

**LOVE SO AMAZING, SO DIVINE
DEMANDS MY ALL**

**Grace Communion International, New Brunswick, Canada
April 5, 2020**

CONSIDERING THE CROSS

(1Co 1:20-24 ESV)

“20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.



The church worldwide is celebrating what is called “holy week” as we remember the gruesome death of our Lord Jesus.

This Scripture reading today is longer than usual. It will be from Matthew 26:14 to the end of chapter 27.

As human beings, we don’t like to stop and think about death. For example, instead of saying that a person has died, we often say that the person has “**passed away**”.

Death is the last enemy that will be destroyed as the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15. Because death is an enemy, we all we can to avoid it.

We can appreciate and be thankful to our leaders who are doing their utmost during this Covid-19 epidemic to save as many lives as possible. The Bible tells us in Romans 13, their authority comes from God. Unless they tell us to blatantly disobey God, we are not to resist them. Staying home and keeping our distances from others not to spread this disease is an act of love.

“Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and

those who resist will incur judgment.” (Ro 13:2 ESV)

God inspired us to think about the death of Jesus Christ as he inspired the gospel writers to describe it in substantial detail.

We also read about the gruesome death of Jesus Christ prophesied in such chapters as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

In the Gospels we see the cruelty of what Jesus went through for all of us.

As we read the Scriptures, I would encourage us to imagine ourselves as part of the crowd who witnessed the death of Jesus. I would also encourage us to think in our minds of a loving friend dying for us and in our place suffering terrible physical, emotional and spiritual pain. It is what Jesus experienced carrying the weight of all of our sins and brokenness.

Let's not think that he not only died for other people. He died for us individually because we are sinful in our human nature.

Imagine a friend dying for us out of love. Imagine ourselves not seeing that person as a friend but seeing him as one of our enemy.

Let us realize that Jesus does not hate us but he certainly hates the sin and the seriousness of sin which plagues our life. It causes so much suffering because of pride, self-centeredness, jealousy, strife, selfishness, etc.

The result of sin is physical and spiritual death. Jesus had to die to conquer death for us and in our place.

Let us not pride ourselves because wars and conflicts reside in my heart and in the heart of humanity. For me to have any hope and hope for humanity, Jesus has to go through the terrible death on the cross.

Let us think about it. Where do quarrelling and conflicts come from?

Here is what James tells us as he writes to Christians, to followers of Jesus. **“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” (Jas 4:1 ESV)**

I have to admit that yesterday morning my heart wanted to hate because of some of the terrible things that are happening now in our world with some of the selfish decisions that are causing people and nations so much strife and division. As these

feelings began to well up in me, I had to bring my thoughts in captivity to the obedience of Jesus, recognizing what they were. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I had to take control of these potentially sinful thoughts and temptations.

I know personally that sin abides in my flesh. I have no doubt that Jesus died for me when I did not do anything to deserve such an awesome act of love on my behalf.

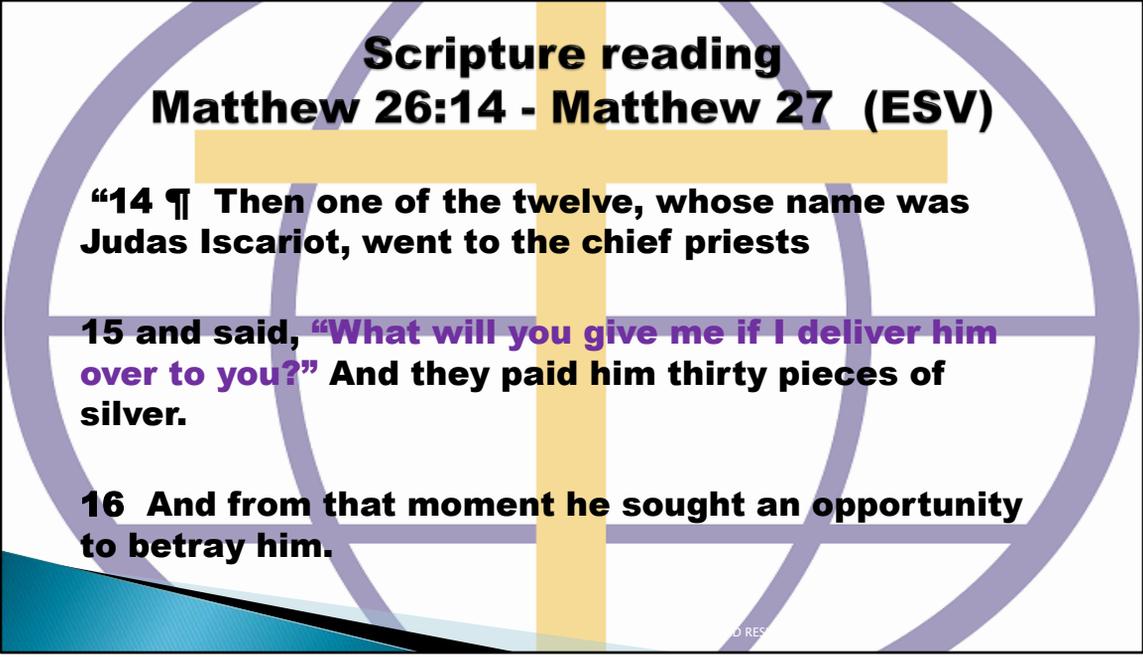
Although the Scriptures we are going to read today are difficult to read and meditate upon, let us not tune out. Let each and every one of us realize that he died and took on the sins of the whole world including mine. Let us personalize what we read.

Realizing such profound love on the part of God the Father and Jesus who died as a human on the cross to defeat death endears us and draws, attracts us to him.

Such love demands our all.

Michael and Joanne Cunningham help in our reading of Matthew 26. Edna and Winston Jones will participate in the reading of Matthew 27.

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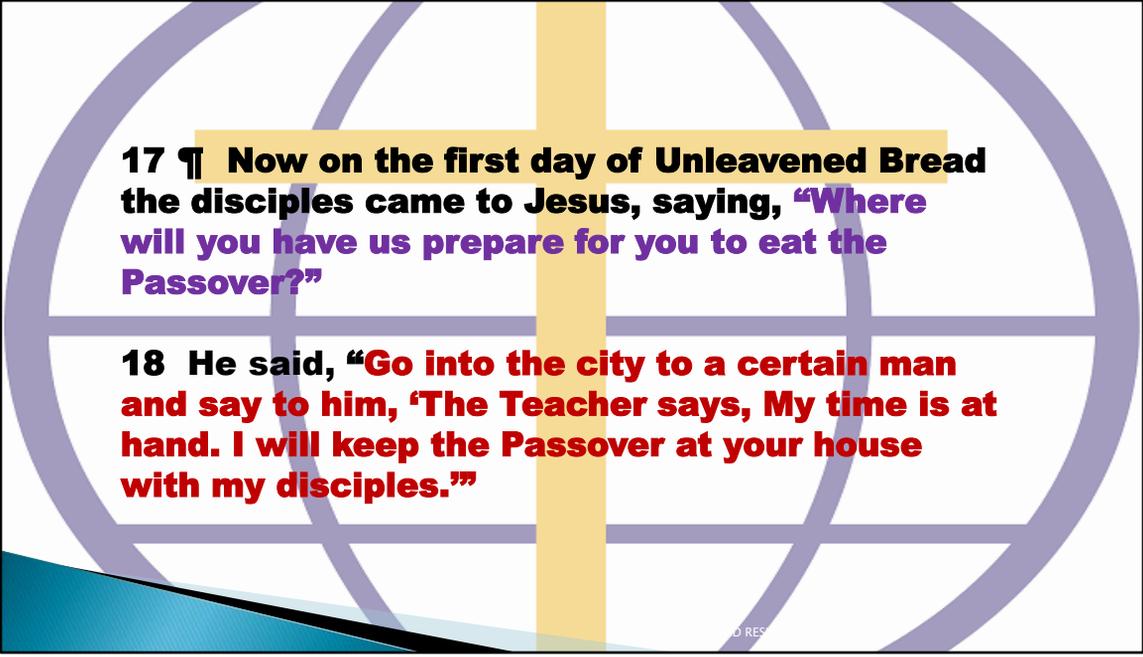


Scripture reading
Matthew 26:14 - Matthew 27 (ESV)

14 ¶ Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.

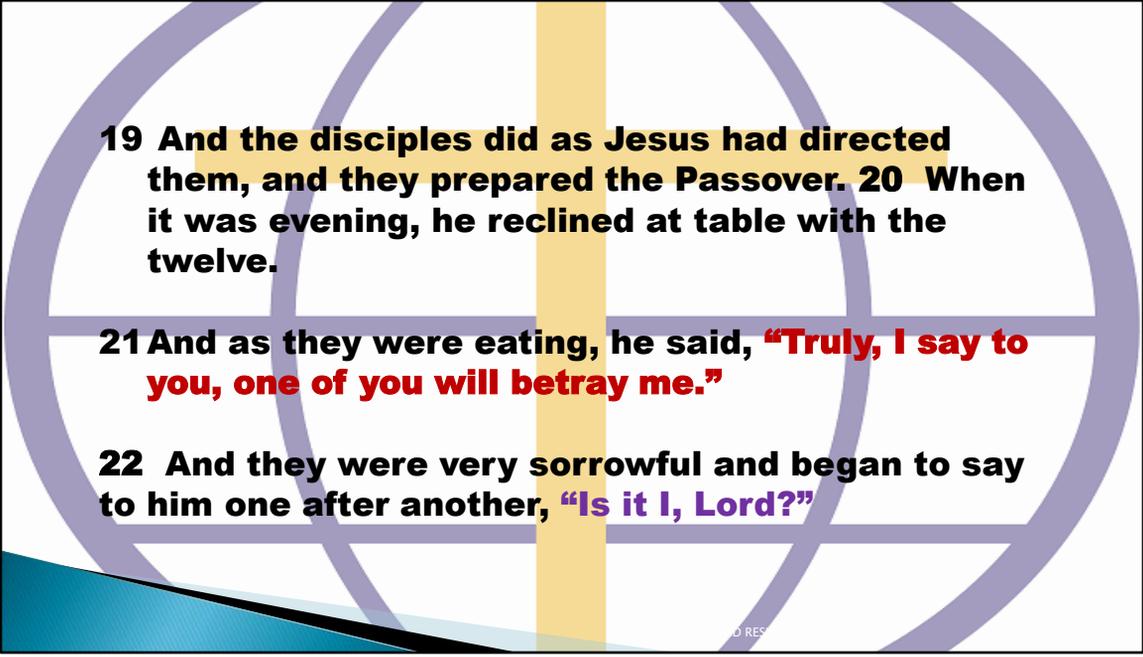
16 And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.



17 ¶ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

18 He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’”

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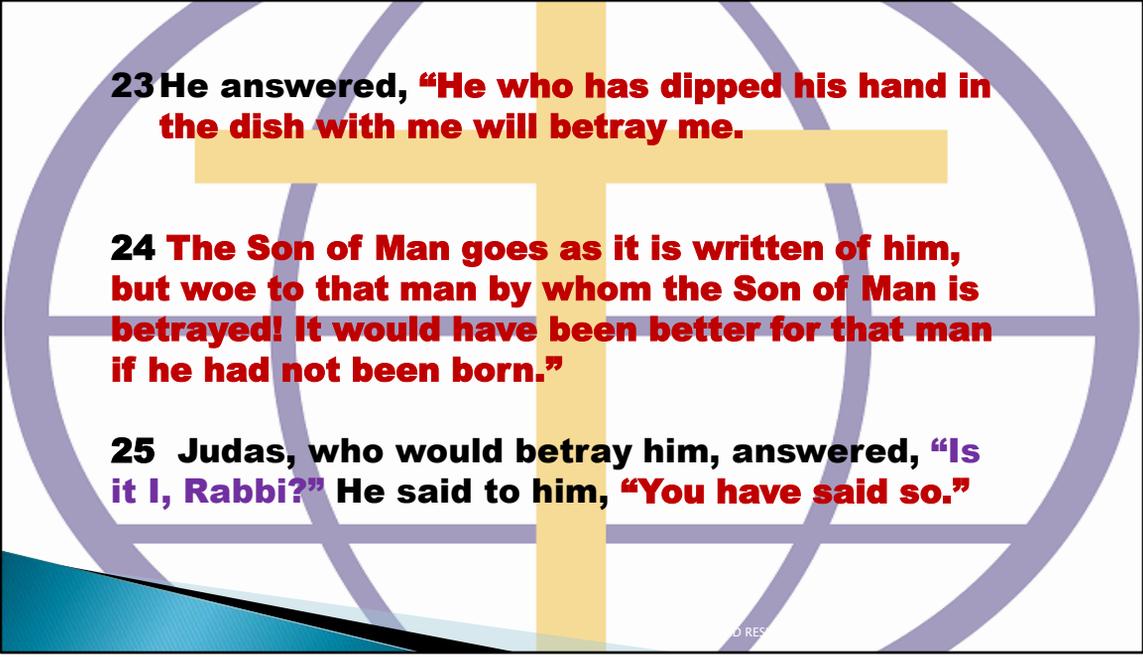


19 And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. **20** When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.

21 And as they were eating, he said, **“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”**

22 And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, **“Is it I, Lord?”**

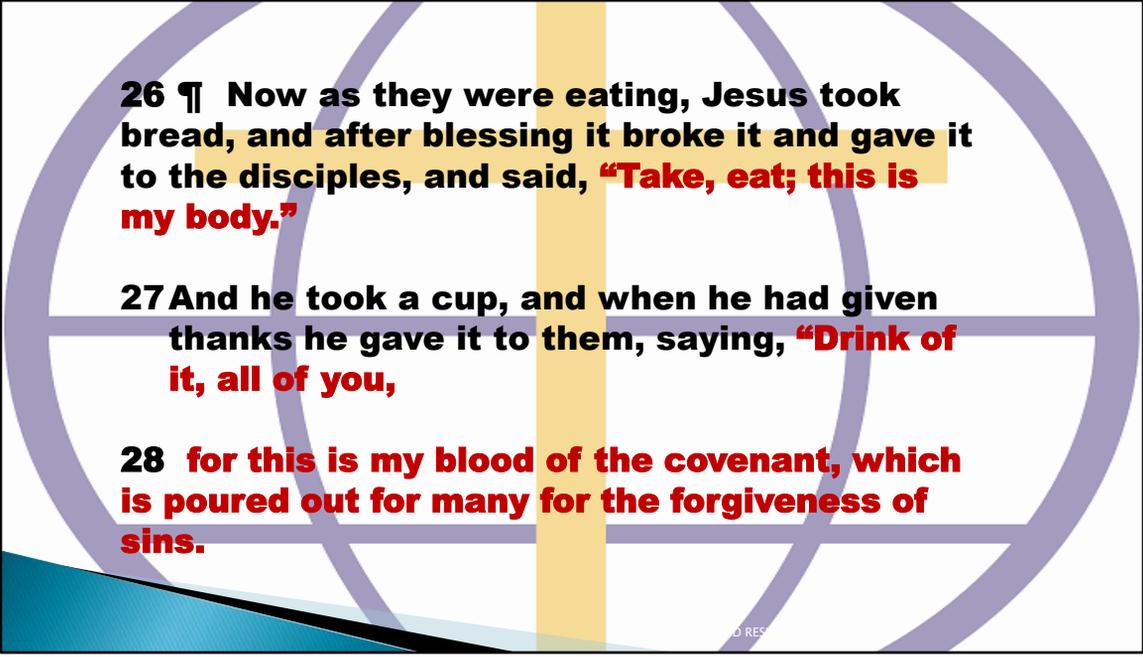
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23 He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

25 Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

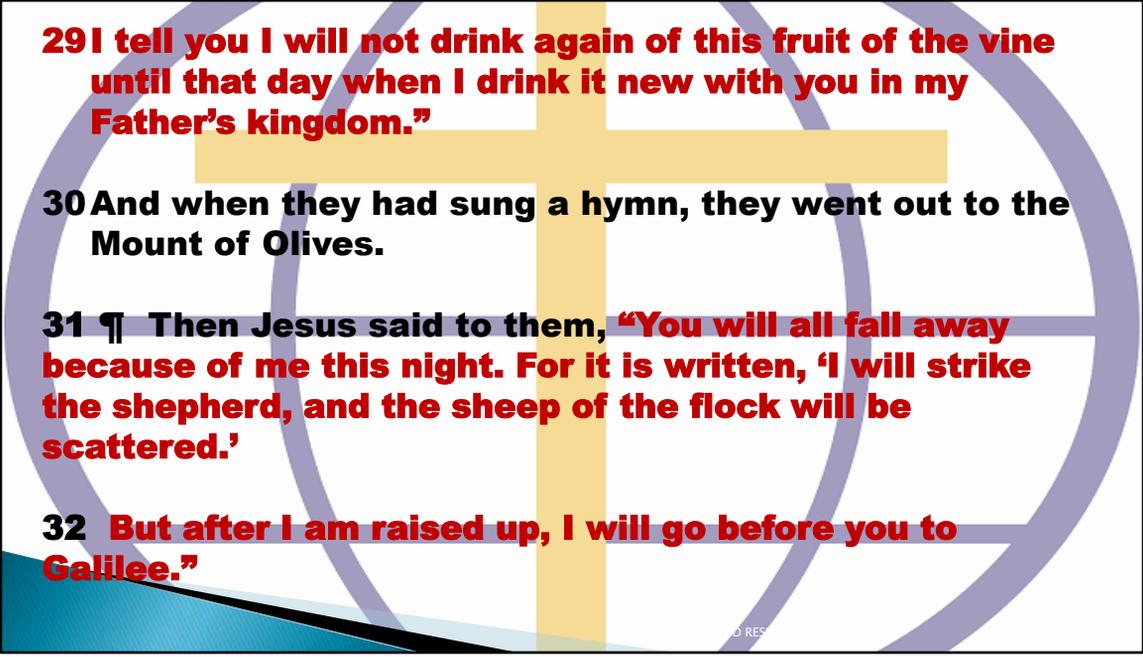


26 ¶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, **“Take, eat; this is my body.”**

27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, **“Drink of it, all of you,**

28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

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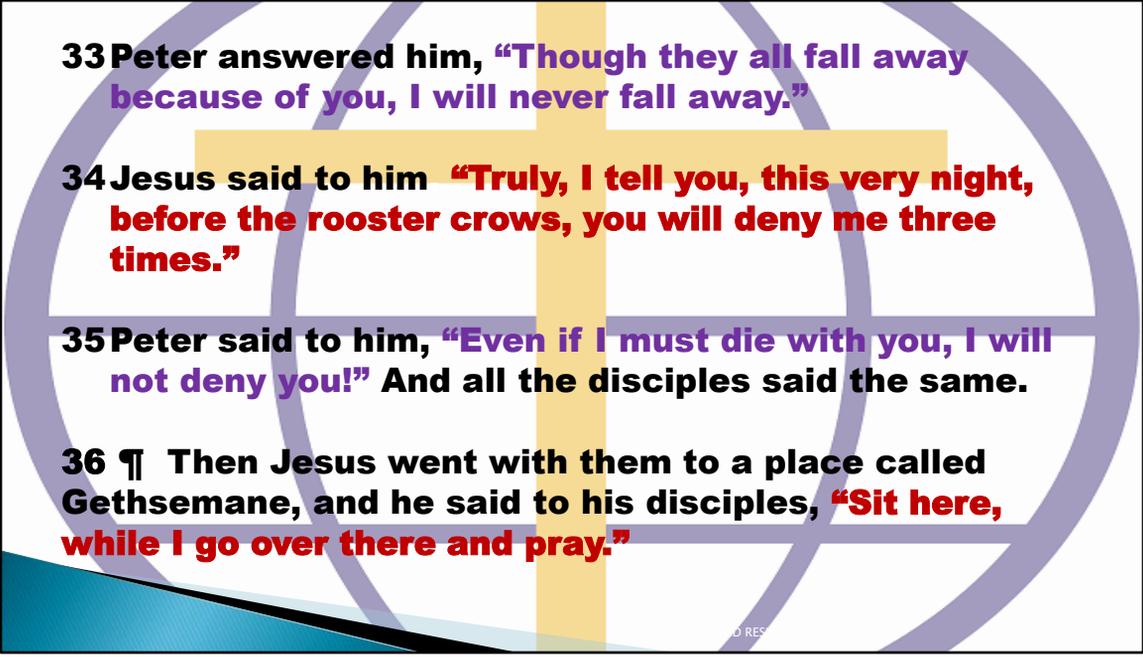


29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

31 ¶ Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

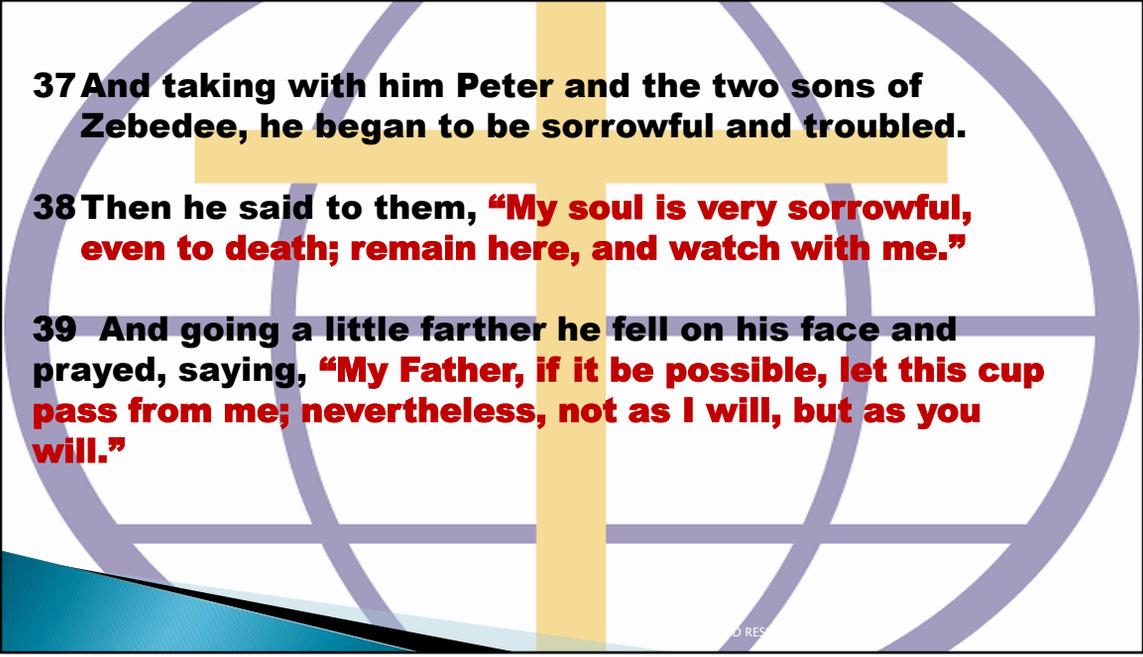


33 Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”

34 Jesus said to him “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”

35 Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same.

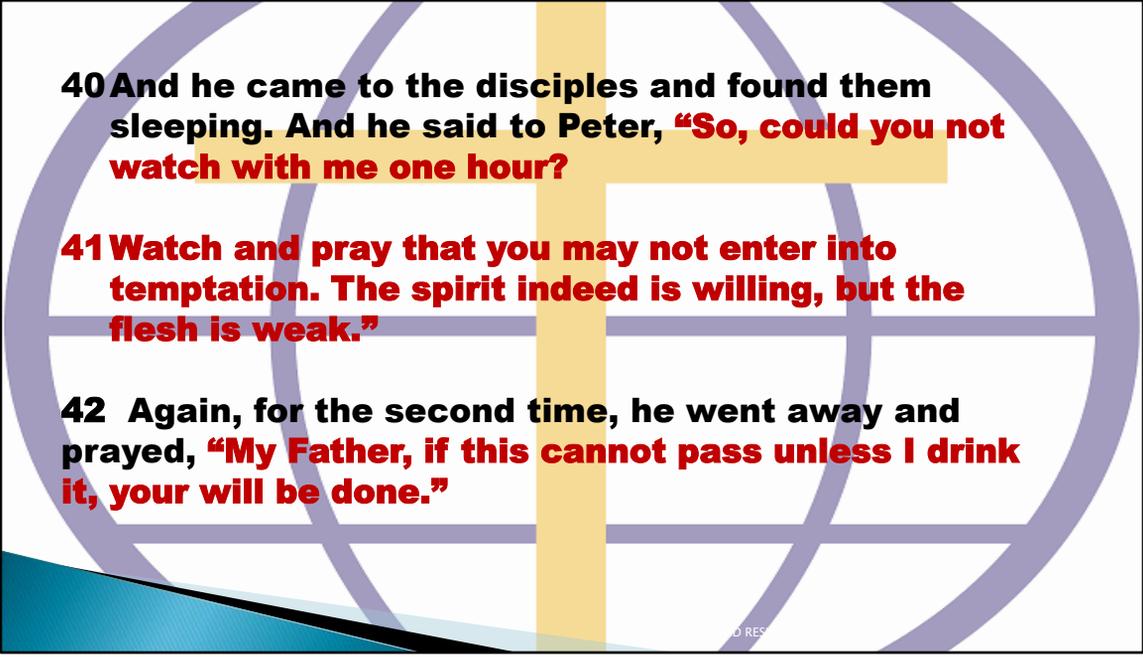
36 ¶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”



37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

38 Then he said to them, **“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”**

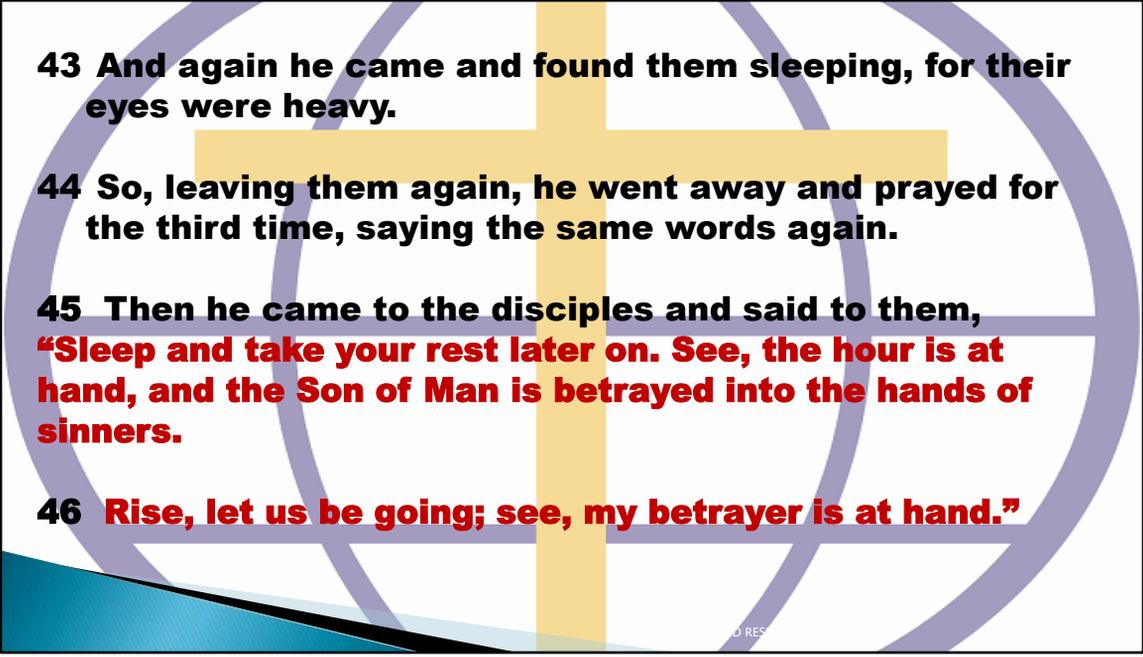
39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, **“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”**



40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, **“So, could you not watch with me one hour?”**

41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, **“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”**

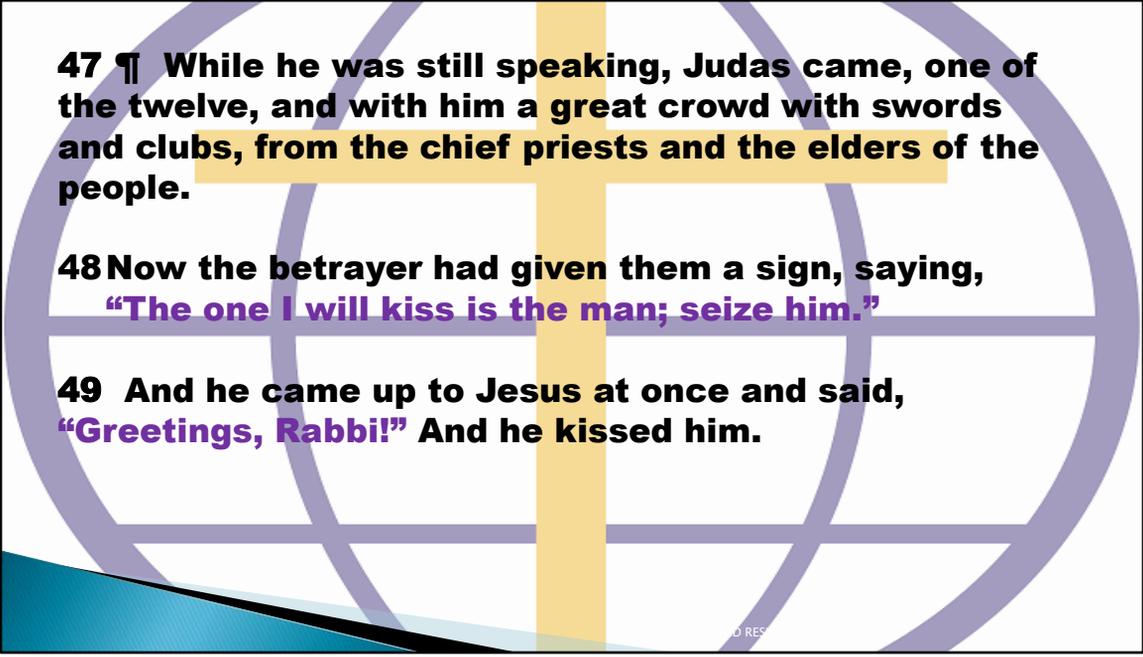


43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

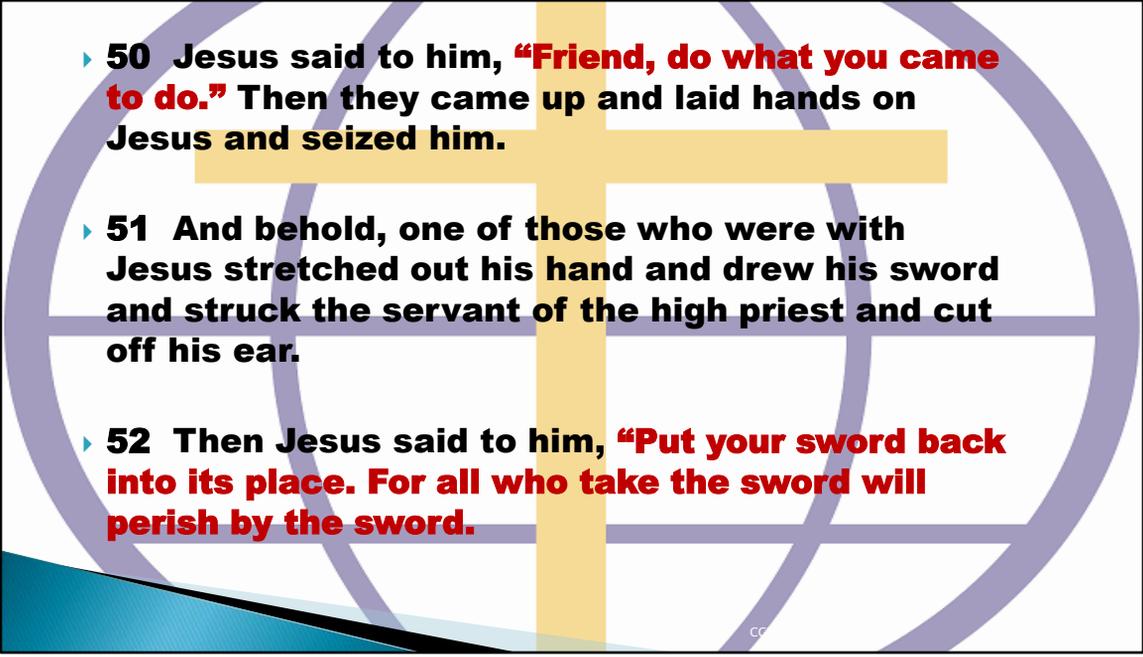
46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."



47 ¶ While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”

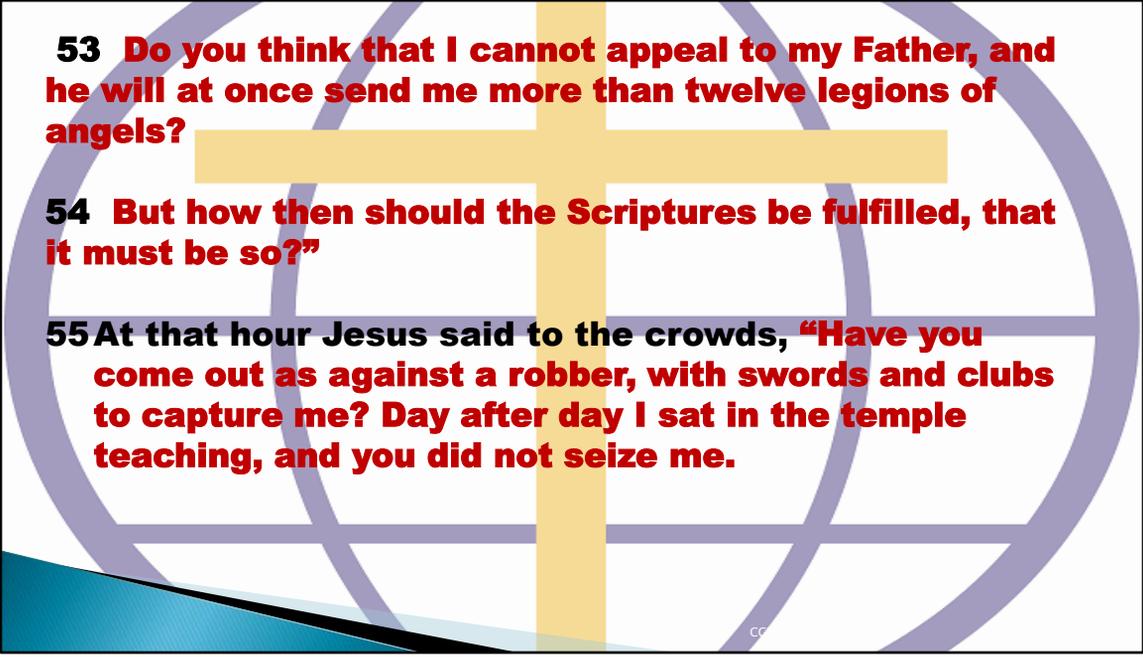
49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.



▶ **50** Jesus said to him, **“Friend, do what you came to do.”** Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

▶ **51** And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

▶ **52** Then Jesus said to him, **“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”**



53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

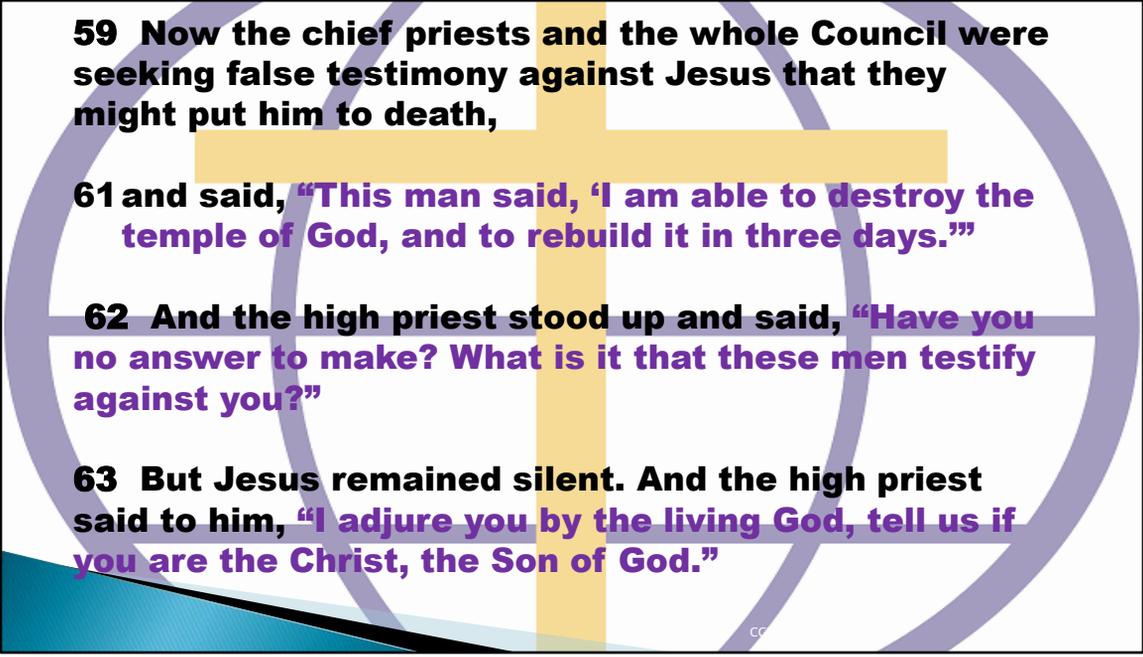
54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.

57 ¶ Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.

58 And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

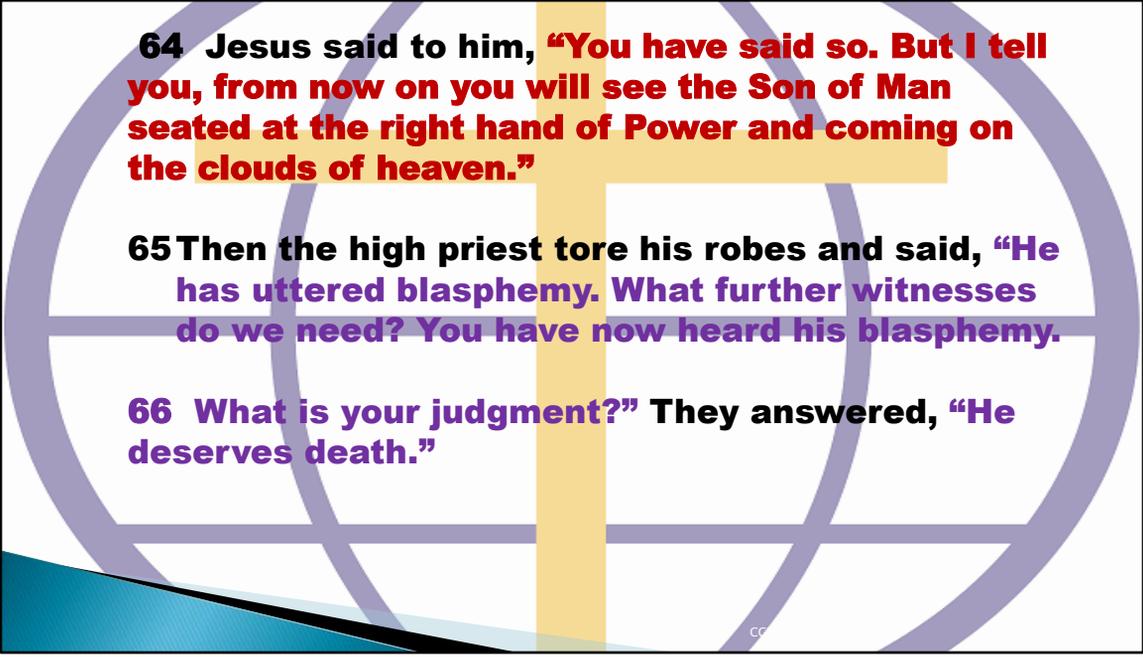


59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,

61 and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’”

62 And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”

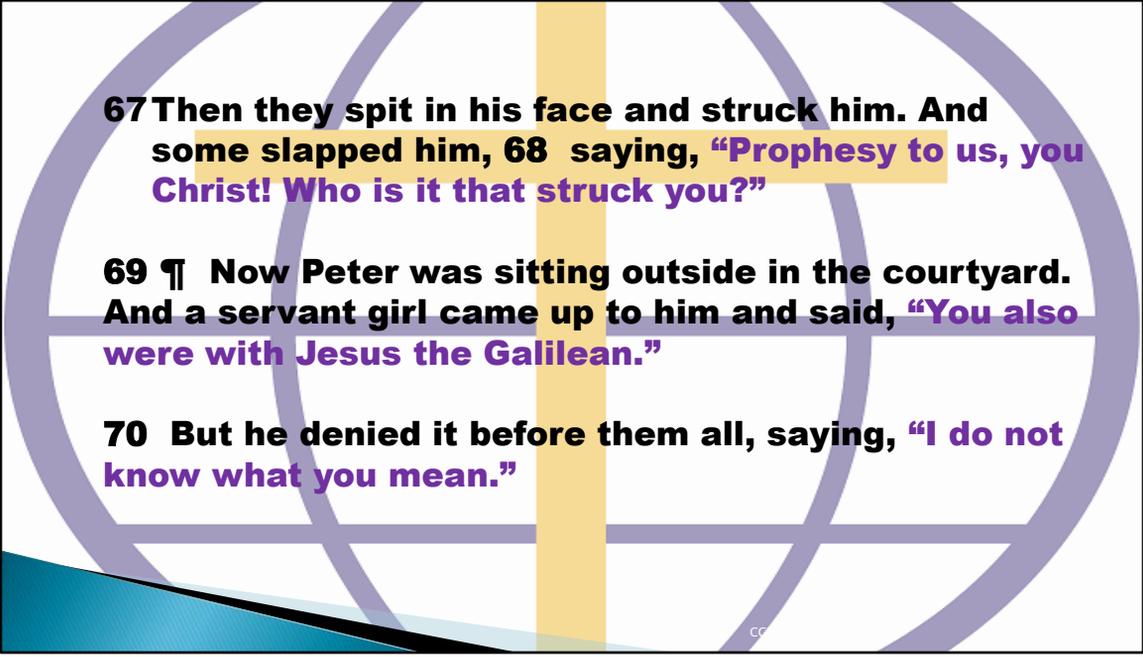
63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”



64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.

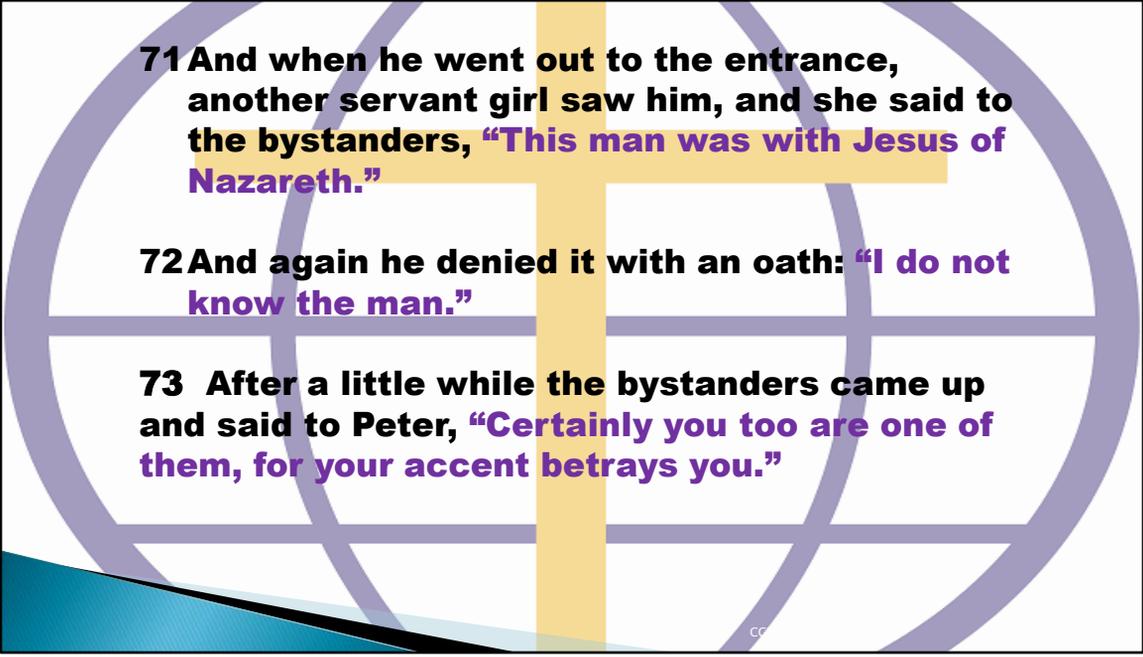
66 What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”



67 Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, **68** saying, **“Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”**

69 ¶ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, **“You also were with Jesus the Galilean.”**

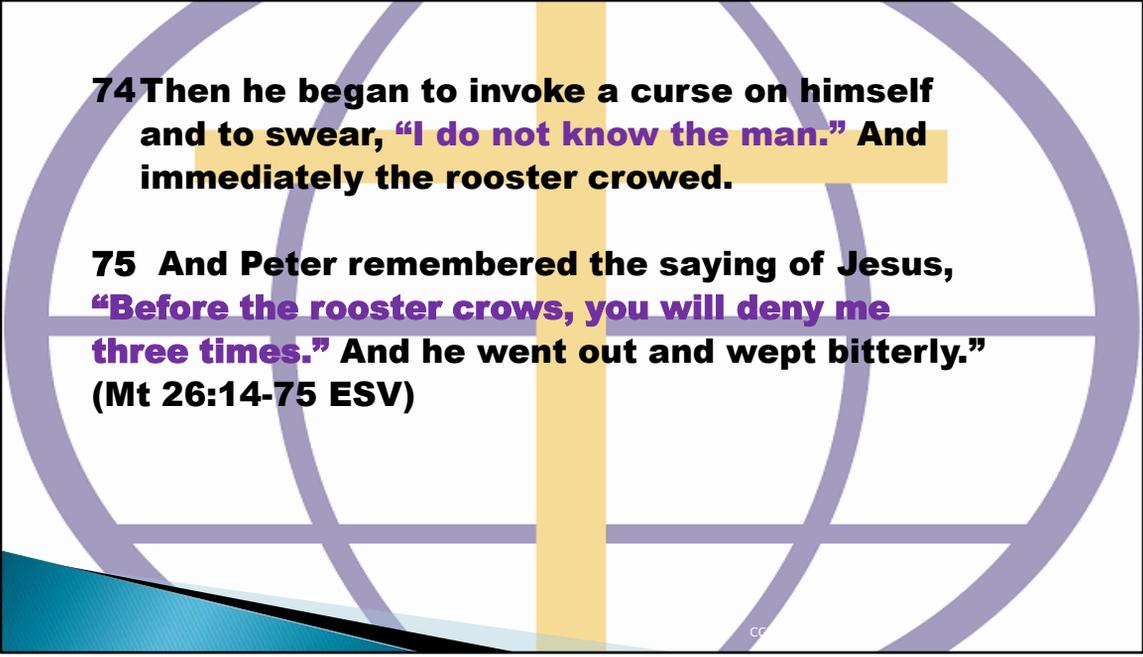
70 But he denied it before them all, saying, **“I do not know what you mean.”**



71 And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, **“This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”**

72 And again he denied it with an oath: **“I do not know the man.”**

73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, **“Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.”**

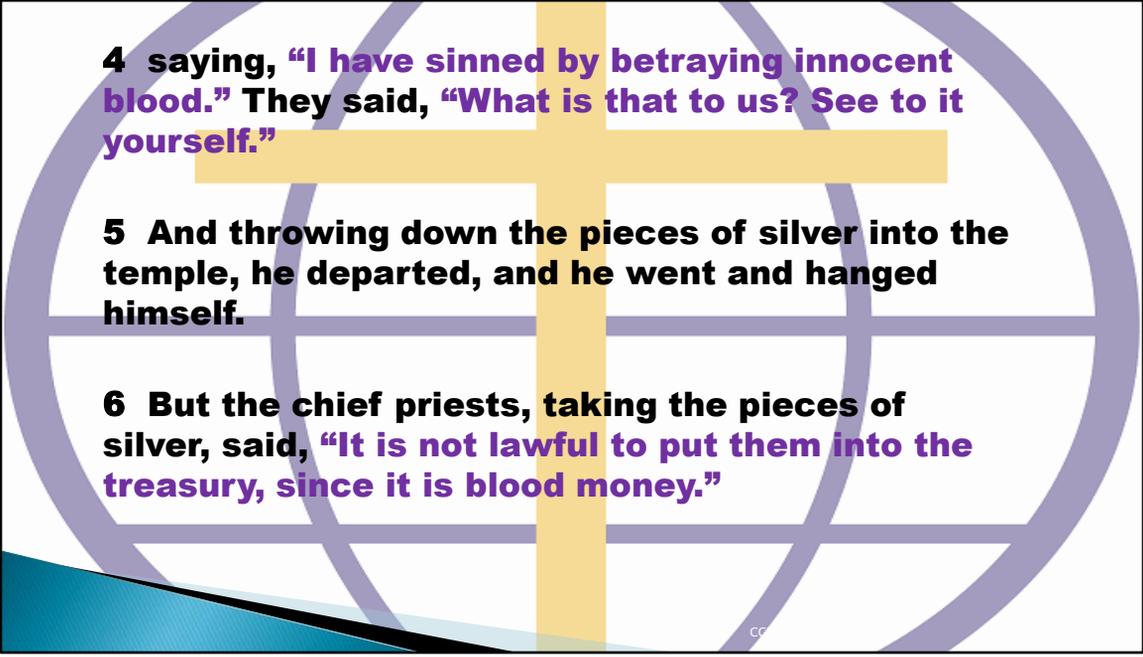


74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, **“I do not know the man.”** And immediately the rooster crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, **“Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”** And he went out and wept bitterly.”
(Mt 26:14-75 ESV)

Matthew 27: 1-66

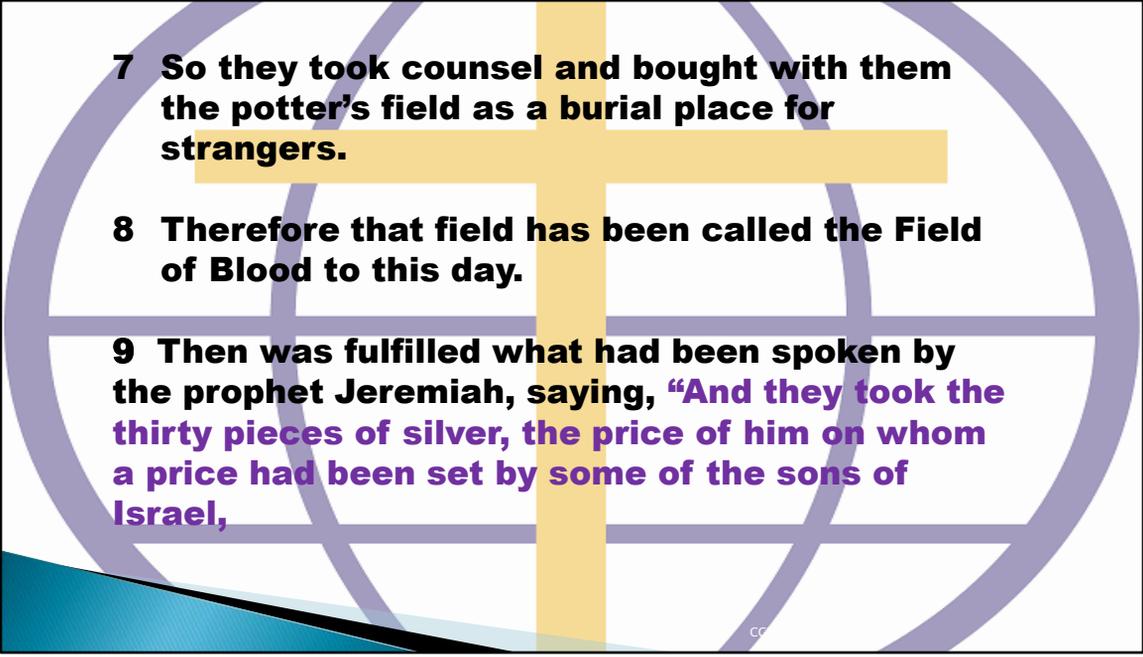
- ▶ **“1 ¶ When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.**
- ▶ **2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.**
- ▶ **3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,**



4 saying, **“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”** They said, **“What is that to us? See to it yourself.”**

5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

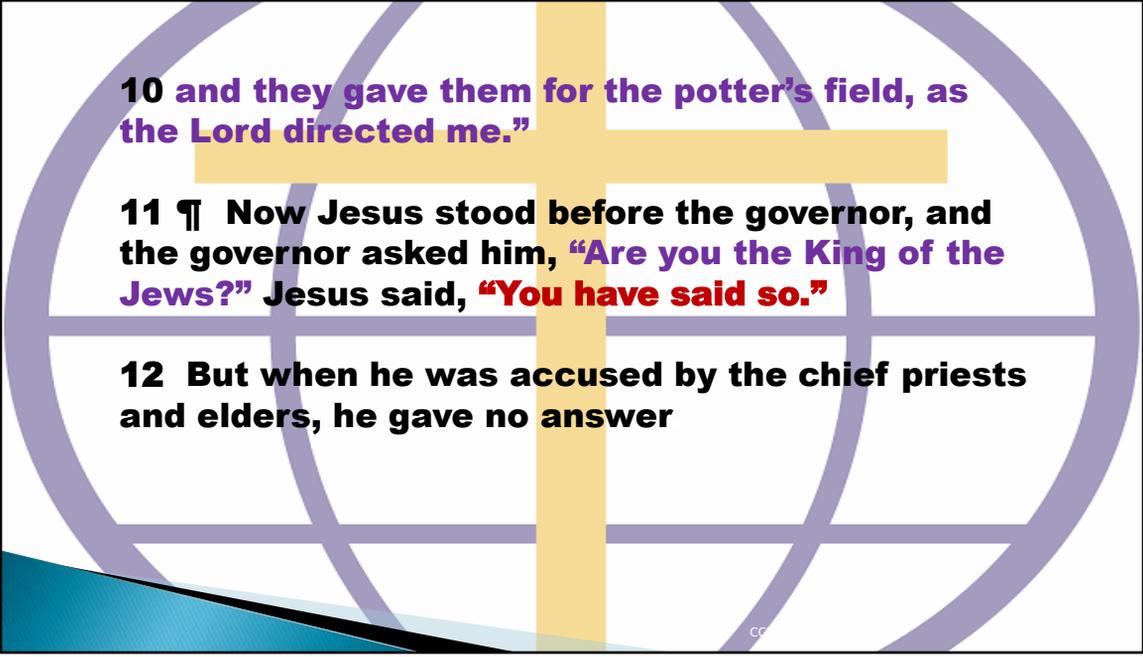
6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, **“It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.”**



7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

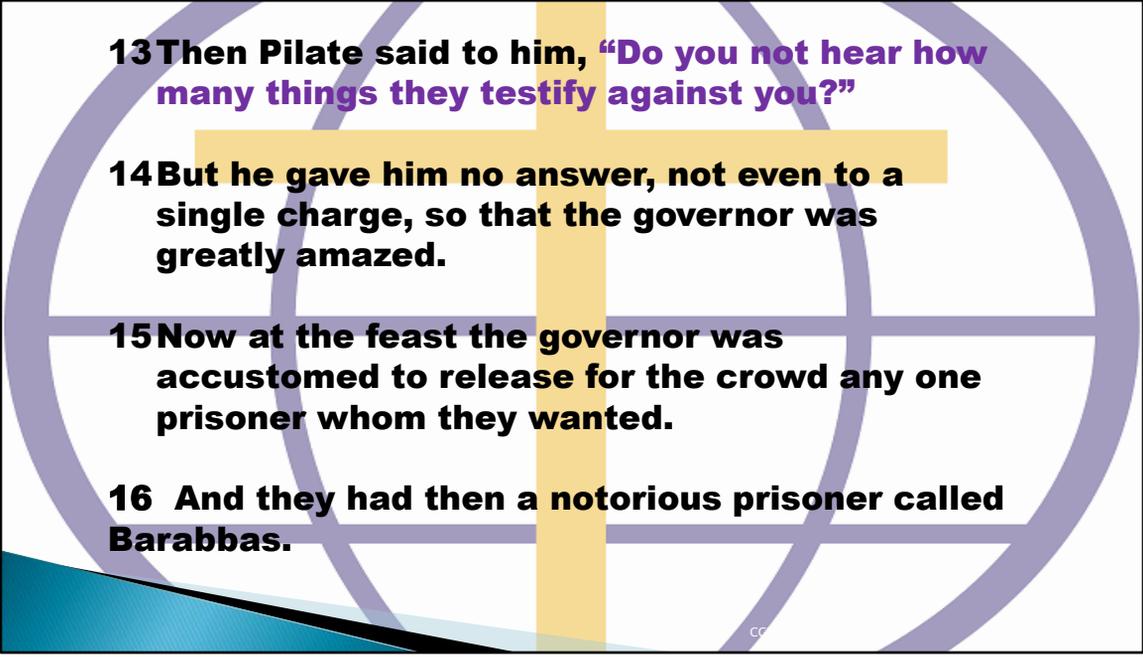
9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,



10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

11 ¶ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so."

12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer

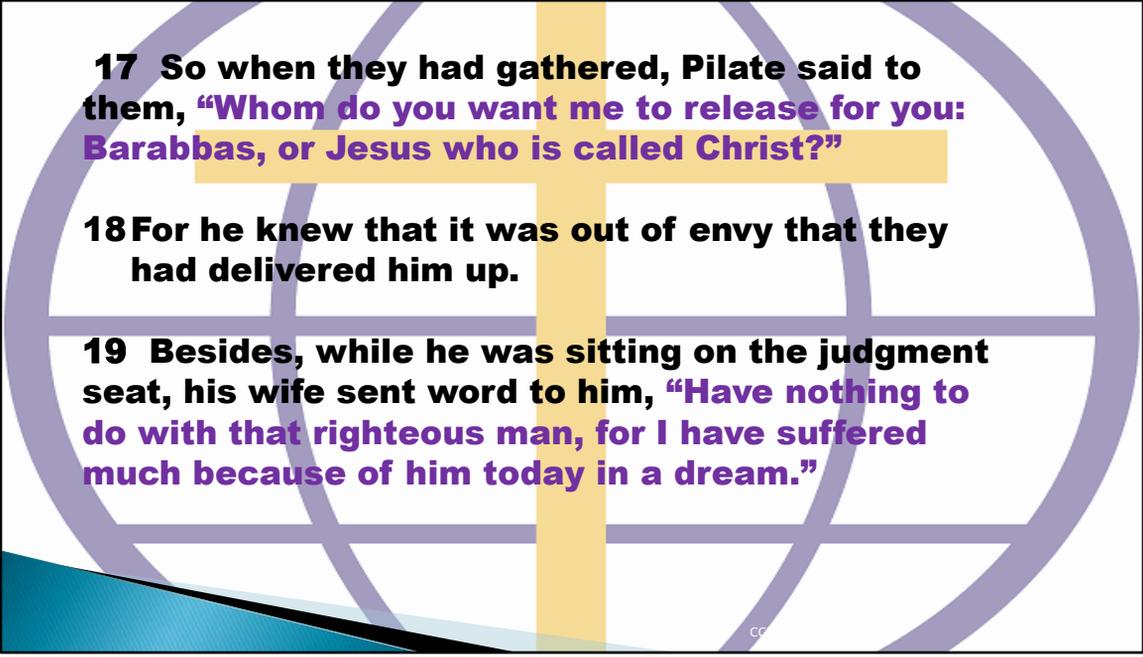


13 Then Pilate said to him, **“Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?”**

14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.

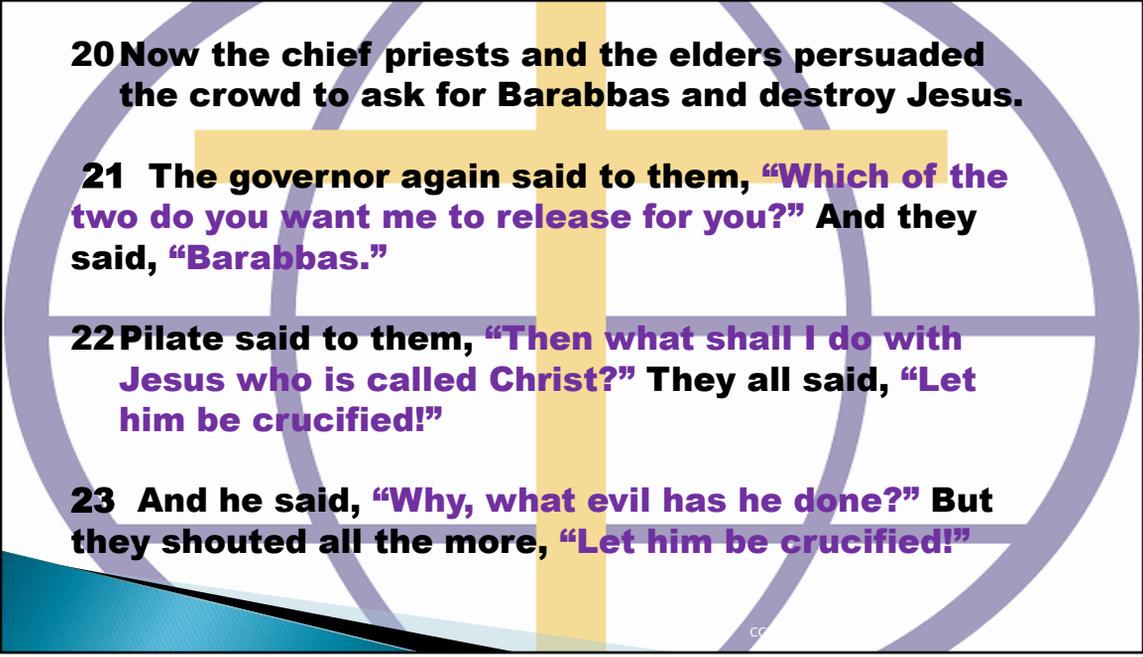
16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.



17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, **“Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”**

18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.

19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, **“Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.”**

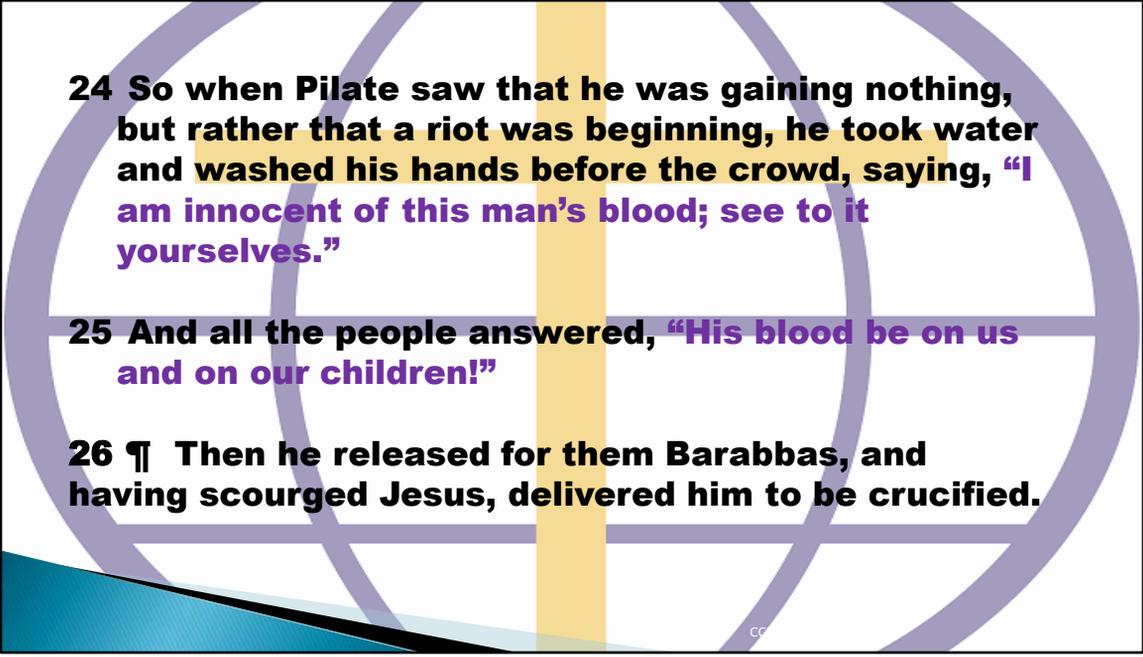


20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor again said to them, **“Which of the two do you want me to release for you?”** And they said, **“Barabbas.”**

22 Pilate said to them, **“Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”** They all said, **“Let him be crucified!”**

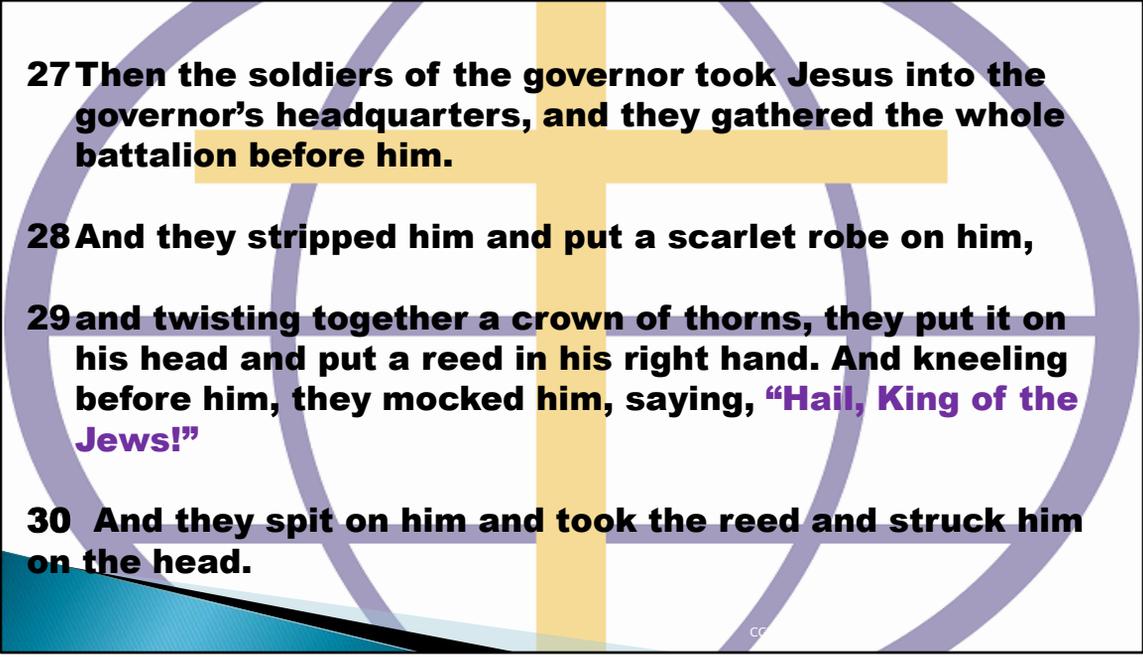
23 And he said, **“Why, what evil has he done?”** But they shouted all the more, **“Let him be crucified!”**



24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, **“I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”**

25 And all the people answered, **“His blood be on us and on our children!”**

26 ¶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

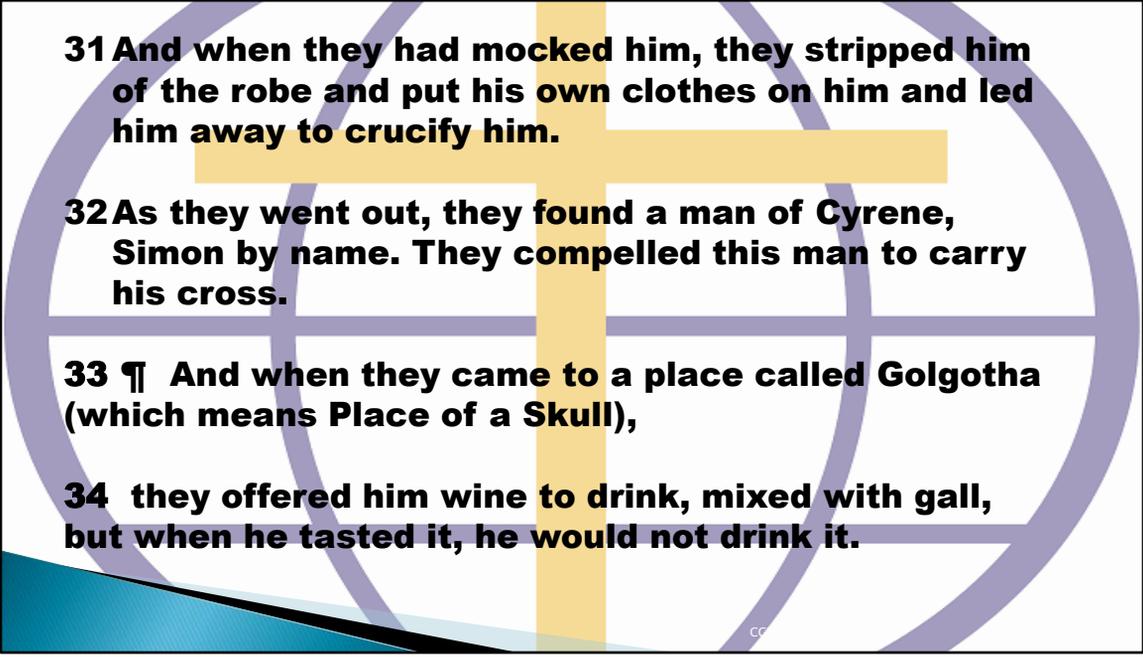


27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,

29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.

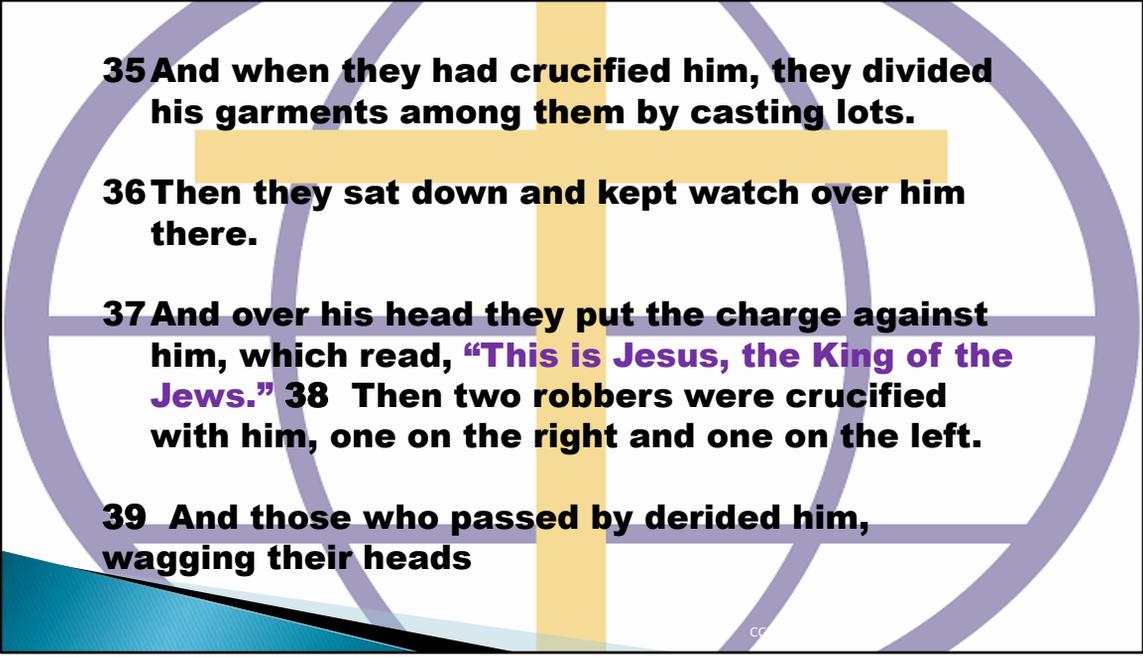


31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.

33 ¶ And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),

34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.

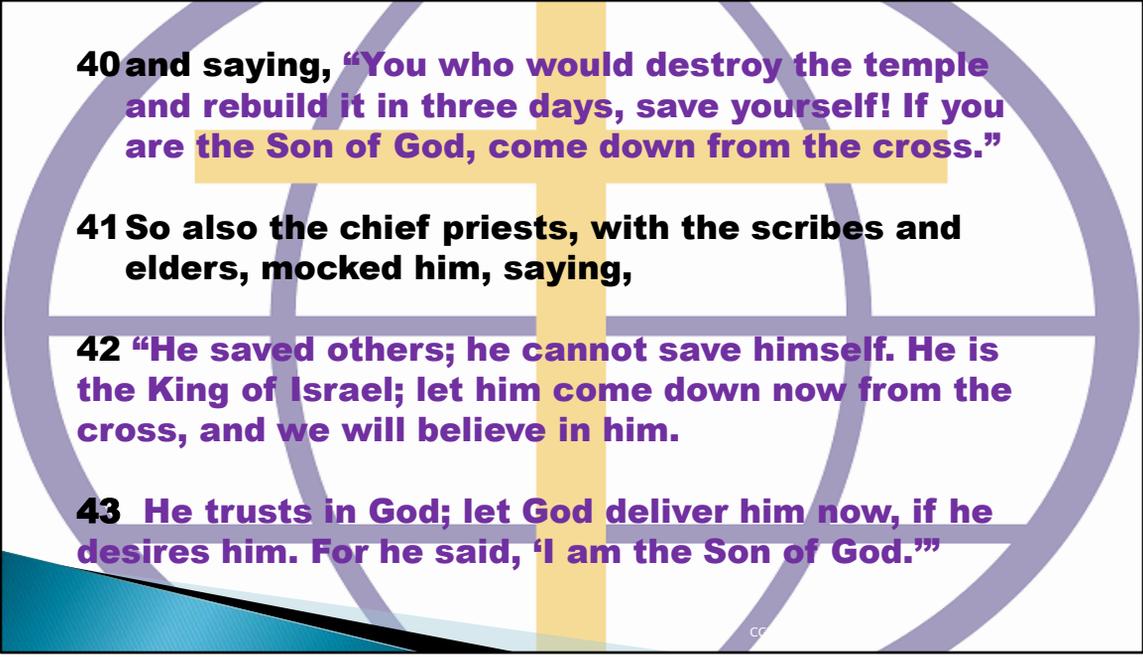


35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.

36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads

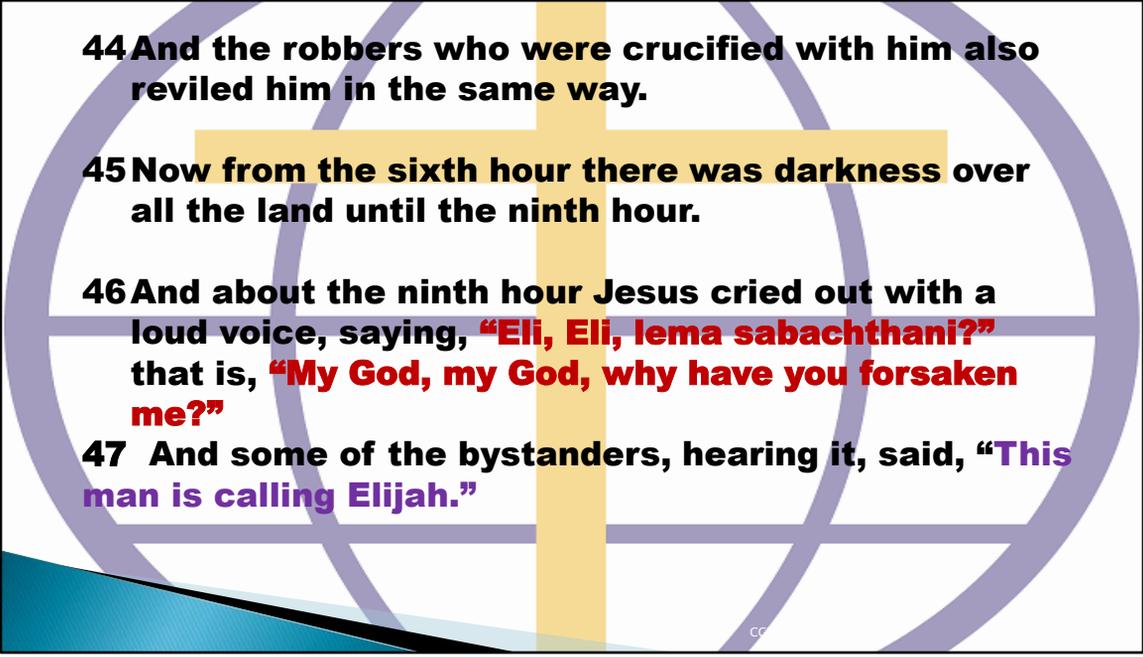


40 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,

42 “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”



44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

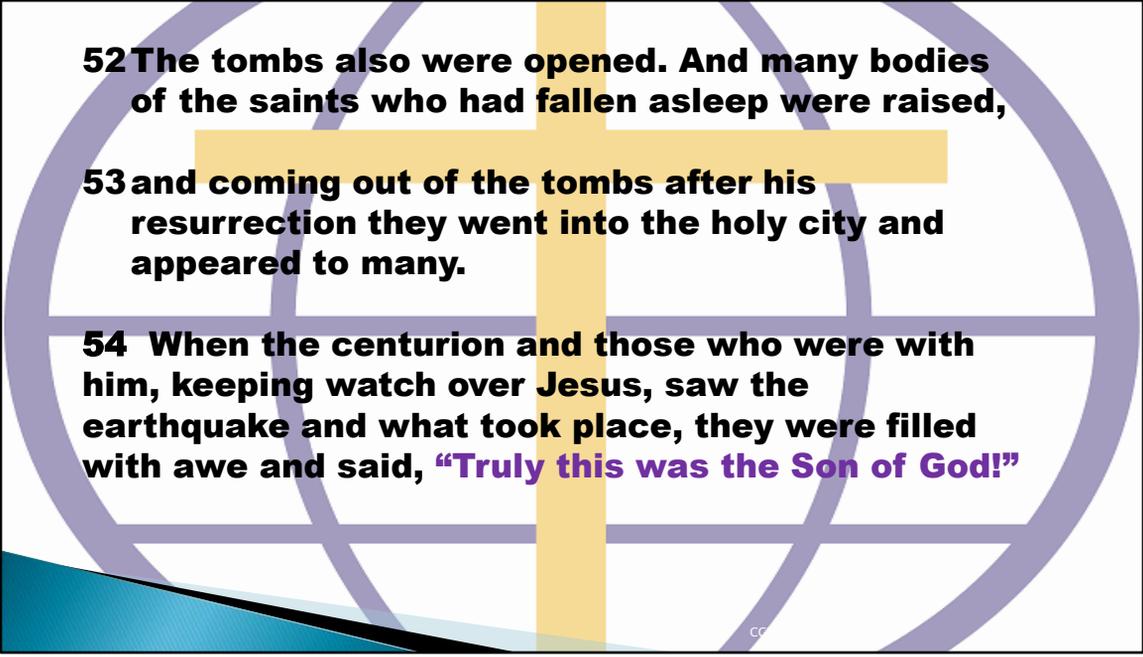
47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”

48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

49 But the others said, **“Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”**

50 ¶ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

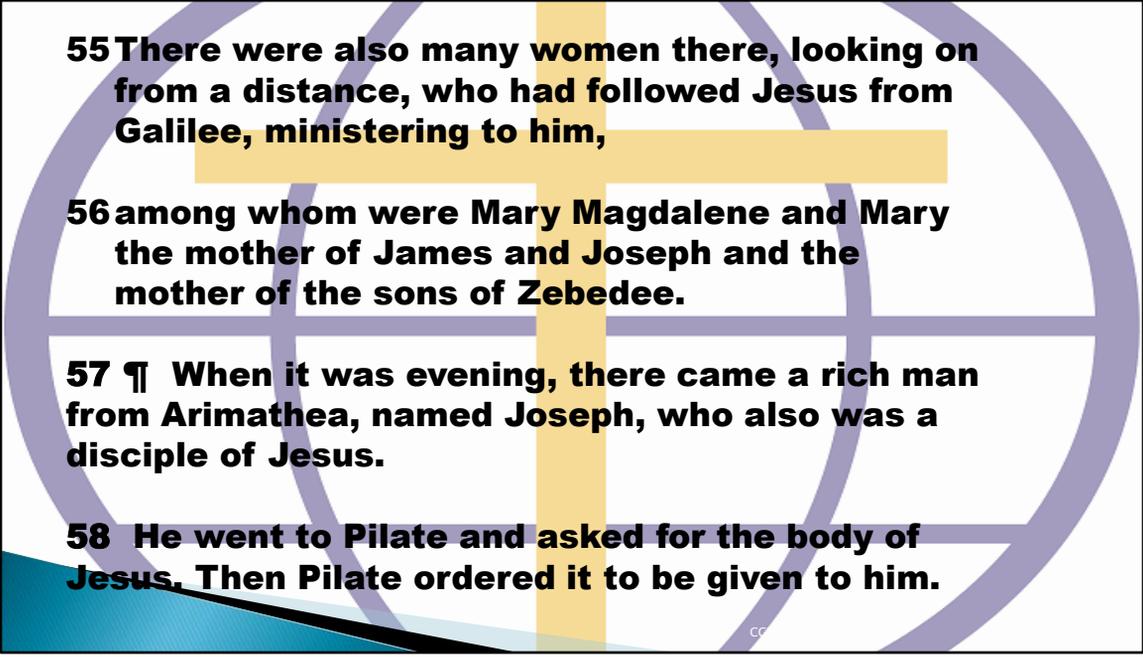
51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.



52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,

53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”**

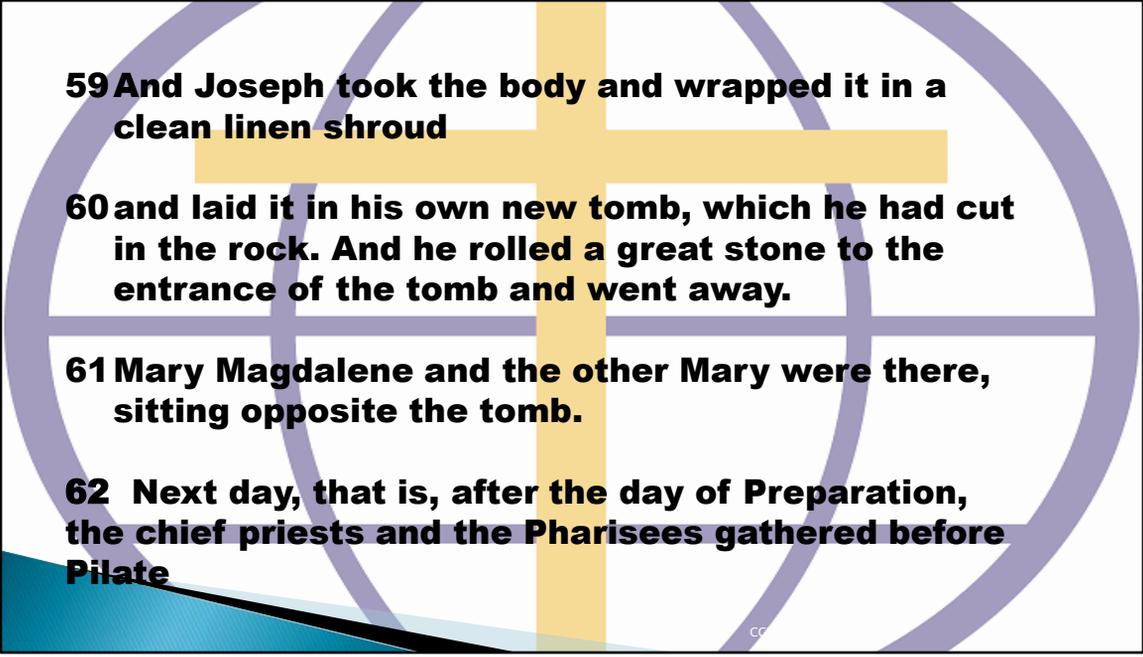


55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him,

56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57 ¶ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.

58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

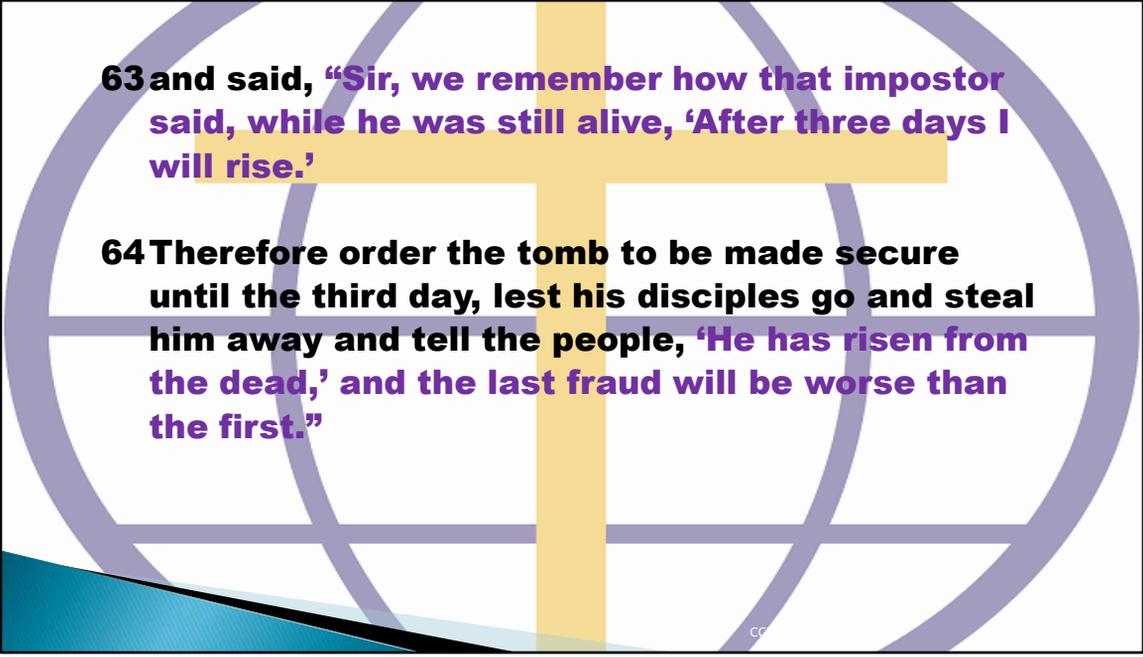


59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud

60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

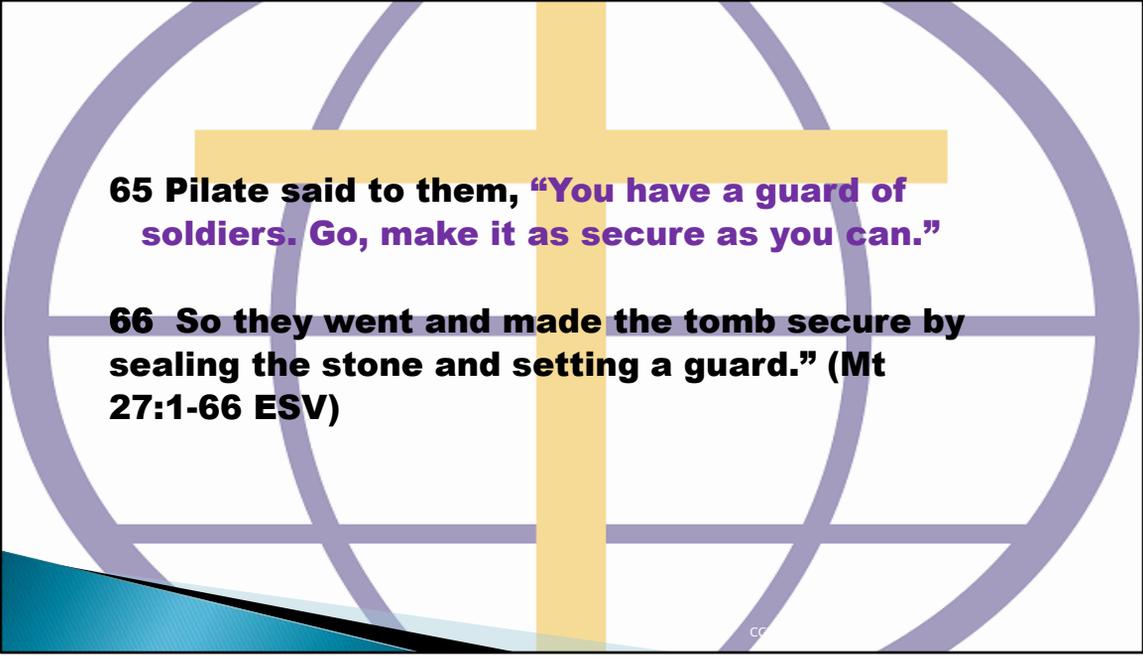
61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

62 Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate



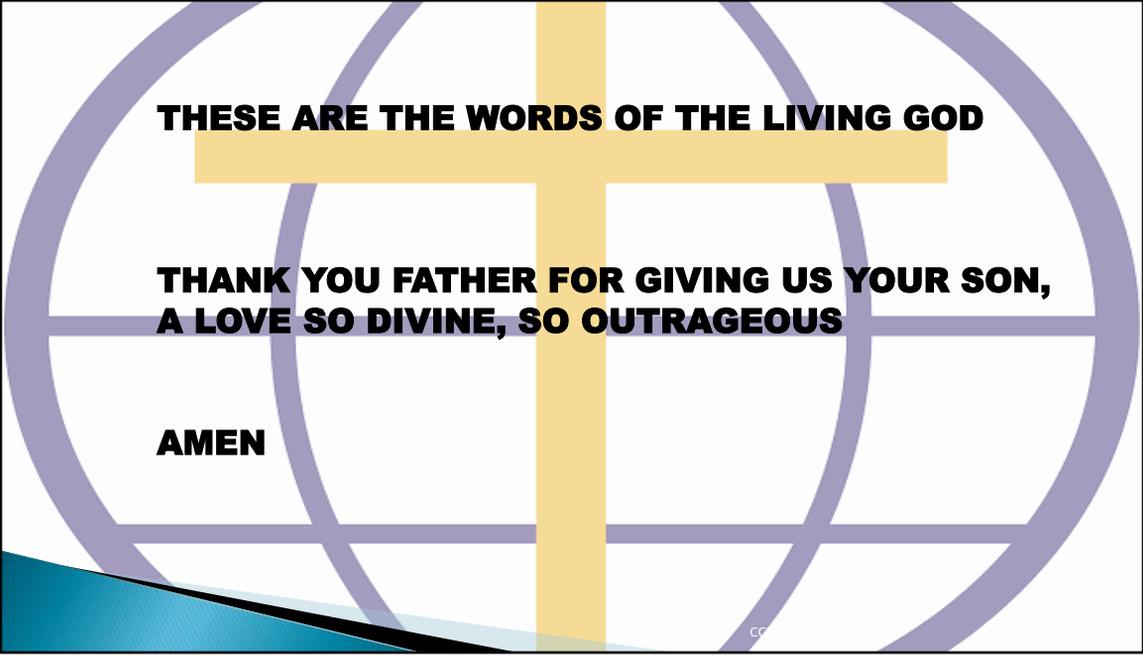
63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’”

64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.”



65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.”

66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.” (Mt 27:1-66 ESV)

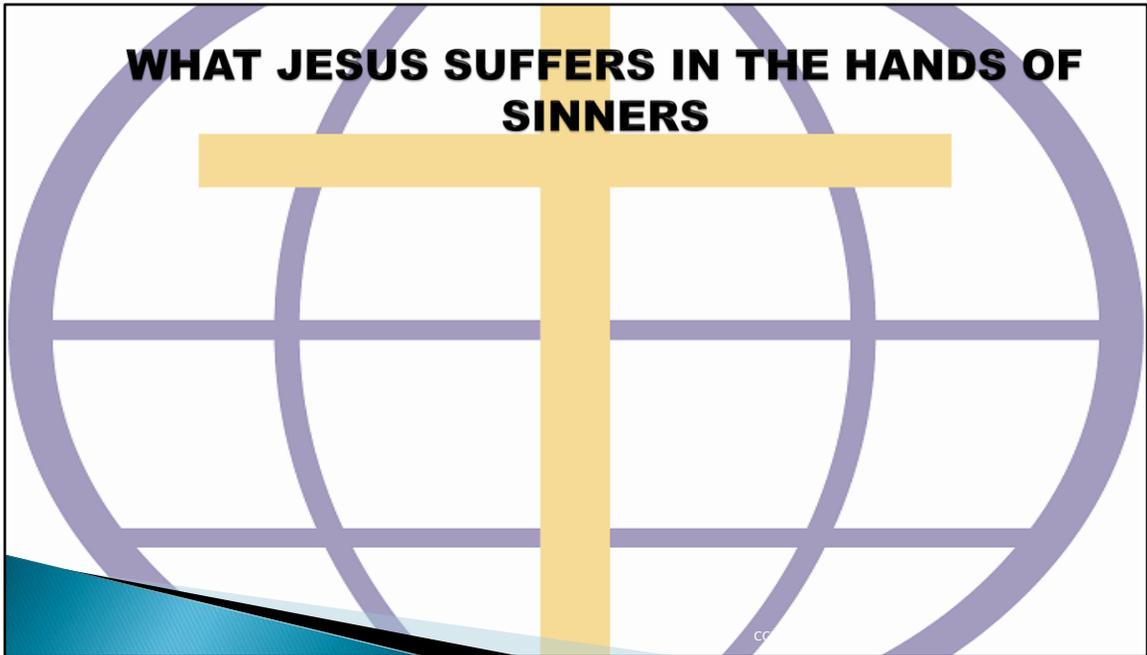


THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD

**THANK YOU FATHER FOR GIVING US YOUR SON,
A LOVE SO DIVINE, SO OUTRAGEOUS**

AMEN

WHAT JESUS SUFFERS IN THE HANDS OF SINNERS



We do not have time to go in the details about the ordeal that Jesus suffered at the hands of various people when he was crucified.

1 – Judah, whom Jesus called a friend, betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. Maybe some of you have not been deeply betrayed but when we are betrayed by somebody we love and trust, needless to say, it hurts deeply.

2 – After the institution of the Lord supper, even if the apostles told him that they would not abandon him.

All of them did. We see the dramatic denial of Peter and his subsequent repentance. When Jesus, their shepherd was struck, they all scattered except for the apostle John who returned to the cross.

3- As he readied himself to face the ordeal of the cross by praying to his Father, his disciples fell asleep. Although they were present bodily, they were not present spiritually or emotionally. The human spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

4 – Judah's betrayed him with a kiss and greeted him as Rabbi. This is the epitome of

hypocrisy.

5 – Jesus never harmed anyone. He did good to everyone by healing an unknown number of people, by raising people from the dead, by treating women and those considered sinners as valued human beings. When they came to arrest him they came as if you were a robber. When the army came, again we read that all the disciples left him and fled.

6 – when Jesus told Caiaphas, the high priest, that he was the Christ, the Son of God, Caiaphas accused him of blasphemy and deserving death. Jesus was then spat upon, struck and mocked.

7- Then we see the manipulation of the facts and the spinning of the truth to suit their wicked intent. The people who were enthusiastic about Jesus when he came to Jerusalem on a donkey a few days earlier did an about-face and demanded his death as per the urging of the religious leaders.

8 – Jesus accepted to humble himself and to be counted among the criminal as the crowd demanded the liberation of Barrabas, a notorious criminal and the death of Jesus.

9- Through political convenience, Pilate knowing that Jesus was innocent gave him over to be crucified and mocked. The soldiers of the governor stripped Jesus and put a scarlet robe on him and placed a crown of thorns on his head which caused pain in profound bleeding. As the Lamb of God, Jesus did not say anything.

10–Then they brought him to be crucified between two robbers. Remember here that we’re not talking about a man.

We’re talking about God incarnate in the flesh in the person of Jesus, the sustainer of the whole universe who voluntarily humiliated himself to the lowest of the low for us.

While on the cross, people continue to mock him and to jeer him. They disrespected him. He took it all for you and I and the whole world.

The Bible tells us that his crucifixion was so brutal that he was poured out like water.

All his bones were out of joint.

His heart was like wax. His strength was dried up.

His tongue stuck to his jaw.

His hands and feet were pierced.

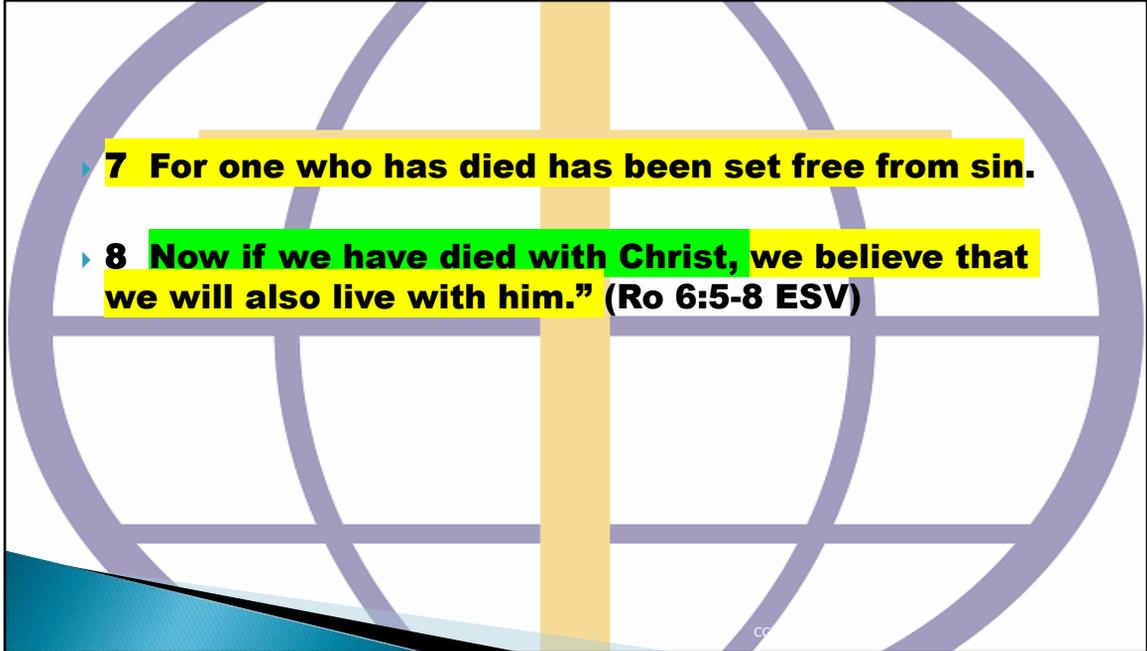
All his bones could be counted. (Ps 22)

How does the death of Jesus affect us?

THE DEATH OF JESUS: MORE THAN SEEING A FRIEND DYING

▶ (Ro 6:5-8 ESV) “5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

▶ 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.



Because of the incarnation Jesus who was and is fully God also became fully man. He is fully God and fully man in his person. He is 100% God and 100% man in his one person.

That being so, because he is God and he sustains all life, when he died on the cross something miraculous happened to all of us. When Jesus died humanity died with him.

At the end of the sermon, we will have the song **“THE POWER OF THE CROSS”** which has the words **“Jesus became sin for us”** and **“We stand forgiven at the cross”**.

We are forgiven because Jesus took our sinful and dead old nature and nailed it to the cross in his person.

When Jesus died, we all died!

We all died with Jesus at the cross. This becomes a very personal, does it not?

When God reveals himself to us, knowing what Jesus has done, why would we want

to live in an old dead human nature?

The good news which we will talk about next week when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus is that we not only have died with Christ at the cross but we were also raised with him as he conquered death through his resurrection!

What amazing good news!

What Jesus did on the cross is indeed **a love so amazing, so divine that it demands our all.**

Jesus is the hope of humanity!

Why?

Because Jesus gave it all when he died on the cross for us all.

Let us praise God! Let us pray