

# ***The Book of Matthew Crucified and Risen***

Lesson #13 for June 25, 2016

Scriptures: Matthew 27:11-26,45-54; 28:1-20; John 3:19; Isaiah 59:2; Hebrews 8:1-6.

1. For Christians the promise of a resurrection and a life forever with Jesus Christ is the greatest hope we can possibly imagine. In this lesson we will look at Matthew's recounting of the trial before Pilate, the mockings and beatings, the crucifixion, and the events connected with the resurrection.
2. Where was Matthew at the time of the crucifixion? He had run away! Where did he get his information? Did John tell him about the cries of Jesus when He was "forsaken" by God?
3. Read Matthew 27:11-26. It is almost impossible for us as modern Christians to imagine that the crowd standing there before Pilate's judgment hall could have chosen a common criminal instead of the Lord of Glory who could have offered them eternal life. They chose selfishness over love, destruction over salvation, death over life. They fell under the influence of the shouting mob instead of the quiet whispers of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Barabbas was the one who was supposed to be crucified on that middle cross. The name *Jesus* means "Yahweh saves," and *Barabbas* means "son of the father."
4. Which "Jesus" would you choose?

There was Barabbas versus Jesus the Messiah. The Latin name "Jesus" derives from the Hebrew, "Joshua," signifying, "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh the deliverer." Barabbas offered political deliverance through human means: armed conflict, political uprisings, civil disobedience. The Messiah tendered spiritual deliverance through spiritual channels: sincere repentance, heartfelt conversion, transformed lifestyles. Barabbas's objective was overthrowing Roman armies and reestablishing Jewish self-government. Christ's objective was overthrowing sinful rebellion and reestablishing God's kingship.

Modern Christians encounter similar choices. Some believers think establishing God's kingdom involves party politics, lobbying efforts, and partisan maneuvering. Sometimes their objectives are laudable. Their methodology, however, is forever flawed, because Christ seeks willingly obedient hearts rather than legally coerced compliance. The "Jesus" of these political Christians is Barabbas. Jesus, the Nazarene, guides the Christians who are authentic believers. Their mission supersedes political change and challenges humankind to experience spiritual transformation. Only this internally motivated conversion can raise humanity above legalistic self-righteousness to experience genuine liberation. Christ's kingdom, He declared, is otherworldly. *This* Messiah should be our choice.—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 173. [Italics are in original.]

This man [Barabbas] had claimed to be the Messiah. He claimed authority to establish a different order of things, to set the world right. Under satanic delusion he claimed that whatever he could obtain by theft and robbery was his own. He had done wonderful things through satanic agencies, he had gained a following among the people, and had excited sedition against the Roman government. **Under cover of religious enthusiasm he was a hardened and desperate villain, bent on rebellion and cruelty. By giving the people a choice between this man and the innocent Saviour, Pilate**

**thought to arouse them to a sense of justice. He hoped to gain their sympathy for Jesus in opposition to the priests and rulers.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 733.1. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

5. Why did the Jewish leaders and most of the Jewish people reject Jesus? Why do people tend to prefer darkness over light? Can you see any of that kind of thinking in your behavior or in your own experience? How did this tendency toward evil get started? Did it start right in the Garden of Eden with Adam blaming Eve and Eve blaming the snake? Has that tendency grown even stronger over the years as we continue to sin?
6. Read Matthew 27:45-46. What are we supposed to understand from Jesus's cry on the cross? Crucified at 9 a.m., Jesus died about 3 p.m., the time of the evening sacrifice.
7. Jesus took upon Himself the results of sin which come from separation from the Source of life, God Himself. (Isaiah 59:2 and Romans 6:23) From the time of Jesus's birth, the Father had always been close to Him. Then, Jesus felt the terrible consequences of the Father's withdrawal—His "wrath." What He felt is exactly what sinners will feel in the final destruction of sin and sinners. It is called the second death.

The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. **The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.** *Ibid.* 753.1. [Bold type is added.]

8. What was happening at the cross? In order to demonstrate the terrible and deadly consequences of sin, the Son and the Father agreed before our world was created to show us in this ultimate demonstration what happens when a human being separates from the Source of life. Jesus allowed Himself to be separated from His Father. That experience was so horrific and terrible that when it came to a conclusion, Jesus died.
9. There was no pretending there. The wrath of God, i.e., *His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choices* was being demonstrated by Jesus. Jesus, of course, was not a sinner; but, He agreed to be treated as a sinner to teach us that very important lesson about sin. Why was that necessary? Did the Father require it? Was the Father angry? What do we mean when we say that "our transgressions fell upon Him"? Did Jesus pay the price for our sins? If so, to whom was it paid? What is the ransom? Does God owe anything to the Devil?
10. Jesus fully understood what a close relationship to the Father could mean to a human being. Losing that relationship was so awful—as we noted above—that when He felt His relationship breaking up because of sin, it caused His death. Neither the Jews nor the Romans actually killed Jesus; He died of sin. Certainly, that is beyond the understanding of any human being at that point in history. It was the worst kind of pain. The only solution available to us to avoid that kind of pain is "by beholding we become changed." (GC 555.1) By studying and worshiping the life and character of Jesus Christ, we can allow the Holy Spirit the opportunity to enter our lives and transform us into His likeness.

Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be

profited by the Scriptures must meditate [60] upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought he must learn the meaning of the words of truth, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles.

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of the Scriptures.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 59.5-60.1.

11. Read Matthew 27:49-54. Each of the Gospel writers spent a very significant portion of his Gospel talking about the final events in the life of Jesus. However, Matthew is the only one who talked about the fact that at the time of Jesus's death, an earthquake occurred and graves were thrown open. At the time of His resurrection, a group of saints rose to everlasting life and went to heaven with Him.

As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a multitude of captives. **The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came forth with Him.** They were those who had been co-laborers with God, and who at the cost of their lives had borne testimony to the truth. Now they were to be witnesses for Him who had raised them from the dead.

During His ministry, Jesus had raised the dead to life. He had raised the son of the widow of Nain, and the ruler's daughter and Lazarus. But these were not clothed with immortality. After they were raised, they were still subject to death. **But those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 786.1-2.

The voice that cried from the cross, "It is finished," was heard among the dead. It pierced the walls of sepulchers, and summoned the sleepers to arise. Thus will it be when the voice of Christ shall be heard from heaven. That voice will penetrate the graves and unbar the tombs, and the dead in Christ shall arise. **At the Saviour's resurrection a few graves were opened, but at His second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life.**—*Ibid.* 787.2. [Bold type is added.] See also *EW* 184-5, 189, 208; *1SM* 304-7.

12. Read Matthew 27:51-53. It was apparent to all that the most holy place was empty.

When the loud cry, "It is finished," came from the lips of Christ, the priests were officiating in the temple. It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain. Clothed in his significant and beautiful dress, the priest stood with lifted knife, as did Abraham when he was about to slay his son. With intense interest the people were looking on. But the earth trembles and quakes; [757] for the Lord Himself draws near. With a rending noise the inner veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand, throwing open to the gaze of the multitude a place once filled with the presence of God. In this place the Shekinah had dwelt. Here God had manifested His glory above the mercy seat. No one but the high priest ever lifted the veil separating this apartment

from the rest of the temple. He entered in once a year to make an atonement for the sins of the people. But lo, this veil is rent in twain. The most holy place of the earthly sanctuary is no longer sacred.—*Ibid.* 756.5-757.0.

13. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. What do these verses suggest to us about the old earthly sanctuary system? If you read Hebrews 9 and 10, it suggests that all those animal sacrifices accomplished essentially nothing. So, what does the blood of Christ accomplish that the blood of all those animals could not accomplish? Is it the blood itself that is significant? Or, does it have to do more with the meaning of His death?
14. Paul seemed to suggest that the death of Jesus somehow takes away our sins. How does that actually work? Did He take away our sins at the time of His crucifixion? If so, do we believe that He actually took away our sins before we committed them? How could that be? Or, did He “deal with” sin—all aspects of sin at one time—by proving that Satan was completely wrong in all of his accusations against God and, thus, that all of his claims were false. Does the life and death of Jesus demonstrate that sin is always self-destructive?
15. Are those who live a Christian life really to be pitied? In Paul’s day, those who were Christians were always at risk of death; but, today, Christians live better lives than others.
16. What evidence is there outside of Scripture that Jesus actually existed and died on a cross? After Nero burned a large portion of Rome, he accused Christians of causing the fire.

Nero fastened the guilt of starting the blaze [in Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians [Chrestians] by the populace. *Christus*, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. (Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44) (as quoted at <http://www.causeofJesusdeath.com/jesus-in-secular-history> on April 14, 2016) [Content in brackets in first line is added.]

17. In a book on the history of Roman civilization and Christianity up to 325 A.D., Will Durrant on page 557 wrote:

....That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels. After two centuries of Higher Criticism the outline of the life, character, and teaching of Christ, remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature in the history of Western Man.
18. Among scholars there is probably little debate that a historical figure name Jesus lived, was condemned, and was crucified. But, is it really true that a majority of the world’s population recognize that Jesus of Nazareth existed as a historical Person as the *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* suggests? It is much more likely that the majority of people living in our world today know almost nothing about Jesus; many of them have never even heard His name. Some have only heard His name—or variations of it—as curses.
19. The challenging part of the story of Jesus is the resurrection. The idea that Someone could raise Himself from the dead—let alone be beaten and tortured then crucified and only portions of three days later rise to life—is something absolutely startling. Yet, without this belief, namely, that the crucified Jesus was also the risen Christ, Christianity falls apart. (1

Corinthians 15:14,19)

20. There are really only two choices when we are faced with the story of the resurrection of Jesus. It is either a made-up story—some kind of propaganda perpetrated by a few lonely followers of Jesus to try to keep His memory alive—or, it is a firsthand account of an absolutely unique event impacting every human being living on this earth and every creature throughout the universe.
21. Read Matthew 28:1-15. How do you understand the experience of those women? When we compare the Gospels, we discover that the disciples did not believe their words. What are we supposed to learn from that? Jesus did tell them to pass the word to His disciples to go to Galilee where He would meet them. The great good news that He had to share with the women and with His disciples was that His resurrection is a promise to us.
22. Read Matthew 28:16-20. Compare Daniel 7:13-14. What does it mean to suggest that all authority is given to Jesus to rule the universe for eternity? How seriously should we take the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20?

**The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.** All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 822.2. [Bold type is added.]

23. If every one of us is supposed to be His coworker, what does Jesus intend for us to do?
24. Why do you suppose that none of the Gospel writers dedicated any significant space to discussing the meaning of the cross? Paul made a brief attempt in Romans 3; but, those verses have also been misunderstood. What does the resurrection of Christ mean to you personally? If the disciples knew that Jesus was not really raised and they were just perpetrating a lie, don't you think at least one of them would have "spilled the beans" and admitted the truth before he died?
25. When discussing the death of Jesus, many Christians apply the term *substitutionary*. What does *substitutionary* mean when referring to the death of Jesus? He took my place?
26. How did Christ's resurrection qualify Him for all authority? Would you agree that by winning the great controversy, Jesus Christ has earned the right to be crowned as King forever and ever. (Philippians 2:5-11) How are we supposed to be involved in finishing the great controversy?

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 69.2.

27. The Bible makes it clear that Christ died for our sins. Who is involved? Are we in any way responsible for the fact that Jesus was "forsaken" by the Father?
28. The Bible study guide suggests that as humans we exist for one purpose: To glorify "the

eternal Three-in-One.” (*Teachers Bible Study Guide*, 172) That is surely better than self-glorification which seems to be the aim of so many humans. But, didn’t Christ also create us for fellowship with Himself? He loves us; He came in the evenings to walk with Adam and Eve. He cannot wait to establish once again that kind of a relationship with humans.

29. Without a doubt, the most important portion of Scripture is that dealing with the life and death of Jesus Christ. So, what can we do to make it more meaningful in our own lives?

**It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones.** As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 83.4. [Bold type is added.]

30. In order to understand something of the meaning of Christ’s death, we must realize that He had to experience the results of sin in order to demonstrate the truth of God’s words spoken back in the Garden of Eden: That sin leads to death. (Genesis 2:17) Satan had claimed that was a lie. (Genesis 3:1-4) Who are we going to believe? Did Jesus actually die of sin—the second death mentioned in Revelation? What is the difference between the first death and the second death? What actually happened as God the Father gradually separated “His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved son”?

[In Gethsemane] God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour’s agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.—*Ibid.* 693.2.

[On Calvary] amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father’s acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father’s favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.—*Ibid.* 756.3. [Content in brackets is added.]

31. Sin has fatally changed us. We cannot exist in the presence of God in our sinful condition. What does the crucifixion of Christ and His death on the cross do to change our condition?

By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.—*Ibid.* 764.1.

32. How can we be certain that we have chosen the side of Christ in the great controversy and not the side of Satan?

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