

Matthew Chapter 27 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

1. What events happened in this chapter concerning Judas and his death? What do you find important in this text? What do you think it means that Judas “repented himself”?

Help for Teachers:

Judas sees that Jesus has been condemned by the Sanhedrin and that they have every intention of killing Him. Judas realizes the wickedness of the conspiracy he has entered with the Jewish leaders. He can't escape the guilt of being confederate in the murder of this man that he has accompanied with for more than three years. This man that he knows in his heart is different than all others. This man that is not only innocent of the charges the Jews have brought against Him, but innocent of any wrongdoing ever. Matthew records that Judas “repented himself”. Outside of going to the One he had sinned against and that solely had power to forgive and impart eternal life, Judas returned to the equally wicked chief priests and elders with his blood money, futilely hoping to undo the deal. There rejected, he throws down the silver and goes out and hangs himself. But that's not all, as recorded in Acts 1:18, Judas somehow falls “headlong” and “he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.” Tradition says that Judas hung himself on a cliff overhanging the valley of Hinnom and that the rope he used broke, thus he fell into the valley below. Hinnom is the same place known as “Gehenna” in the Greek. It was the city dump of Jerusalem that Jesus used as a metaphor for hell, where the trash fires burned continually, and the maggots fed on rotting garbage (Mark 9:43-46). It was also the place where many Jews of the Old Testament sacrificed their children to the false god Moloch by burning them alive.

In “repenting himself”, trying to undo his own evil condition, Judas never repents toward God. Notice how Jesus always demonstrated kindness to Judas. Even as Judas entered the garden for the very purpose of betraying Him, Jesus greeted him as “friend”. Romans 2:4 says, *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* Repentance is turning from something and going to something else. Turning from sin to self, as Judas did, is like adding insult to injury. Turning from sin to anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ will not save. In Acts 20:20-21, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that he had *“kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2. Throughout the interaction of Pilate with Jesus, a recurring concern we see is “King of the Jews”. What do you see as the significance of this, to both Pilate and the Jewish people and to all that witnessed the trial and execution of Jesus?

Help for Teachers:

Verse 11: “And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.”

Verse 29: “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”

Verse 37: “And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Verse 42: “He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.”

John 19:21-22: “Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.”

God, from His throne in the heavens, rules over all (Ps. 103:19). He made everything (John 1:3) and sustains everything and all things are for Him (Col. 1:16-17). He has always been and will always be (Ps. 90:2). He is the King.

Though not one deserved it, this King Jesus Christ is graciously calling to Himself a holy nation out of a sinful and fallen world. He has chosen them to be a royal priesthood and a peculiar people. Their purpose is to show forth His praises (1 Pet 2:9). To them, Jesus is not only *The King* (which He is, rather through faith or force), but He is *their King*.

The Scriptures begin showing us the unveiling of this nation in the Genesis stories of a man called and chosen by God, whose name was Abram. God commands him to get up and remove from the idol worshipping country of his ancestors and go to land God will give him. God renames Abram and calls him Abraham, and the nation that God brings from the seed of Abraham God calls Israel and the people of Israel are known as “Jews”. This nation, in truth, was founded as “one nation under God”.

But even as this nation born of the genetic offspring of Abraham grows “as the sand of the sea”, a mystery emerges. Not even most that are of Abraham’s physical descendants are truly “Jews” (Rom 11:1-7). The “Jews” that are really of this holy nation are not so because of their flesh and blood connection with Abraham, but because they relate to Abraham in that they have faith in Jesus Christ the King (Rom 2:28-29). Because the promises, wrongly supposed to be restricted to the physical descendants of Abraham are in fact given to those that have faith, there is gentile inclusion; the mystery is revealed (Col 1:26-27)!

As Jesus hung on the cross, the sign was over His head that read in three languages, so that all watching there that day could read, “The King of the Jews” (John 19:20). There on that day Jesus’ blood bought citizenship for all that by faith ever receives Him as *their* King, “the King of the Jews”. Those (professed Jews) that were not of faith made it clear, “We have no king but Caesar.” (John 19:15)

3. How do you see the gospel in the story of Barabbas?

Help for Teachers:

Barabbas is guilty of crimes that deserve death. He is not merely accused, he is under condemnation, the Bible calls him “notable” or “as we would say, “notorious”.

Conversely, Jesus is innocent. No number of witnesses can make a case against him. Quite opposite of notorious, He is renowned for the good things He has done for masses of people. Those that preside in judgement over Him can find not fault in Him, declaring His innocence publicly.

Barabbas had no reason to expect to go free. Caught and convicted, he was as good as dead at the hands of a power that he was helpless to escape. Furthermore, he deserved what he was facing and mercy from any humanitarian source was out of the question. Maybe he had some foolish aspirations of saving himself by breaking out of jail, but they were only impossible fantasies. But what Barabbas didn’t count on was intervention from heaven in the form of the Son of God. Barabbas wasn’t seeking salvation by God from the penalty of his crimes, but an incredible gift came to him... a gift that he did not seek and certainly did not deserve... an innocent man was chosen to die so that he might go free.

While maybe not a perfect analogy in all regards, there are some wonderful comparisons: We, like Barabbas, stand guilty and condemned (Rom 3:23, 6:23). We are without real hope (Eph 2:12), clinging to some unrealistic fantasy that we will somehow save ourselves (Rom 3:20). Like Barabbas, our help comes from the Lord (Ps 121:2), and He comes when we are yet in our sins (Rom 5:8), and we play no part in our deliverance (Rom 9:16, Eph 2:8-10). Like Barabbas, the cost for us to go free is the life blood of the innocent Son of God (Eph 2:13).

4. We call the first four books of the New Testament collectively, “the gospels”. Each book gives an account of the life, ministry, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While telling the same story, some books disclose details that others do not. For that reason, a serious student of Scripture will look at all four to gain a better understanding of the “gospels” and get the full picture.
- a. Theologians refer to the first three books (Matthew, Mark, Luke) by a special term. What is that term and why is it given to the first three of the four gospels?
 - b. We frequently use the term “four gospels” when speaking of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Is that an accurate expression? Why or why not?
 - c. Using all four gospel accounts to understand all that Scripture reveals of the events of Jesus’ arrest, trial, execution, and burial (the time-period of Matthew 27), compile a chronological summary of what is recorded to have happened.

Help for Teachers:

- a. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the “synoptic gospels” because they largely record the same events. John, however, is significantly different in the events that he records. For instance, John records only one of the parables of Jesus, but many are found in the synoptic gospels. Only in John do we have the record of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. John doesn’t spend nearly as much time on the early part of Jesus’ life and ministry but goes into great detail concerning the last week of His earthly ministry.
- b. Though it may be argued that it is splitting hairs, it is important to know that while there are four books God inspired that record the coming, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they all are a record of one gospel. It is the “gospel of God” as both Paul and Peter refer to it (Rom 1:1, 15:16, 2 Cor 11:7, 1 Thess. 2:2,8,9, 1 Pet 4:17). There is only one plan for redemption. There is only one good news. These four records harmonize perfectly to tell the one story of the One God that sent His only begotten Son to purchase with His blood and by His death a people, that though dead in trespasses and sins, He makes alive and sanctifies, to the glory of His great name.
- c. Here is a link to a “Harmony of the Gospels” you may find useful by Blue Letter Bible.

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/harmony/index.cfm>

5. What do you think is the significance of Jesus' refusal to drink the vinegar mixed with gall in verse 34?

Help for Teachers:

It was prophesied, Deut. 32:32, Psalms 69:21

There are differing opinions among scholars concerning the drink Jesus was offered and the intent behind it, but this seems a fair summary of the most common conclusion.

From Pulpit Commentary:

Verses 34-44. - The Crucifixion and the mockery. (Mark 15:23-32; Luke 23:32-43; John 19:18-24.)

Verse 34. - Vinegar...mingled with gall (χολή). Instead of "vinegar" (ὄξος) very many manuscripts, followed by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and others, read here, as in Mark, "wine" (οἶνον). Dederunt ei viam bibere (Vulgate). Doubtless the two words represent the same fluid, a wine of a sharp and acrid taste. The received reading in our text is supposed to be derived from Psalm 69:21, "They gave me gall for my meats, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." "Gall" here signifies some bitter ingredient (St. Mark calls it "myrrh"), which was infused in the wine to impart a narcotic quality. It was the custom to offer this draught to criminals about to undergo crucifixion, either as an anodyne or to give them adventitious strength to bear their sufferings. The beverage is said to have been prepared by some benevolent ladies in Jerusalem, and to have been owed to a gloss on Proverbs 31:6, 7, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul; let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." This was not an additional insult offered to Jesus, as some have opined, but a usual act of kindness. When he had tasted thereof, he would not (οὐκ ἤθελε) drink. He accepted the kindly offer so far as to put his lips to the cup, but, recognizing its stupefying qualities, he refused to drink it. He willed to endure all the coming pains without mitigation; he would meet all with the powers of mind and body undarkened; he would have his senses and his self-consciousness unimpaired to the end. Matthew 27:34

6. What were the common remarks from the on-lookers that took part in or witnessed Jesus on the cross (those that passed by said it, the chief priests, scribes, and elders said it, the thieves being executed with him also stated the same)? What do you think would have been the result if Jesus had done what they obviously didn't think He could do?

Help for Teachers:

In various words they all said, "If you are who you claim to be, the Son of God and the King, then prove it by saving yourself from the death of the cross".

The fact is that Jesus could have, at any moment, come down off that cross. As Jesus was arrested and Peter drew a sword to defend Him, Jesus told Peter to put away the sword, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53)

John records the words of Jesus in chapter ten, verses seventeen and eighteen, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Pilate threatened Jesus with being able to determine if He lived or was executed, to which Jesus replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” (John 19:11)

The Apostle Paul writes later, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil 2:8)

Had Jesus come down from the cross I don’t know what it would have looked like, other than complete ruin for all humanity. The punishment He took for us would have been on us, we would have suffered the eternal sting of death and the grave would have had its victory. We would have been left forever in our sins and abandoned by God, without remedy. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb 9:22)

But Jesus didn’t come down from that cross. He finished the work He had come to do. But He did so much better than coming down from the cross, He came up out of the grave!

7. By looking at all the gospel accounts, what does Luke recorded concerning the thieves that Matthew doesn’t include?

Help for Teachers:

One of the thieves, that had at the first mocked Jesus, had a change of heart (Ezek. 36:26), as the gospel of Jesus was revealed to him, and he responded in saving faith.

“39And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43)

8. Why did Jesus cry out “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

Help for Teachers: (copied here from a portion of our chapter 26 discussion, question #7)

The idea that in taking on our punishment the Son is separated from the Father, that the Father “turns His face away” or turns His back on the Son becomes a complicated but interesting study. Matthew 27:46 reads, “...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Much of the basis for this idea is that Jesus now, and only here, addresses His Father as God. In every other instance in all His personal ministry, Jesus always calls Him “Father”. Why?

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is a quote from Psalms 22:1. Is David, in this Psalm, referring to some personal experience from his life? As the Psalm unfolds it becomes apparent that this is prophetic. David never experienced the suffering described in Psalms 22; David’s hands and feet were never pierced (V16), no one ever parted his garments or cast lots for his vesture (V18). But Jesus suffered all these abuses as He died for our sins. This Psalm is a prophetic script of the crucifixion and suffering of Jesus Christ and begins with this agonizing cry of abandonment. By verse 3 there is a “but” and then a reflection of God’s dependability and constant protection. Verses 6-8 seems to reflect the position of the mocking crowds. Verse 9 begins with another “but”, and continues in a vein of trust and hope that God is and will be there as the source of protection and strength throughout the entire passion event and seems to climax in verse 24, that emphatically declares, “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.”

Again, the Psalm begins with a prophesy of the exact words Jesus will cry with a loud voice from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” David then records that the earthly fathers of Israel were delivered by the Holy God in whom they trusted, and greatly praised Him because of it. But in Jesus’ humanity He suffered as though, and to the watching world it looked as though, God had forsaken His Son. But, in keeping with the Psalm, it seems there is nothing to ground the idea that the Father ever abandoned or turned his face away from the Son (Is not separation from God the ultimate punishment for sin?). So, which is it? Did Jesus suffer being separated from the Father as He died on the cross, or not?

Isaiah 50:4-9 [especially 7], John 16:32, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 all seem to support that there never was a “turning away” or “turning His face away” from the Son. Jesus did teach others about “God”, but in all of the gospels there is no place where Jesus personally addresses the Father in any other way than “Father” (except for this quote from Psalms 22:1). And so, it seems at first glance that Jesus is now speaking, as He addresses His Father as “God”, that there has occurred a positional change, that Jesus is now in the position of a sinner, outside of the mercies of God. But on closer inspection, Jesus’ cry is, “My God...”. This is not the language of abandonment, but of inclusion of a covenant people (Gen 17:8, Ex 29:45, Lev 26:45, Jer. 24:7,

Jer. 31:33, Jer. 32:38, Ezek. 11:20, Ezek. 37:23, Zech. 8:8). What a thought that Jesus secured our relationship by doing for us what Israel couldn't do... obey (Jer. 7:23)!

Even Jesus' last recorded words from the cross were, "...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost (Luke 23:46), back to a relational position. But there is no denying that Jesus, with loud voice, asked the question, "Why have you forsaken me?" ... forsaken means abandoned.

The answer is found in the hypostatic union, the understanding that Jesus was [and is] fully God and at the same time fully Man. It would reason that Jesus is here speaking from His humanity. The punishment decreed for the sin that man commits, now being paid for by the sinless Son of man, is nothing less than separation from God. Yet at the same time, Jesus never ceases to be fully God and at no time is the Godhead divided. The separation ends in triumph, as the offering for sin is accepted, as evidenced by the resurrection!

9. What do you think is the importance of the veil of the temple being ripped in two from top to bottom?

Help for Teachers:

The veil of the temple was a thick curtain that hung in separation between the holiest place of the temple, referred to in the New Testament as the "holiest" or Holiest of all", and the rest of the temple. It was the place that had contained the ark of the covenant (before the Babylonian captivity) and was called in the Old Testament, "the most holy place".

The most holy place was the place where, once a year, the high priest entered and offered sacrifice for the sins of the people. No one could enter, under penalty of death, except the high priest, and the high priest had to offer the sacrifice precisely as commanded, under penalty of death. Furthermore, the sacrifice had to be constantly repeated, as it was only a shadow of something much greater. It was never sufficient to satisfy the justice that sin demanded. The most holy place of Solomon's temple was but an image of the true, in the heaven of God. The high priest from the line of Aaron and the offering he brought were but shadows of what the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, would do when He brought the final sacrifice of His own blood and offered it once and for all before the Father!

When Jesus died on that cross, Himself taking our guilt and bearing our penalty, that veil that separated man from God was torn in two. The veil of the temple symbolized the flesh of the perfect Son of God that was torn so that we can enter in. By His blood we have confidence to come before God... into the holiest place! (Heb 10:1-22)

10. Who was the rich man of Arimathaea? What was his role in the events of Jesus' death?

Help for Teachers:

The Bible records that his name was Joseph.

This man's involvement in the burial of Jesus again reveals that the sovereign plan of God for His own glory in saving His people was being enacted, exactly as He had decreed it to come to pass. It was another confirmation of Jesus' identity as Messiah, the only begotten Son of God.

Prophetically Isaiah 53:9 records:

"And he made his grave with the wicked, **and with the rich in his death**; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

The N.T. records the fulfilment of this prophecy in all four gospel accounts:

Matt. 27:57-60: "When the even was come, there came **a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph**, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."

Mark 15:42-46: "42And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43**Joseph of Arimathaea**, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre."

Luke 23:51-53: "50And, behold, there was **a man named Joseph**, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: 51(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) **he was of Arimathaea**, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. 52This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

John 19:38-42: "38And after **this Joseph of Arimathaea**, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

Crucified among wicked thieves, the Lord was buried in a tomb that had never been used and belonging to a rich man.

Besides knowing that he was rich, Joseph was a counsellor and appears to have had a position of responsibility in the Jewish government. Unlike his contemporaries, who were envious, unbelieving, and more than willing to dishonor themselves in their quest to destroy Jesus, Joseph was an honorable counsellor. He had refused to agree with the plotting of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus. In fact, he was a secret disciple of Jesus, fearing the Jews. But at the point of seeing the Messiah of promise crucified, his faith became greater than his fear and he publicly came forward to honor his Savior in the best manner he could, providing a proper burial in his own tomb. His action seems to have been timely with Nicodemus, another of the Jewish leadership, who also made his faith known by assisting in the burial of Jesus' body.