua's biological half-brothers there is a Jacob and Joseph. So, this Miriam could well be Jesus's mother; but it would sure seem to have been much easier to have just said that!

In any case, as the day of Passover wore on and evening was approaching, a man named Joseph (said to be from Ramatayim) came to Pilate. Joseph is identified by Matthew as a disciple of Yeshua. That he was able to get an audience with Pilate says he was probably of the aristocrat class and that Pilate previously knew of him. The Book of Mark chapter 15 identifies the day as "Preparation Day", the day before Sabbath. This is where our extensive study of the Hebrew versus Roman calendars and the timing of the Feast Days comes in. Remembering that John plainly says that among the Judeans Passover Day is nicknamed Preparation Day, then we understand that this is what Matthew is referring to. It is, of course, still Passover Day but this one-day feast is about to end, and the immediate start of the week-long Feast of Matza is about to begin. Since the 1st day of the Feast of Matza is a special added sabbath, then that means that Yeshua's burial had to happen quickly (before this sabbath began), or the body would have to wait for another 24 hours before it could be entombed. No burial could take place on any kind of sabbath; feast sabbath or weekly 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath. This is why the mention of the time of day (evening) and the urgency of getting Jesus's body down from the cross and placed into a tomb.

Following tradition, the body was wrapped in a linen covering and Yeshua was laid into Joseph's personal tomb. Apparently the tomb had only recently been completed and no one had yet been laid to rest in it. Here's how burial typically worked for Jews in the 1st century. The deceased was cleaned with water (for ritual purification), then wrapped in a linen cloth. Usually, various fragrant herbs and spices were wrapped up inside the linen covering for obvious reasons. Then the body was placed in a tomb. Tombs usually had a few resting spots to hold perhaps 3 or 4 bodies at once. A body was usually in there for about a year, while nature did its work. Once nothing remained but bones, the bones would be

removed and placed into an ossuary (a bone box), and then moved to another place (often a designated cave) where many of these bone boxes would reside as permanent burial. So, tombs were used and reused scores if not hundreds of times by various people.

A large stone was rolled to cover the door into the tomb and Joseph left. Matthew says the 2 Mary's remained there near the tomb. Verse 62 takes place a day or so later. It says that the next day after the preparation the chief priest (not the High Priest) and some Pharisees went to visit Pilate. It's hard to place this in time. Whether "after the preparation" means after the preparation of Jesus's body, or it means the day after Preparation Day, is ambiguous. If they had gone to Pilate the day after Preparation Day (Passover Day), then it means that they visited Pilate on a feast sabbath. That is not impossible. If it means they met with Pilate the day after Jesus's body was prepared, it might mean Nisan 16<sup>th</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the Feast of Matza. I believe in order to make the timeline work according to the Prophecy of Jonah, it can only mean that they went to Pilate on the feast sabbath, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the Feast of Matza, Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>.

The concern of the Temple and Synagogue leadership, and thus the reason for their audience with Pilate, was that they were afraid that Yeshua's body would go missing because they understood Jesus to have said that after 3 days He will be raised from the dead. While they didn't believe that resurrection would happen, they were afraid that some of Yeshua's followers might come, remove the body, and make it appear as though He had arisen. And if that happened, then the belief that Yeshua was the Messiah and divine Son of God would spread like wildfire putting the Jewish religious authorities' power and position at risk. So, they asked Pilate for permission to have guards at the tomb. Obviously these were Roman guards they were requesting or they'd have no need to approach Pilate about it; they could have just used a couple of the Temple guards. These men were far more concerned with making sure that the threat of Jesus was ended once and for all, than with contracting ritual uncleanness from being near to dead bodies or in some way violating the festival sabbath rules. Each Gospel account tells this story a bit differently. Luke has it that the women came to the tomb shortly after Jesus was laid in it, went back home until after the sabbath, then later came back with spices to better prepare the body, but the tomb was empty. Mark has it approximately the same.

Here's the timeline of events that I think happened, as it properly fulfills the Prophecy of Jonah for Messiah in be in the tomb, dead, for 3 days and nights. On

Nisan 14, Passover, Christ was killed. On Nisan 15, Christ was in the tomb (this was a feast sabbath). Nisan 16 was the regular 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath and Christ was still in the tomb. On Nisan 17<sup>th</sup> Christ arose. This amounts to 3 days and 3 nights as the Hebrews reckoned it, and it incorporates the reality of the various sabbaths involved.

We'll begin the final chapter of Matthew next time.