

## **Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Lecture 18, Matthew 26-27**

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 18, Matthew 26-27.

As we come to the finale of Matthew's gospel, we're going to look somewhat briefly at Matthew's passion and then the resurrection narrative.

But again, I spent more time on some of the things at the beginning just to show you how we could do it. But a historical question, would Jesus foreknow his death? Well, he certainly had to foreknow his death. He provoked it.

You have some scholars who say, well, Jesus wouldn't have foreknown his death because he'd have to be a prophet to do that. Well, for myself, I don't have a problem with that. I do believe that Jesus foreknew things.

But even apart from that question, I mean, you can't go in and overturn tables in the temple and publicly challenge the authority of the priestly aristocracy and not expect to get executed. Well, you could maybe if you raised an army, but Jesus didn't do that. Or you could maybe if you fled town very quickly, but Jesus didn't do that either.

Jesus clearly foreknew his death. He clearly orchestrated his death. The events that we read about with Jesus' passion also fit the period in question.

We mentioned earlier about Joshua ben Hananiah. He spoke against the temple. The Sadducees arrested him and handed him over to the governor.

He refused to answer when interrogated. He was scourged, Josephus says, until his bones showed. And there the similarity basically breaks down because he had no following, unlike Jesus.

So, he wasn't dangerous in that way. Also, unlike Jesus, he was considered to be insane. And so, after he was scourged until his bones showed, the Roman governor released him.

But the way things were done in this narrative is the way things normally were done back then. Rome didn't go around looking for people to prosecute under normal circumstances. They simply tried those who were brought before them, especially by the local aristocracy who were accused to the local officials.

The passion narrative as we have it, many scholars have argued for the passion narrative being much earlier than Mark, but the passion narrative as we have it, the sequence in Mark and the sequence in Paul, although it's very concise in Paul, match one another. The idea of both Jewish and Roman responsibility, we also have that in Paul as well. There are indications that this goes back to the early Jerusalem church.

I mean, in most of the gospel narrative, you have people named by their father's name or something else that was common, naming somebody by their patronymic. But in the passion narrative, we often have people named by the places they were from. Simon from Cyrene, Mary from Magdala, and so on.

That would be most relevant in a place where you had people who had come from different locations, which was true in the Jerusalem church. Moving on to the narrative itself. In the first couple of verses of Matthew 26, officials plot Jesus' death.

We'll come back to talking about that when we talk about the trial. But we're going to look here, especially at the other verses here. How much is Jesus worth? I've been happy to see that some other people have used this that I pointed out.

They haven't always mentioned that I'm the one who came up with it, but that's fine. Actually, I'm probably not the only one who's come up with it anyway. I'm just happy that God's word gets out.

Anyway, that's what we try to do when we make the word known. We don't own it. If it's correct, if it's incorrect, well, then it's ours.

But how much is Jesus worth? We have a contrast between the woman and the male disciples. You have this woman who comes and lavishes everything on Jesus. She has this alabaster vial of perfume.

Now, this was a very expensive vial, and it contained very expensive perfume. In fact, many argue that it was a family heirloom that had been passed down for generations. That's why it was so expensive.

We don't really know that for a fact. But also, the ointment was very expensive. It was a kind of nard probably imported from India.

Some have also argued that the nature of this vial, the nature of this flask, you would have to break it to get the ointment out. So, all of it would come out at once. Again, I don't know for a fact that that's true, that you wouldn't be able to reseal some of it.

But it seems that it wouldn't have mattered anyway, because she wanted to lavish it upon Jesus. And she shows her love to him in a lavish way. Jesus goes on to say about her that wherever the story is told, the story will be told about her.

Now, we only know her name because her name is preserved for us in the Gospel of John, that this is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Luke seems to be reporting a different story, and there's some overlap among the stories. But in any case, in Mark, she comes and anoints Jesus beforehand for his burial, because by the time the women get to the tomb to anoint Jesus, then after the Sabbath for his burial, it's too late.

He's no longer buried. But Jesus says that this story will be told about this woman around the world, wherever the Gospel of the Good News is preached about Jesus. And it's true.

But that kind of phrase was also used often in ancient literature, like Ovid says, I've made this wonderful book, and I trust that my name will be preserved forever. Well, I know who Ovid is, and classicists know who Ovid is, and some other people know who Ovid is, but most people don't know who Ovid is. More people have actually heard of this woman than of Ovid because of what she did for Jesus.

Jesus wanted her to be honored as well. But then we look at the male disciples. Matthew says that the male disciples complained.

They said that the money could have been sold. It could have been given to the poor. Well, they have the right idea about caring for the poor, but the wrong circumstances.

Because Jesus takes precedence over everything. And what she offered, she offered as an expression of devotion to him. And so, we have their response contrasted with her response.

But ultimately, in verses 14 through 16, we have the contrast with Judas's response. Judas was a different kind of response. The kind of response from the kind of people who follow Jesus only for what they can get for him.

Judas basically sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. That was the price of a slave in Exodus. Of course, the price of slaves varied from one period to another.

In Joseph's day, it was 20 shekels. In Moses' day, it was 30 shekels. In Nehemiah's day, I think maybe it was 50 or a hundred shekels.

The price went up. But in any case, this is the one people knew from Scripture. This was the price of a slave.

And Judas sold Jesus for that. Matthew ties that in with the Scripture reference and also talks about the sheep being scattered. But then we read about the meaning of Jesus' death.

How much is Jesus worth to us? The woman becomes the model for what we should see there. But we go on to the meaning of Jesus' death, verses 17 through 30. We have good reason to believe that this is a bedrock tradition.

In other words, this goes back very early. Again, not saying that other things don't, but we have good data in support of this. There are multiple attestations for this.

This is also attested earlier probably than the written Gospels. It's attested in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where Paul gives basically the same information, somewhat different sequence, but pretty much the same information about the interpretation of Jesus' death that he gave. Paul says this is what I received.

I've delivered it to you. When those words were used together, they often suggested careful oral traditioning, careful passing on of tradition. There's a partly recoverable Aramaic tradition behind both what you find in Mark and what you find in Paul.

And there are allusions to the Passover that are very early. Joachim Jeremias argued extensively over some of his materials later. Joel Marcus has argued it more recently from Duke.

And I think that the evidence is very strong that you have a lot of allusions to Passover that may have been lost on some later Gentile Christians in various places, but certainly would have been understood in the earliest Jerusalem church and would have been understood by Jesus, obviously, who offered them. People typically reclined at banquets. And if I could demonstrate that for you, maybe this table is large enough to hold my weight.

Let me try to demonstrate that or something like that at this point if I can do it without cutting anything off. They would recline on the left elbow. That way they had the right hand free to take things from the table that would be in front of them.

And they would recline three people or sometimes four people on a couch. And normally in a wealthy home, especially a wealthy Roman home, they would have a triclinium where you would have three couches. And these couches would recline, again, three or four people.

So, you could get like nine to 12 people very comfortably in one of these rooms. Well, the way you got them, the feet would be pointing away from the table so that always you could reach out to the front of the table. But when you had these people reclining, nobody's feet would be sticking in anybody else's face.

The next person reclining beside me, if they were reclining to my right, would be here a little bit further down so that their feet would be further down than my feet. And if they leaned their head back, they would lean it on my chest. John 13:23, where the beloved disciple leaned his head back on Jesus' breast.

He was seated to the right of Jesus. Judas may have been seated to the left or reclining to the left because Jesus was easily able to give him the sop. And that's also why when you read about in Luke chapter seven, where this other woman anoints Jesus and it says that she's wiping Jesus' feet with her hair, Jesus turns to her at a certain point in the narrative after he finishes talking with Simon.

Well, Simon is apparently on an adjacent couch and is able to speak with Jesus. Jesus is in a position of honor. But he has to turn to speak with the woman because she's at his feet and his feet are pointed away from the table.

Well, people reclined at banquets. Jewish people would treat the Passover as a banquet. They didn't recline at all meals.

They often would sit like I'm sitting now. If they were studying under a rabbi, they would often sit at the person's feet in the dust. Mishnah about one, one, or for that matter, Acts 22:3, or what Mary does in Luke chapter 10 verses 38 to 42.

But at the Passover banquet, the person, according to the traditions we know about, would hold the cup at about a handbreadth above the table. People have proposed different backgrounds for the meal, whether it was like Greek association meetings, the Pharisee Kabira, or a Sabbath Kiddush. But I think all the evidence really points to a Passover meal.

The language that Jesus uses at this meal like flesh and blood poured out, is sacrificial language. So, Jesus is a sacrifice. His blood is poured out for the many.

Isaiah chapter 53 may be an allusion to something else, but Isaiah 53 seems to fit the larger context of Jesus' ministry and other things we've learned about him. He says the bread is his body. And this probably reflects Passover interpretation, where at the Passover you say, this is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate.

Now, of course, there are different views on this among Christians as well. And so, I'm going to give you my view, but again, you're not obligated to hold to it. The question is, is this his literal body and blood? I don't think anybody says it's literal in the sense that you would put it under a microscope and you'd see red corpuscles and things like that.

But in terms of how we should understand the body and blood, some people in antiquity apparently took this very literally. Christians were accused of incest because they were saying, I love you, brother. I love you, sister.

They were also accused of cannibalism because they said that they ate the body and drank the blood of their Lord. But if we remember the Passover context, the host, it was normally the head of the household, in a Passover context would explain certain elements of the meal. And the host declared this is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate when they came out of Egypt.

Was this literally the same bread that their ancestors ate when they came out of the land of Egypt? If so, the bread would be a bit stale, being about 1300 years old and already having been chewed up by someone else. There's a joke that I heard years ago where someone complained that they ate leftovers every day and they never, ever found the original meal. But in any case, this made a lot of sense in a Passover context.

But the Lord's Supper was treated in a different way when it was taken into a different cultural setting. And this is what we always have to be aware of. I mean, we have to contextualize for new settings, but people sometimes will misunderstand because of their own contexts if we're not very careful, and sometimes even if we are.

In Corinth, where the Lord's Supper was being observed, Paul had given them instruction. Paul had apparently led them through the Lord's Supper. He taught them about this.

But in Corinth, in the Greco-Roman world in general, people were accustomed to doing banquets a certain way. And you would have hosts of banquets who would invite peers from their own social class or they'd invite people of a slightly lesser social class who would be their clients, who would be social dependents on them. And people were often seated according to their social rank, their social status.

And we read about this in various ancient authors, especially Roman authors, which would be relevant for Corinth. It was in Greece, but it was a Roman colony, that had a great deal of Roman culture. The people would be seated according to rank at banquets and people who weren't seated very high according to rank, remember how Jesus talked about that in a different context, you take the lowest place, and if they invite you higher, well, and good, but don't take a higher place and be asked to move down.

People were very sensitive about social status in banquet contexts. So, some of these people went out and complained how they were made to grovel and just honor the patron who gave them this food and gave them other favors. Paul has to explain to

the Corinthians that they're not rightly discerning the body of Christ because the body of Christ is not just in the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Christ, but the body of Christ is also us, as Paul also said in 1 Corinthians.

And if we don't treat one another rightly, we're shaming Jesus' body and blood. And judging one another by our social status is missing the whole point of the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, I'm going to die for you.

Now we've seen that things have been building toward the cross. We've seen that things are building towards this passion narrative throughout the gospel. But it's here that Jesus especially explains what his death is going to be about.

He also said it back in chapter 20 in verse 28, where he said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Jesus came to die for our sins. He came to atone for our sins.

And that was something the Jewish people should have been able to understand because, after the Maccabean era, a number of Jewish people said, well, the blood of martyrs, the suffering of the righteous turns away God's wrath from Israel. And sometimes they spoke of that as martyrdom, atoning for the sins of the people. So, they should have been able to understand this somewhat, but Jesus was taking it to a whole new level.

Jesus was turning away God's wrath from humanity. He was atoning for all of our sins. Jesus came to do this for us, but what did we do for him? Jesus' disciples let him down.

In verses 31 to 46, we read here about Jesus' pain, and his anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. And he asked the disciples to pray, to watch and pray. But he comes back twice after this and finds them sleeping, even his closest disciples.

Jesus prays, Father, take this cup from me. And of course, it refers to the cup of the cross. This also is multiply attested very likely because, Hebrews chapter five, it speaks of Jesus crying out for God to spare him from death.

It also meets the criterion of embarrassment. Probably the early church would not have made up the idea of Jesus saying, not my will, but yours be done, acknowledging a difference between Jesus' will and the Father's will. But we ask, well, how did the disciples know about this if they were asleep? That's a good question.

And I don't know for sure the answer. The answer some people give is that they were drifting in and out of sleep and they heard some of it. It seems to me more likely that there was somebody present from whom they could learn this later on.

And that's because since Jesus rose from the dead, well, they were with him for 40 days afterward. There was time for them to learn about these things. But it's so shameful the disciples stayed awake.

Jesus hadn't asked much of them for himself. But now he asked his friends to stay awake with him in his time of anguish. Jews usually stayed up awake late on Passover, talking about God's mighty acts of redemption.

But on this one Passover, they went to sleep on him. And that seems kind of like the way the disciples act throughout this narrative. They go to sleep on him.

They forsake him and flee. His star disciple denies him. One of his other disciples has betrayed him to death.

They don't follow the cross. The disciples back then are like some of us as disciples today. But Jesus made them into something else, just as Jesus makes us today into something else.

But remembering that we let him down when he needed us the most should also reinforce for us how deep is his love and laying down his life for us. We read also about the betrayal in verses 47 to 56. Judas betrayed Jesus with an outward act of devotion.

Proverbs says, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. Judas used to kiss in a deceitful way. And by the way, here's one of the examples where context determines the meaning of a word because phileo can mean kiss or it can mean love.

Here it obviously just means kiss. Kisses were common in the ancient world. You would greet a family member with a kiss.

Normally it was a light kiss on the lips. Different cultures are different. That offends my sense of sanitation in my culture.

But they would greet one another with a kiss on the lips. It was a light kiss on the lips. It was not passionate.

It was very different from a lover's kiss. But teachers could be greeted with kisses. Teachers could greet students with a kiss, could kiss them on the forehead, or something like that.

For Judas to kiss Jesus was an act of greeting, but it was also an act of betrayal. These guards would come up. They were probably members of the Levite police.



Some point out from the Gospel of John, well, the language used here is the language used for Roman military units. Unfortunately, if you read Jewish literature, it's also the language for Jewish military units borrowed from other places. So since the chief priests are leading the people, presumably it's the Levite temple guards who are under the command of the chief priests, they have their torches.

And yet even with their torches, I mean, they know that if they approach the group too quickly, too suddenly, the people may run off. They may lose their main target, Jesus. And even if they've got a full moon and even if they've got torches, it'll really help them if Judas, who's already known and trusted, can approach the group and identify Jesus for them so they can see which figure it is, because, after all, it's dark out.

But the rest of the disciples react in an interesting way. One of the disciples, identified by the Gospel of John as Peter slices off the ear of the high priest's servant. Probably he wasn't aiming for the ear.

Probably Malchus, the high priest's servant, as John names him, Malchus, doesn't hold still. He moves and the ear is cut off instead. Luke, who likes to talk a lot about miracles, mentions how Jesus healed the ear.

Matthew doesn't specify that. Matthew specifies some other issues. Each of the writers gives us a different perspective, which is helpful because that's why we don't have just one gospel.

We can get these multiple perspectives. So, he cuts off the ear and Jesus says, put up your sword. That's not what this is about.

We're not going to fight the king's battles in worldly ways. Don't you understand that if I asked my father, he would give me 12 legions of angels? Well, a legion was about 6,000 troops.

Rome did not even have a legion stationed in Judea at this time. They had a number of cohorts stationed in Caesarea. They had one cohort stationed at the Fortress Antonia on the Temple Mount, but they didn't have a full legion anywhere in this land.

They had one in Syria, but not in the Roman province of Palestine, not in Judea or Galilee. And so, Jesus says, my father would have given me 12 legions of angels, one legion for each of my disciples, basically. That would have been enough to have wiped out Jerusalem.

That was probably more power, even if these were just human beings than what Rome had in any nearby legions. But Jesus said that's not the purpose. Jesus had come to this point that scripture might be fulfilled and to finish his mission.

And Peter, who was ready to put up a fight, even though the odds were clearly against him, I mean, they were clearly outnumbered. Peter was brave enough to be willing to put up a fight, but if he couldn't even fight, he abandoned Jesus. And so did the other disciples.

This is not something later writers would have made up because it was considered shameful. It was so embarrassing for a teacher if disciples were not loyal. It was considered embarrassing for a general if his troops abandoned him.

Jesus' own disciples abandoned him, and he had to go through the suffering that was ahead of him, completely alone. And yet, as the Gospel of John says, not completely alone because the Father would be with him. But often we're this way.

We want to fight the kingdom's battles the world's way or not at all. But the time comes when nobody can help us except God himself. And when that happens, we really have to learn faith.

In verses 57 to 68, we come to a head with this theme of the religious leaders versus Jesus. Well, some people have protested that the Sanhedrin here violates missionary law, and therefore this account isn't plausible. But keep in mind that the Mishnah is later.

The Mishnah is written from the traditions of the rabbis who came from Pharisaism. They didn't come from the Sadducees. These were later Pharisaic idealizations of the law.

We can learn a lot from it. But the Sadducees, the chief priests, didn't really care about Pharisaic idealizations of the law. And of course, the Mishnah is written down in the year 220, around the year 220 AD.

Whereas what we have about Jesus in the New Testament is written in the first century. It also comports well with what we know about how things were done from Josephus. So, all of our first-century evidence points in a different direction than what we have later in the Mishnah.

Rabbinic literature itself says that the priestly aristocrats did not always and often did not play by the rules that the Pharisees thought were ideal. Also, this isn't an official trial. It's a preliminary inquiry that has the semblance of a trial at sunrise when they gather, they regather for something more official.

Information leaks, like how could this be known? Well, leaks were very common. You have leaks from closed sessions of the Roman Senate all over the place in ancient literature. You have leaks from the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish Senate in ancient literature.

Some people from a closed session of the Sanhedrin, and some leaders of the Sanhedrin, sent some people to cause trouble for Josephus. Josephus finds out about it because some of his friends leaked the information to him. It was pretty hard to keep a secret in antiquity.

So, leaks happened very often. And also, one of the people, whether he was present or not at this trial, would have heard about what happened at the trial from his friends, from other Sanhedrists. And that was Joseph of Arimathea, who became a disciple of Jesus.

So clearly, if Joseph knows about it, word is going to get back to the rest of the believers. And besides all that, there was somebody who was present, that we know was present, who could tell the disciples about it later. And that was Jesus himself.

Because after all, the gospel witness is unanimous. And talk about something being multiply attested, there's nothing more multiply attested in the New Testament than Jesus' resurrection. But in any case, we know that Jesus cleansed the temple.

Almost all scholars agree with that. Virtually all scholars agree that Jesus was crucified by the Romans. Well, you connect the dots, going from the temple cleansing, which would offend the priestly elite, probably before Pilate was even in town, and then the crucifixion by the Romans.

It probably suggests that things were done this way, the way they were normally done in antiquity, namely the local municipal aristocracy handed Jesus over to the Romans. Here are the laws that were broken, if the Mishnah is accurate. And I don't think that the Mishnah shows the way things were actually done with the original Sanhedrin.

But I do think it shows us the way the Pharisees thought they should have been done. Actually, this comports with the way a lot of people in antiquity thought things should have been done, in terms of Roman views and other views. You shouldn't have the trial on a holy day.

Executions could happen on holy days, but you shouldn't have a trial on a holy day. But a more widespread sense of what was supposed to be done, you shouldn't hold a trial at night. Also, you shouldn't hold the trial in the high priest's home.

That was a violation of protocol. Also, you shouldn't have a lack of advance notice. Words should have been sent out.

Probably many members of the Sanhedrin couldn't gather, especially, I mean, it's during the night, it's after sundown. You know, people are eating the Passover and they're celebrating the Passover. Certainly, many people would not show up.

The people most likely to show up in the greatest numbers would be those who were the high priest's supporters, who liked to do what the high priest asked. Then you have false witnesses. That might suggest that there were some Pharisees there because Pharisees were very meticulous about interrogating witnesses.

But here we have another breach of protocol. Because in a capital trial, if witnesses are found to be false, the witnesses are to be executed. And that's according to the Torah.

It's also according to Roman law and other matters. Nothing was said about what happened to the false witnesses. In fact, even after their witness was discredited, the trial went on.

The trial should have been called off as soon as they found that they had false witnesses. At this trial, which fits what we know of the corrupt leadership, again, the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the priestly aristocracy as corrupt. The teacher of righteousness in the Qumran community, the Dead Sea Scrolls, says that he was himself persecuted, and had to flee from the high priest of his day.

And generations later, the Dead Sea Scrolls didn't like the priestly aristocracy any better. The rabbinic literature, using Pharisaic tradition, condemns the priestly aristocracy as corrupt. Josephus talks about it, people plotting against each other.

He talks about one of the high priests. In this period, as opposed to in the Old Testament, high priest was sometimes used in the plural, because it could be used for all the members of the high priestly families. That's why it's used this way, both in the New Testament and in Josephus.

But one of the high priests accepted a bribe from a later Roman governor to assassinate one of his fellow high priests. So, these are the kinds of things that were reported as going on. And in terms of the unity of the Sanhedrin, not everybody in the Sanhedrin always got along.

At one point, a generation later, you have the different factions in the Sanhedrin throwing rocks at each other. So, we know from the things of this period, that there was a lot of corruption, there was a lot of disunity, and so on. So, they give Jesus this unjust hearing.

And here Jesus lets out the Messianic secret. Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? the high priest asks him. Well, apparently word has gotten out that this is who Jesus claims to be.

And Jesus says, yes, it's as you say. And you will see the Son of Man coming with power and seated at the right hand of God. Now, here he blends Psalm 110, verse 1, the Lord who sits at the right hand of the Lord, with Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 and 14, the Son of Man who would come and reign.

Well, both of these are pictures of reigning. And this goes beyond expectations of a mere earthly Messiah. There were a few people back then who were expecting an exalted Messiah or a heavenly Messiah.

And that's basically what Jesus claims to be. Well, as far as the high priest is concerned, that's blasphemy. Jesus may not have pronounced the divine name.

Of course, we're reading it in Greek, so we don't know exactly what wording he used. But remember, blasphemy didn't just mean technically what it meant later in Pharisaic tradition in Mishnah Sanhedrin, didn't necessarily mean blaspheming the divine name per se, it could mean any kind of disrespect towards God. But the high priest tears his robes.

That was a sign of mourning that was also used, particularly for the mourning of what would happen when you heard blasphemy. High priestly robes were pretty expensive. He probably didn't do this very often, but he tears his high priestly robes and says, we've heard it ourselves, the blasphemy.

What do you all say? Normally, the way the Sanhedrin was supposed to answer, at least according to tradition, we don't know this for a fact, but according to tradition, there were 71 members, probably they weren't all present on this occasion. 71 was probably just an average. Rabbinic tradition says 71 because you had to have one extra to break a tie, which could be the high priest himself.

But normally, the youngest would answer first and then the eldest because the youngest could be too easily influenced by the eldest. But in any case, there's a consensus among the people there that Jesus has blasphemed. Well, according to biblical law, you could execute somebody for blasphemy.

You would execute them by stoning them. But a stoning would be a lynching, and that would not be appropriate for the Sanhedrin, especially with the Roman governor in town. Even though sometimes things got out of hand, as I mentioned later on, people in the Sanhedrin were throwing stones at each other.

So, they need a charge, but they've got one. The high priest was a smart man. The high priest, by the way, would have been Caiaphas.

We read both about Annas and Caiaphas. Annas probably still, both members of the high priestly family, so both can be called high priests in this period. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and he still had a lot of the power.

Five of his sons and his son-in-law all held the office of high priest after him. So, he still held a lot of influence, obviously, even though the Roman governor was the one to appoint the high priest. Joseph Caiaphas was the high priest from the years 18 to 36, the longest-reigning high priest in the first century.

That means he probably kept the Romans very happy. He kept Pilate very happy. He stayed in for most of the time Pilate was there.

But Caiaphas was part of this group that we hear about in other Jewish sources, where they were corrupt. They were known for using their clubs to abuse people and things like that. So, the high priest says, we've heard it ourselves from his own mouth, but he was a very smart man, very politically astute.

If Jesus is the son of the Most High, then you might debate whether that's blasphemy or not. But one thing could be sure, he was claiming to be the Messiah, and therefore he was claiming to be a king. And by Roman standards, claiming to be a king was high treason against the majesty of the emperor.

Now, if the emperor said, okay, you can be king, I'll let you be a client king, that's one thing, but you don't volunteer to be king. And so, they now have a charge on which they can hand him over to Pilate. And they are witnesses having heard it themselves.

Before the narrative about Pilate, we end up with two responses to betrayal, the response of Peter and the response of Judas. Jesus had predicted Peter's betrayal. Peter would betray Jesus before the cock's multiple crowing.

Now, as to when the rooster crows, when I've stayed in areas where there are roosters, I'm a light sleeper. It seems to me that they crow a lot during the night. And there are several periods where they're especially associated with cock crowing.

But when people spoke of cock crowing, they especially spoke of sunrise, because that's when most people were awakened by it. They'd had enough sleep, they were awakened by the cock crowing. Whether it's referring to sunrise or something else, before the night was over, Peter had denied Jesus.

He had betrayed Jesus. He recognizes it, and he goes out and weeps bitterly. He betrayed it under duress.

He was afraid that he was going to die. He had followed into the high priest's courtyard, which is a very brave thing to do, right? Brave or stupid. He followed into the high priest's courtyard.

The outer courtyard was a place where guests could be welcomed on certain occasions. But here, some of the Levite guards were gathered, and probably servants from the household. And this woman says I've seen you.

I mean, the high priest's home was in the upper city of Jerusalem. It was very near the temple. She had probably frequented the temple on other occasions, and she said, I've seen you.

You were with Jesus of Nazareth. And also, he's got a problem, because Galileans didn't pronounce gutturals the way Judeans did. His accent also helped give him away.

So Peter denies Jesus. And to save his life, some people might think that was worthwhile, but Jesus had already warned, if you confess me before others, I'll confess you before my father. If you deny me before others, I'll deny you before my father.

Jesus had praised Peter because he had confessed Jesus as the Christ. Here, he denies even knowing him, and he denies it even with an oath. So, Peter goes out.

He has betrayed Jesus by denying him, and he weeps with repentance. But then we have Judas, who has betrayed Jesus also. And Judas has a different way of being sorry.

He has a different response to his betrayal, and he ends up hanging himself. Suicide. Romans considered suicide under some circumstances to be honorable.

We don't have that in early Christian tradition. In early Christian tradition, Augustine and others believed God gave life. God takes the life.

We shouldn't kill ourselves. But there were some kinds of suicide that were considered dishonorable, no matter what. Hangings were normally considered a dishonorable form of suicide, as opposed to falling on one's sword, which Romans did, and some Jewish people apparently did at Masada and elsewhere.

This is a clearly dishonorable death. It probably evokes Ahithophel, who was a counselor of David and betrayed him and ended up hanging himself when he realized things weren't going to go his way. Two responses to betrayal.

Two ways of showing repentance. A positive way and a negative way. If we have to repent, we need to make sure we do it Peter's way, not Judas' way.

But the theme of innocent blood dominates this chain. There's the language of handing over. You have this also in the Gospel of John.

Jesus is going to hand himself over to death in the Gospel of John. But also, you have Judas handing Jesus over. Periditim, he hands him over to the chief priests.

The chief priests hand him over to Pilate. Pilate hands him over to their will here, the people's will, but is motivated by the chief priests. And finally, Jesus hands his life over to death.

The innocent blood also dominates the chain. Judas says I betrayed innocent blood. The priests say, what is that to us? You see to that yourself.

Pilate wants to say that he's not guilty of the blood. He washes his hands, which is a way of repudiating guilt, and says, see to it yourself. Everybody tries to pass the blame.

Today sometimes people debate about guilt, whether it's individual guilt or societal guilt. Well, it's both. I mean, think in Deuteronomy chapter 21.

You find somebody who's been murdered in a field. Well, if you find the murderer, the murderer is guilty. But if you don't find the murderer, the local community has to take responsibility for it.

And if it's between two communities equidistant, then both take responsibility for it. Here we have innocent blood dominating a chain of guilt, individuals, and corporate guilt. Well, Judas throws down the money, and it's used to buy a field for burying strangers.

And notice what the high priests say. Well, we can't use this for anything holy. You hang yourself in a temple with desecrated blood money would desecrate a temple.

So, he's throwing this money down there. They say we can't use it for anything holy because, after all, this is blood money. They know it's blood money, and they're worried about ritual purity when they have blood on their hands.

Something similar in the Gospel of John where the timing is put in a little bit of a different perspective. And in 18:28, they come to Pilate's Praetorium. He was using Herod the Great's old palace.



But they won't go in, lest they defile themselves and not be able to eat the Passover. But here is an innocent person, and not just an innocent person, the Son of God. And they're handing him over to death.

Of course, they may not believe all that, but they have real guilt. And their concerns are with much lesser ritual issues. In verses 11 through 26, we see how political expediency gets played off against justice.

Well, it fits what we know of history, that Jesus was executed under Pilate. In fact, Tacitus, the Roman historian in Annals 15:44, I believe it is. Tacitus, in his Annals, says that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

It's interesting. Pontius Pilate didn't make a big impression on Rome. Pontius Pilate wasn't even very high status in Roman culture.

But he was a bully in Judea. That's the way he appears in Josephus and Philo and elsewhere. Jewish people wrote about him, Philo, and Josephus.

We have an inscription about him as well. But in Rome, the only mention we ever have of Pontius Pilate is that he was the governor under whom Jesus of Nazareth was executed. Well, it fits history.

It fits what we know. Christians would not have invented the charge of a Roman execution or crucifixion which implied a Roman execution. They certainly wouldn't have invented the charge that he was executed, his titulus, the sign above his head.

They certainly wouldn't have invented the king of the Jews. Because that was, again, the charge of high treason. That's what he was executed for.

That's what he was handed over to be executed for. And if you're following somebody who's held to be a treasonous king, then you are guilty of sedition against the emperor yourself. Rome actually didn't crack down on the Christians all the time despite that.

Because as far as the Romans were concerned, they said Jesus was dead. But that was not the kind of thing that you would want to make up. It was just suicidal.

And as you would expect in normal trial settings back then, the accuser speaks first. Then the governor questions the person who's accused. And the governor also would have a concilium.

He would have his advisors, a handful of advisors. In the provinces, Rome didn't have more staff than necessary, but he would certainly have some advisors. He didn't really need to depend on them too much at this point.

Although he did have his wife who was advising him a different way. Remember, she had a dream just like the magi earlier had dreams. God was speaking in dreams.

Does Pilate act in character here with what we know of him? I said earlier that Josephus and Philo present him as a bully. He was a bully, but like many bullies, he was a coward when confronted with force from another direction. Pilate is known to have executed people on a whim.

But Pilate was probably dependent on Sejanus. Sejanus was the Praetorian prefect in Rome. He had the emperor's full confidence, the emperor Tiberius' full confidence.

The emperor Tiberius was paranoid. He had some reasons to be paranoid. His beloved son had been murdered.

But Sejanus kept Tiberius paranoid. So, Tiberius was away on the island of Capri while Sejanus the Praetorian prefect basically ran Rome for him. He had a system of informers.

He had people being killed. Pilate probably was in good with Sejanus. And Pilate probably didn't have to be too careful until the fall of Sejanus around the year 31, which is probably later than this scene.

But Pilate was also only an equestrian. He wasn't of the senate class. He was one class below that, the knight class.

So, he had lower social status than most governors. He was politically vulnerable if he was accused and if he didn't have somebody supporting him in Rome. Now, what we see of Pilate is, just like what I mentioned earlier when he brought the Roman standards in, he wanted to make a show of force.

He wanted to show his power. He wanted the Jerusalemites to submit to his will. But when they said, you can kill us all, that was too much.

He knew he couldn't get away with that. They made him back down. He did some other things like confiscating money from the temple treasury to pay for an aqueduct and in other ways did things that made him be considered reprehensible by the people.

But Pilate was sometimes forced to back down by Judeans. And we read about that in Josephus and elsewhere. So, Pilate makes a little bit of a resistance, but not really that much, because it's more politically expedient to give in.

But he's not in the mood to humor the local leaders either. He acts pretty much in character. Under Roman law, a defendant who refused to defend himself had to be condemned.

And so, Pilate says, you have nothing to say for yourself. Jesus refuses to give him much of an answer. Crowds in ancient literature were usually easily swayed by their leaders.

There were certain people that they looked up to and, well, this crowd was easily swayed by its leaders. The chief priests said, no, ask for Barabbas, not this man. So, Pilate was maybe hoping that the crowds would solve matters for him, that he wouldn't have to condemn this man.

He'd give the crowds a choice. In a sense, go over the heads of the chief priests. But the crowds went for what the chief priests wanted.

Basically, probably these were mostly Jerusalemites rather than Galilean pilgrims who probably didn't know what was going on. We do have an inscription about Pilate, as I mentioned before. Pilate handed Jesus over then, and the Romans, and again, these may have been Syrian auxiliaries, but the Romans, by virtue of, you know, they worked for Rome.

So, these soldiers of Rome tortured Jesus. Pilate probably used words like *in cruce*, probably Latin words. Governors could use words like this, you will mount the cross.

Handed Jesus over to the will of the crowds. The soldiers took him off, and Jesus was scourged. As we mentioned earlier, sometimes during scourging, people's bones were laid bare.

Sometimes people bled to death from the scourging itself. They were killed by the scourging, although they wanted to preserve Jesus for the cross. The way the Romans executed people, abused prisoners was common.

That's happened in many parts of the world, even today, prisoners are abused. And some places it doesn't get talked about. I suspect it has happened even in some prisons, even in some countries where they say they're against it.

Sometimes it happens to individual prisoners. Sometimes it happens to other prisoners. But abuse of prisoners was common, and in this case, they were making fun of him.

They made fun of a Jewish king earlier in Alexandria. Some people were making fun of him with a make-believe king. But in terms of abusing prisoners directly, they do that here.

Ave Caesar, hail Caesar, was a common salute. Well, hail, king of the Jews. Now these people are probably anti-Jewish.

That was pretty common among Syrian auxiliaries. It was fairly common among Romans as well, although there were some very pro-Jewish Romans as well, and some pro-Jewish Syrians as well. But he says, they say, hail, king of the Jews.

And then they give him a scepter, probably a bamboo cane used for military floggings. And then they beat him with it. An acanthus shrub, possibly.

They are used for thorns. It may have been something else, but they probably meant the spokes to point outward from his head rather than point inward in imitation of Hellenistic vassal princes' crowns. However, when you're weaving something from a thorn bush, even if what you care about are the ones pointing outward, they don't all point in the same direction.

And the scalp wounds bleed profusely. So, you can be sure that Jesus was bleeding very heavily from his forehead. They probably used a faded soldier's cloak as a purple royal robe.

One of the Gospels says purple. One of the Gospels says red. But if you look at the semantic range of the Greek terms that are used, these colors actually overlap, a purplish red or a reddish purple.

Both of them are in the same range. In Revelation chapter 6, you read about a chlorosipos, which we might translate as green horse. But green could also mean pale.

The semantic range of the words are not exactly the same as the semantic range in English. The color terms, when you translate, the range is often different in different languages. In this case, we know something of the semantic range of the Greek terms.

But here's the irony. They're mocking him as king of the Jews. In reality, he is the king of the Jews.

And in reality, he's the rightful king of the universe. And here they were mocking him as a king. As people and Sandedrin were mocking Jesus as a false prophet, Jesus' prophecy concerning Peter denying him three times was coming to pass.

The scourgings in Jewish synagogue beatings would be just 39 lashes. Romans used a flagellum.

It would have pieces of bone or glass or other sharp things woven into the tips of this leather whip. The soldier would beat the condemned person as hard as he could until he got tired of doing so. And there was no limit, no 39 lashes to show mercy.

And again, sometimes people died from these beatings. Jesus is made to carry the cross out to the site of execution. Well, one normally carried the horizontal beam of the cross, the patibulum, not as we often see in pictures, you know, the whole thing.

Often the upright stake would already be at the site of the execution, the palus, the upright stake. Sometimes people were even nailed to trees if they didn't have enough other things available. But the person could be taken out to the site of the execution for this reusable stake, and then they could be nailed or they could just be fastened with rope.

In Jesus' case, he was nailed, and that's even alluded to in Colossians. Nailed to the horizontal beam, which would be fixed on the stake. Jesus didn't finish carrying the cross.

Now, did he start carrying the cross like the Gospel of John says? That would make sense because normally a condemned person was supposed to carry their own cross. However, the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all mention that the Romans had to draft a bystander to do this. Well, I think there's a reason why they want to emphasize that because it drives home the point.

Jesus said, if you want to be my disciple, take up your cross and follow me. When the time came, his disciples were nowhere to be found, and the Romans had to draft a bystander in his place.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 18, Matthew 26-27.