

In the Footsteps of the Cross

Text: Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19

Reading: Luke 22:52-53

Introduction:

1. Aim: To follow in the footsteps of Christ from his agony in the garden of Gethsemane to his crucifixion on Golgotha (Calvary). We could say from Gethsemane to Gabbatha to Golgotha.
2. Note: We will not be able to cover all the events that transpire (e.g., details of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial). Nor will we be able to look at many of the details in depth but we hope to present an overall picture of Christ's journey to the cross through the eyes of the Gospel writers (eye witnesses).
3. We will divide these last hours of our Lords life into 3 phases: 1. His Arrest 2. His Trial 3. His Crucifixion

I. CHRIST'S ARREST (MATT. 26:36-56; MARK 14:32-50; LUKE 22:39-53; JOHN 18:1-12)

A. The Area of the Arrest – “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called **Gethsemane**...” (Matt. 26:36)

1. Gethsemane

- a. Christ and the disciples leave the upper room and walk out one of the gates of the city, cross the brook Cedron¹ and walk up the Kidron valley in a North-easterly direction. The time is probably somewhere around midnight; the sun has well and truly set and the blackness of night has come. Being Passover, it was probably full moon. The night was cool.² They come to a garden³ located at the foot of the Mount of Olives⁴. This was a favourite place of resort for Christ as John records, “for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.”⁵
- b. The word ‘Gethsemane’ literally means “oil press” as it was here that the olives that grew in this area had been pressed according to the ancient methods. The garden apparently was an olive orchard enclosed with a stone wall and equipped with an oil press.⁶ In those days the olives were first crushed in a circular stone bed by another large circular stone being rolled

¹ John 18:1

² John 18:18

³ John 18:1

⁴ Luke 22:39

⁵ John 18:2 (See also Luke 22:39)

⁶ Edmond D. Hiebert

through the channel. The pulp was then pressed three times to extract the olive oil. The first pressing yielded the highest quality oil (what we call “extra virgin”) which was used in the temple. The second pressing yielded a medium quality oil and the final pressing a lower quality oil that was used in lamps.

- c. Christ was crushed under the shadow of the cross in Gethsemane so much so that his sweat was mingled with his blood in great drops and fell to the ground. Christ had three seasons of agonizing prayer in the garden so was also pressed three times in Gethsemane.

2. Garden

- a. The place is not only referred to by the name ‘Gethsemane’ but as “a garden” (John 18:1).
- b. Christ is called the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). Adam, the first man was defeated by sin and Satan in the first garden (Eden) and disobeyed His Heavenly Father. Christ, prevailed over sin and Satan in Gethsemane’s Garden and perfectly submitted Himself to the will of the Heavenly Father. In the first garden paradise was lost, in this garden it was regained for all who will put their faith and trust in Christ.

B. **The Agony of Christ**

1. Agony of his heart

- a. Christ’s agony in the garden is described the Gospel writers as follows: “sorrowful and very heavy” (Matt. 26:37); “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Vs. 38); “sore amazed and very heavy” (Mark 14:33). **His soul was heavy under the crushing weight of our sins.**
- b. Illustrated: “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, **strengthening him**. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were **great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**” (Luke 22:43-44)
- c. Medical insight: Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. This has been seen in patients who have experienced, extreme stress or shock to their systems. (Edwards) The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat.
- d. Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with **strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death**, and was heard in that he feared;”
- e. Imagine the scene: Christ was no soft, effeminate, blond-haired, blue-eyed man. He was strong and masculine, raised in Joseph’s carpentry shop. See the tears streaming down his face. See his body convulse and shake with great sobs of anguish and

remember “it was for me he died, for me he cried, for me he shed his blood upon the tree.”

2. The Agony of his prayers

- a. Christ withdraws himself from the disciples by the space of “a stone’s cast” and falls down in fervent prayer, pleading with the Father, “if it be possible, let his cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matt. 26:39) Mark adds the word ‘Abba’ to the prayer (Mark 14:36). Christ has **three such seasons of prayer** interrupted by attempts to awaken the disciples to watch and pray.
- b. The cup: represented all the sufferings of the cross⁷ – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is hard for us as sinful creatures to plumb the depths of what it meant for One who was completely sinless and holy to feel the weight of being “made sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21)

C. The Arrest of Christ

1. Christ comes to the disciples the third time and says, “Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; **behold** the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go, **lo**, he that betrayeth me is at hand. **And immediately, while he yet spake**, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and scribes and elders.”⁸ Can you see the mob making its way through the darkness in the words of John “with lanterns and torches and weapons.”⁹ Judas walks a little ahead¹⁰ of the mob described as a ‘band’¹¹ or cohort which typically constituted a 10th of a Roman legion so in the order of about 600 men.
2. Christ boldly confronts his betrayer: “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, **Whom seek ye?** They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them **I am** he...As soon then as he had said unto them **I am** he, they went backward and fell to the ground.” (John 18:5-7)
3. Judas steps forward from the band to betray Christ with a kiss. “And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him” records Mark.¹² As he makes his way toward Christ, Christ asks him “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”¹³ Judas ignores the question and draws near saying, “...*Master, master;*” a term

⁷ Compare Mark 14:35 & 36. The ‘cup’ in Vs. 36 corresponds to “the hour” of Vs. 35.

⁸ Mark 14:41-43

⁹ John 18:3

¹⁰ Luke 22:47

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Mark 14:45

¹³ Luke 22:48

meaning 'teacher'. The repetition of the title 'master' "indicated personal warmth in the greeting. Judas **acted** greatly delighted to find Jesus here."¹⁴ It was meant to give the **appearance** of warm respect and affection. Judas then comes into contact with Christ and Christ feels the icy, betrayers kiss by a man now possessed with Satan himself ("*kissed him.*")¹⁵

4. Peter, only one of two disciples carrying a sword¹⁶, and seeing that Christ would now be apprehended by the mob, attempts to defend Christ and aims his blow at Malchus, a relative and servant of Caiaphas the High Priest, cutting of his right ear.¹⁷ In a stunning act of mercy, Christ heals Malchus' ear¹⁸ and then reminds Peter that he is not being forced against His will. Matthew 26:53-54 "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than **twelve legions** of angels? **But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?**" A legion was around 6,000 men so this means approximately 72,000 angels! Just one angel was powerful enough to slay 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35)!
5. Christ turns to the mob, with the words, "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: **but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.**"¹⁹ Other attempts had been made before this to apprehend Christ but "**his hour was not yet come**".²⁰ But now the hour had come – "**it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**"²¹ John 12:27 "**Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.**"
6. Heaven gasped as sinful, evil men "laid their hands on him, and took him."²² It is no wonder that Peter, in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost declared, "Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and **by wicked hands have crucified and slain.**" Acts 2:23 Imagine! The Creator in the hands of the creature; the Son of God in the hands of sinners.

¹⁴ Heibert

¹⁵ Mark 14:45; John 13:27

¹⁶ Luke 22:38

¹⁷ John 18:10 & 26

¹⁸ Luke 22:51

¹⁹ Luke 22:52-53

²⁰ John 7:30; 8:20

²¹ Mark 14:41

²² Mark 14:46

II. CHRIST'S TRIAL (MATT. 26:57-68; 27:1-2, 11-31; MARK 14:53-65; 15:1-20; LUKE 22:54-71; 23:1-25; JOHN 18:12-24, 28-40, 19:1-16)

There were 6 trials conducted in this short period of time leading up to Christ's crucifixion. They represent the greatest miscarriage of justice the world has ever seen. They can be divided into two categories: 1.

Ecclesiastical Trials 2. Civil Trials

A. The Ecclesiastical (Religious) Trials

1. A Preliminary audience with Annas (John 18:12-14)

- a. Annas had been high priest from A.D. 6-15 and was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the current high priest at the time of Christ's crucifixion. Annas was corrupt patriarch who controlled the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem and used it to his own ends. E.g., the temple trade that aroused our Lord's anger and indignation.
- b. Annas promptly sends Christ bound to Caiaphas.

2. Tried before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin in an illegal night session (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:19-24)

- a. Christ is taken to the "high priest's palace."²³ After a brief audience with Annas, he appears before Caiaphas²⁴ and the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas interrogates Christ concerning his disciples and doctrine. Christ puts burden of providing evidence back on Caiaphas and is struck by one of the officers – the first act of physical maltreatment.²⁵
- b. The entire council seeks "false witness against Jesus, to put him to death."²⁶ This trial was absolutely unjust, a total sham as the outcome was already pre-determined. The Sanhedrin, in its hatred for Christ, violated their own strict code of jurisprudence on multiple levels. **Man's depravity in all its wretchedness was on display in the trial of Christ. They thought Christ was on trial before them but in reality, their wicked hearts were on trial before Him.**
- c. Many false witnesses testify against Christ "but their witness agreed not together."²⁷ Finally, the case settles on two witnesses who misquote and misrepresent a statement of our Lord's concerning destroying the temple and raising it in three days. "But neither so did their witness agree together."²⁸

²³ Matthew 26:58

²⁴ The official high priest during A.D. 18-36

²⁵ John 18:19-24

²⁶ Matthew 26:59

²⁷ Mark 14:56

²⁸ Mark 14:58-59

- d. Someone observed, “It is harder to agree on a consistent lie than to tell the simple truth.”²⁹
 - e. Christ is silent in the face of false accusation, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
 - f. Caiaphas, knowing the allegations were insufficient to condemn Christ resorts to his last option and puts Christ under oath - “And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us **whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God**. Jesus saith unto him, **Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**” (Matt. 26:63-64)
 - g. Caiaphas rends his clothes and accuses Christ of blasphemy.³⁰ Note: This was not evidence; this was an accusation. By their own code of jurisprudence, the Sanhedrin were required to test the evidence for or against this claim before rendering a verdict.
 - h. With the condemnation pronounced, the courtroom quickly turns violent as their evil rage and hatred begins to find expression in acts of violence against Christ. “Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, **Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?**” (Matthew 26:67-68) Luke and Mark reveal Christ was blindfolded during this ordeal.³¹ Luke also adds, “**And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.**”³² Manmade, works based religion was exposed for what it truly is that day.
3. **Final trial before Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn for formal sentencing (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71).** Matthew and Mark mention it only very briefly but Luke records the encounter in greater detail.
 4. Summary: Zero evidence found against Christ. The outcome of the trial was already pre-determined. The accusation of blasphemy forms the basis of the guilty verdict. They condemned Him because He claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God.

B. The Civil (Political) Trials

1. The First trial before Pontius Pilate (Luke 23:1-5)

²⁹ R.A. Cole

³⁰ Mark 14:63-64

³¹ Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64

³² Luke 22:65

- a. Christ is now taken from the palace of the high priest to the “**hall of judgment**” to stand trial before Pilate³³ the Roman governor. John notes that it was now early in the morning and that the religious leaders would not enter the judgment hall “lest they should be defiled” on the Passover.³⁴ What utter hypocrisy! They are the key players in the greatest miscarriage of justice the world has ever seen, yet they go to great lengths to pay attention to observe a minor, external religious observance.
- b. Pilate quickly discerns Christ’s innocence and issues his first statement of acquittal – “I find no fault in this man.” Upon hearing mention of Galilee which was Herod’s jurisdiction, Pilate refers Christ to Herod, hoping to relieve himself of a difficult case.

2. The Trial before king Herod (Luke 23:6-12)

- a. Christ is now taken the short journey from the hall of judgment (Praetorium) to the palace of Herod Antipas who was evidently in town for the Passover festivities. Herod is thrilled because he had heard many things about Christ and hoped to have his jaded senses stimulated by a miracle.
- b. Herod tries to cross question Christ and the chief priests and scribes stand by and “vehemently” accuse him. Christ remains silent, not uttering a single word.
- c. Christ is now mocked for the **second time** by Herod and his soldiers – “And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and **arrayed him in a gorgeous robe**, and sent him again to Pilate.” (Luke 23:11) The word ‘gorgeous’ means “white, radiant or shining”. Little did they realize that the brilliance of that robe was symbolic of His Deity – He was and is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Little did they realize that the whiteness of the robe they put on Christ that day to mock Him was actually symbolic of His perfect purity.

3. The Final trial before Pilate (2nd time) (Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 1:1-15; Luke 23:13-25, John 18:28-40)

- a. Pilate, hoping to have Christ released, offers them a choice between Barabbas, a robber and a murderer³⁵, and Christ. “The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.” (Matt. 27:21-22) Pilate, “willing to content the people”³⁶ released

³³ Pilate held the office of Procurator between A.D. 26-36.

³⁴ Matthew 27:1; John 18:28

³⁵ Luke 23:25; John 18:40

³⁶ Mark 15:15

Barabbas and after having Christ scourged, delivers Him for crucifixion.

- b. Samuel Crossman (1664): “They rise, and needs will have my dear Lord sent away; a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay. Yet willing he to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free.”
4. Summary: Christ’s innocence confirmed repeatedly throughout these trials. He was totally pure and innocent.
 - a. Pilate’s 5 acquittals – “I find in him no fault at all.”
 - b. By Judas the betrayer – “I have betrayed the innocent blood”.
 - c. Pilate’s wife’s statement – “just man”.
 - d. Herod’s verdict expressed by Pilate.

III. CHRIST’S CRUCIFIXION (MATT. 27:26-54; MARK 15:15-39; LUKE 23:25-49; JOHN 19:1-37)

A. The Preparation for crucifixion (Matt. 27:26-31; John 19:1-15)

1. Scourging – “Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him” (Jn. 19:1). We believe this took place in the Antonia Fortress that stood at the Northern end of the Temple Mount.
 - a. “The scourge consisted of a handle to which several leather thongs were affixed. These were weighted on the ends with jagged pieces of bone and metal. This would help tear the flesh and make each blow more effective. The victim was stripped, and usually tied to a post with his hands also bound so as not to be able to defend himself. The blows were normally applied to the back and loins, but sometimes to the whole body. According to Jewish law, a man could receive no more than forty stripes (Deut. 24:3). With the Romans, however, no such limitation was observed; it depended entirely upon the commander in charge. The implication of the text is that Jesus Christ received a Roman scourging, and it was by no means limited to 39 stripes.”³⁷ Isaiah 52:14 “As many were astonished at thee; **his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:**”
 - b. Isaiah 53:5 “But he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was **bruised for our iniquities**: the **chastisement** of our peace was upon him; and with his **stripes** we are healed.”
2. Mocking (a mock coronation)³⁸
 - a. A mock coronation (Matt. 27:28-29)
 - i. A mock robe.
 - ii. A mock crown (thorns) – Christ bore the curse of sin as his diadem (Gen. 3:17-18).

³⁷ John W. Lawrence

³⁸ Took place in “the common hall” (Matt. 27:27) which was likely the fortress Antonia (Hiebert).

- iii. A mock sceptre – a reed (something akin to a bamboo pole).
 - iv. This is **the third time Christ is mocked** before He is crucified.
- b. Violence and contempt
- i. Spitting.
 - ii. Beating – smitten repeatedly with the reed (Vs. 30) and with the hands (John 19:3).
 - iii. Beard plucked out – Isaiah 50:6 “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”
- c. Final rejection by the multitude **(Read John 19:5-16)**

B. The path to crucifixion (Matt. 27:32-33)

- a. Christ bears His cross initially³⁹ as “it was the practice to compel the one to be crucified to bear his own cross to the place of crucifixion”⁴⁰ but soon it becomes too much for him to carry (the cross likely weighed around 30-50 kilograms) and Simon of Cyrene compelled to assist. The path to the place of crucifixion from the Antonia Fortress was uphill. The crushing weight of the cross was symbolic of the weight of our sins. Isaiah 53:4 “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:” **Christ carried our sins and our sorrows up Calvary’s hill that day so that our broken hearts and lives could be healed from the disease of sin.**
- b. There is an estimated distance of about **650 yards (590 meters)** from the place of judgment to place of crucifixion. **The place was called “Golgotha” meaning “the place of a skull”.**⁴¹ **A skull reminds us of death. Christ died to defeat death and bring new life.**

C. The process of crucifixion (Matt. 27:34-37)

- a. Christ is offered vinegar, mingled with gall to drink. He tastes it but then refuses to drink it.⁴² Rabbinic writings indicate that the drink was provided as a charitable act by rich women in Jerusalem to deaden the sense of pain (like an ancient anaesthetic). Christ refused it, “determined to meet His suffering and death in the full possession of His faculties. It meant that in His self-giving, there was to be no self-sparing. He was determined to drink the bitter cup of His vicarious sufferings consciously to the very last.”⁴³
- b. Christ was crucified at **the 3rd hour (9am)** (Mark 15:25).
- c. **Four soldiers** assigned the task (John 19:23). No doubt the number was in part due to the expected struggle with the victim. But Christ laid down His life willingly. As the soldiers drove in the bitter,

³⁹ John 19:17

⁴⁰ Hiebert

⁴¹ Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17

⁴² Matthew 27:34

⁴³ Hiebert

7-inch (17cm) spikes into His hands and feet, they heard no cursing or uncontrolled shouts of terror. “It was probably at this moment of inconceivable horror that the voice of the Son of Man was heard uplifted, not in a scream of natural agony at that fearful torture, but calmly praying in Divine compassion for His brutal and pitiless murderers – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” **Think of those precious hands** – strong hands, masculine hands, pure hands, loving hands, compassionate hands, healing hands, serving hands, the Son of God’s hands. **Think of those precious feet** – beautiful feet, serving feet, sinless feet, sacred feet. I see my hand gripping the mallet that day and my sins driving those awful spikes through Christ’s sinless hands and feet.

- d. **Cross lifted into place:** “When the cross was erected upright, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. (Metherall) The arms, being held up and outward, held the rib cage in a fixed end inspiratory position which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would only be able to take very shallow breaths. (This may explain why Jesus made very short statements while on the cross). As time passed, the muscles, from the loss of blood, lack of oxygen and the fixed position of the body, would undergo severe cramps and spasmodic contractions.” (David Terasaka M.D.) Psalm 22:14 “I am poured out like water, and **all my bones are out of joint**: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

D. The Progression of the crucifixion (Matt. 27:38-54)

1. 3 hours of daylight – 9am to 12pm
 - a. Christ subjected to a fourth round of mockery by passers-by, the religious leaders, the two thieves crucified on either side of him and the soldiers. This is the fourth instance of Christ being mocked:
 - i. Mocked before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Mk. 14:65).
 - ii. Mocked before Herod and his soldiers (Luke 23:11).
 - iii. Mocked before the soldiers of Pilate (Matt. 27:29).
 - iv. Mocked while upon the cross.
 - v. Note: Unrepentant men still exhibit this same spirit of devilish mockery when confronted with the truth of Christ.
 - b. Conversion of one repentant thief. Christ was a soul-winner until the very end!
2. 3 hours of darkness – 12pm to 3pm
 - a. Started 6th hour (Vs. 45) which was midday (12pm) when the sun is at its zenith. There was much activity around the cross in the first three hours but now a silence falls over the scene.
 - b. 9th hour (3pm)

- i. Christ's rending cry of anguish – "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Psalm 22:1) Sin's punishment is eternal separation from God (2. Thess. 1:9). Christ endured the wrath of God on our behalf and was forsaken by the Father at the cross. From all eternity past, the Father, Son and Spirit had enjoyed close and intimate communion but now Christ is left alone.
- ii. Significantly, it was right around this time when Christ died that the Passover lambs were being slain just a short distance away at the temple. Little did they realize that the blood of the perfect Lamb of God "which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) was being shed to provide a complete and full payment for sin at that very moment.
- iii. Vinegar given to Christ in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.
- iv. Christ, in a loud voice, shouts "FINISHED" (Compare Matt. 27:50, Mk. 15:37, Luke 24:36 & John 19:30)
- v. "It is finished" = (τετέλεσται) "Word was used in Greek commercial life. The term signified the completion of a transaction by the full payment of a price or the discharge of a debt by a completed payment."⁴⁴
- vi. Christ paid my sin debt in full! We can add NOTHING to His perfect, complete sacrifice. (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7)
- vii. Luke 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." Christ's final words before he died. **Rom. 5:8 & 1 Cor. 15:3 – Christ died for our sins!**
- viii. Shortly after Christ's death, a spear was driven into His side. John 19:34 "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out **blood and water.**"

Conclusion:

1. To the lost: Are you saved? Hebrews 2:3 "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation..."
2. To the saved: Are you serving? Thou didst that for me, what can I do for Thee?! 1 Cor. 6:20 "For **ye are bought with a price:** therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

⁴⁴ Pentecost