

## Week 29

### Matthew series: Two sides of the Cross Pt.1

#### Matthew 27:24-66 (Sentenced to death)

In the book of John, Jesus says "it is finished." What is finished? Is the life of Jesus finished? Is his ministry finished? Is the will and plan of God finished from Eden till now? Is the Bible complete? Did God lose? If we relied on a leader to bring us to victory, but they died, then what? I have not finished this study for a long time. It took a toll on me. I wrote about 12 chapters and then stopped. Eventually I wrote up until chapter 27:32 and then stopped. I am supposed to finish this book study, yet I was afraid to. Why? Because, it's not finished. Jesus was not finished. God is not done at the cross. I had to sit back and see that before I could finish this study.

Am I ready now to end this study? I will but it comes with a confused heart. Matthew has challenged me to be different. All through this book Jesus has challenged the people to be different. To see God different. I know I do, and I hope you do to. So, lets try and get through the cross. To see it through Matthews eyes. It's not just a story. Matthew has a point to make.

Look at the beginning of this chapter. It opens like a movie. Judas hangs himself. The movie answers why. Then we have Pilot looking at all his options to avoid Jesus. He is staring at the water. Water? Jesus ministry begins at water. Jesus is baptized twice. Once with water and once with the Spirit of God. He is clean. Pilate washes his hands clean of Jesus. I bet he went home and kept trying to wash his hands.

Matthew 26:24 **"When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"**

Revelation 21:6 **"He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."**

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Don't you find it interesting that the story of his trial and death is so short? What was Jesus feeling? Was God angry? For the most part we get silence from God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Did the disciples protest? Did the women near Jesus complain to the authorities? Did you notice in this version of the crucifixion, where are the religious rulers? They are mocking Jesus along with the condemned men on the cross and the soldiers. This scene does not even have a pleading voice from his mother. To be fair it might have been bad to protest. Yet, it was fine to mock.

This section ends with a cliff hanger. Is that it? Is it over? Where is God? I did not want to compare the other gospel versions of Jesus death. What is Matthew saying? Check this out. They call Jesus King of the Jews. Pilate calls him the Messiah twice. The soldiers call Jesus King of Israel. Then we have hints of the prophets with a reference to a potter's field and Psalm 22. The whole book is coming crashing together into one epic event with earthquakes and torn curtains of the Temple of God. Epic! Then as the guards stand in front of the tomb we have silence, the chapter ends. What do you think? What do you feel?

Matthew 27:37 **"Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is jesus, the king of the Jews."**

Zachariah 9:9 **"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."**

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I just want to point out a curious section. Sometimes cultures have sayings like "may the force be with you." In the old testament they had their own. One of them is a curse regarding blood heads, and children. Sprinkled throughout the Bible are references to blood on our heads; cursed for generations; and God will avenge. In short, Matthew mentions Judas returning bribed blood money. The religious rulers buy a field of blood. Pilot washes his hands clean of Jesus death. The people cry out that the blood of Jesus will be on their children. Odd verses.

You see, Matthew is using common saying to describe the mood of that day. There is an old saying that says "may the dogs lick up your blood. Jerimiah the prophet mentions Israel as the potter's house. Zachariah mentions money to the potter. Then there are the people crying "*let the blood be on our heads and children.*" Ezekiel mentions it. Many other old testament verses mention curses, children, and land. The Jewish people reading this knew it well. Matthew is talking directly to them in chapter 27. Jesus blood is on their hands.

Matthew 27:25 **"All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!""**

Zachariah 11:12-13 **"told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So, I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord."**

Read Matthew 27 again. Look up these verses for context. Jerimiah 18:1-11, Zachariah 11:12-13, 1 king 21:19, Ezekiel 33:1-11, Deuteronomy 24:14-16.

1. Why have I repeated the sin and children part from last weeks study? It's because all the common Jewish sayings and all the prophet's words come down to this moment. This is the

pinnacle of the whole Bible. If Jesus does not die then everything till now is a fruitless lie. All the sayings were just jargon. What this means is that the Jewish sayings were passion and direct. It means that the prophets words pointed to this place of a cross.

We could talk at length of Jesus death yet God says so little. Matthew is the biggest gospel but the crucifixion of Jesus is one verse of about 15 words. There is no description of the nails being driven in. No screaming in agony. No, blood spurting or people fainting. The Other Gospels tell very little as well. We get a panoramic of the cross. There is the trial, Peter, Judas, Mary, the soldiers, and the men on the cross. Make no mistake that Matthew is painting a picture of the witness. This blood is on our hands, yet, Pilate washes his.

Do we hear the creaking of the nails being pulled after Jesus dies? Did you realize that it took days to die on a cross? This practice was humiliating because your naked to the world. It was meant to take time to pay a price for crime. Why go through all the trouble, just stab them or something? Jesus pushed them to kill him. Jesus predicted they would kill him. He was silent so that they would kill him. Yet, all the witnesses of this scene were yelling, accusing, and mocking the silent one. It is by no mistake that they crucified Jesus.

Matthew 27:35 **“When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”**

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 **“If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.”**

2. Then there are the soldiers. In the movie “The Passion” the soldier whips Jesus so bad. Man, I hid my eyes, but I could hear. It’s the way it went, yet Matthew avoids it. I can remember the exhausted look on the face of the whipper. No wonder Matthew is curt on this scene. He may have witnessed it himself. It does not say. Yet, the Soldiers were not Jewish. They were Roman. They had pledged an allegiance to Rome and Caesar. To mock a foreign king would have been honorable.

I’m going to say this as plainly as I can. It’s convenient to know four gospels. Yet, the reader of Matthews book may not have known the other three. Far too often we look for meaning in every word of God like it’s a sacred code to decipher. Just look at Matthews words. Jesus claimed to be a king of the Jews. He claimed to be the Messiah they were waiting for. Yes, it’s symbolic that the fall of mankind was cursed by thorns. Isaiah called the one to come a bruised reed. So, they gave Jesus a reed and then beat him with it. Yet, Matthew is picturing Jesus as a king.

Breathe. In plain terms Jesus got the crap kicked out of him. Isaiah’s words were that this broken reed would not fail. Read Isaiah 53 and see what I feel Matthew is seeing. This whole scene is really prophesy come true. The length of the thorns is in-sequential. It hurt a lot. Jesus was so weak they had someone else carry the cross. Later the two bandits clearly knew of Jesus. The people on the ground were mocking Jesus claims. Yet, above all this we have a sign “king of the Jews.” Then we find the soldiers sitting after a long day’s work dividing his clothes like spoils of war. The crucifixion of Jesus was pure insanity.

**Matthew 27:37 "Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is jesus, the king of the Jews."**

**Judges 8:16 "He took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them."**

3. Then there are the two bandits. This is a perfect example. Matthew mentions that Jesus is in between two bandits. The other gospels tell us more to this story. Let's hear Matthew. He tells us almost nothing. Why? I feel he wants you to read the account. Far too often we grab the story and miss everything else.

First of all, the three men were crucified. Jesus was being treated equal to bandits. Then we have Jesus position. I believe Matthew places Jesus in the middle by no mistake. God is always in the middle. Finally, we know Jesus was crucified on a cross. Reports after say that Jesus somehow survived and that he did not rise from the dead. Matthew is not reporting that.

Then we have two interesting views of this story. One is that some were walking by (on a stroll?) shouting and mocking him. It says that also the religious rulers were in the mob doing the same. Secondly is this: these people knew what Jesus had claimed. They asked him that if he was the Son of God to come down. I still believe the people believed Jesus was the Messiah. They expected Jesus to come down and wreak havoc.

Then we have the religious rulers. They also mocked Jesus. These men also asked Jesus to come down. This is the clincher to me. Remember these were men of God. They goaded Jesus to come down and be God. Then they said they would believe him. They also had heard what Jesus has said for three years. They reminded Jesus that God's Son should not be on a cross. Then Matthew reports that the bandits said the same things. Everyone had heard of Jesus and what he claimed. They were now expecting Jesus to act.

**Matthew 27:42 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him."**

**2 Samuel 7:12-14 "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands."**

4. There is so much going on in this section of the crucifixion of Jesus. We have Pilate trying desperately to save face and let Jesus go. We hear the crowds mocking Jesus. Some of that same crowd followed Jesus into the city the day before yelling Hosanna in the highest. I can't imagine how easy it is for people to turn on someone. Yet, I have seen it time after time in our own history.

Then we have Simon of Cyrene. Some have said this man was associated with this group or that person. In the end we know virtually nothing about him. I like the answer that he was

part of the Cyanean Jewish church that had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Basically, he got caught up in the crowd. The Roman soldiers just picked him to carry the cross. Some have even wanted him to be a Saint for having that distinction. I bet, at the time, that is the last thing he wanted.

The same can be said of Golgotha: the place of the skull. I don't know why, but this astounds me. There are so many places in the Bible that are famous. I have been to the place where Moses struck the rock. The real place? I have climbed Mt. Saini, the mountain of God. The real place? I have crossed the Red sea. The real one? Jesus was crucified in a common area. It makes sense that it was outside the city. The dead and guilty were always far from the Jewish community. Yet, clearly people could pass by this place to witness.

The wine is interesting. Jesus says in Matthew 26 that he will not drink wine again until they are all together in heaven. Here they try and offer him wine. In John it says he took some from a sponge and then said it's finished. The three synoptic gospels only record that he was offered. Finally, we have the casting of lots. I feel that Matthew witnessed this scene. Why? Because he references old testament verses by what he saw. Literally, Matthew was witnessing the messiah verses coming to fruition.

Matthew 27:33 **"They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull")."**

Acts 5:30 **"The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead--whom you killed by hanging him on a cross."**

Psalm 22:18 **"They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."**

## What it means?

In reality, it means I have not done Jesus death any justice. There is so much more to tell. I hope you will take other studies on the other gospels. Each one adds to this scene. Together they make Jesus death more real. As for Matthew, I can see in his words that he may have witnessed Jesus crucifixion. He correlates prophesy and verses. Matthew is describing the event by what is happening. He avoids commentary between all the players in the crucifixion. He is setting the scene. He is giving us his eye view.

In a way, I have down played the death. What does it mean? Can't I tell you all the clichés? Jesus death is for us all. He is the final sacrifice. I did all that. How? Through Matthews book. He has methodically given us all the prophesy. Jesus said in Matthew 23 that they killed prophets and did not believe them. That is the point of Matthews version of the crucifixion. They did not believe and now it has come full circle. That is why the temple curtain was reported as torn in two. That curtain barred people from Gods house. The death of Jesus has given the common believers access to God through his final sacrifice on the cross. Yet, in the next chapter there is more. Matthew ends chapter 27 in silence.

Matthew 27:66 **"So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard."**

**Job 19:25-26 “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;”**