

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 27

The purpose of this last lesson in the study of the book of Luke is to look back at the major characters found in the pages of the Gospel and seek to discover facts about their lives after the resurrection and ascension of the LORD. We will begin with Pilate.

The Death of Pilate, Who Condemned Jesus

From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII

And when Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Romans, was laboring under a grievous disease, and understanding that there was at Jerusalem a certain physician, Jesus by name, who by a single word cured all infirmities, he, not knowing that the Jews and Pilate had put Him to death, ordered a certain friend of his named Volusianus: Go as quickly as possible across the seas; and thou shalt tell Pilate, my servant and friend, to send me this physician, that he may restore me to my former health. And this Volusianus, having heard the emperor's command, immediately departed, and came to Pilate, as he had been commanded. And he related to the same Pilate what had been entrusted to him by Tiberius Caesar, saying: Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Romans, thy master, having heard that in this city there is a physician who by his word alone heals infirmities, begs thee earnestly to send him to him for the curing of his infirmity. Pilate, hearing this, was very much afraid, knowing that through envy he had caused Him to be put to death. Pilate answered the same messenger thus, saying: This man was a malefactor, and a man who drew to himself all the people; so a council of the wide men of the city was held, and I caused him to be crucified. And this messenger returning to his inn, met a certain woman named Veronica, who had been a friend of Jesus; and he said: O woman, a certain physician who was in this city, who cured the sick by a word alone, why have the Jews put him to death? And she began to weep, saying: Ah, me! My lord, my God and my Lord, whom Pilate for envy delivered, condemned, and ordered to be crucified. Then he, being exceedingly grieved, said: I am vehemently grieved that I am unable to accomplish that for which my lord had sent me. And Veronica said to him: When my Lord was going about preaching, and I, much against my will, was deprived of His presence, I wished His picture to be painted for me, in order that, while I was deprived of His presence, the figure of His picture might at least afford me consolation. And when I was carrying the canvas to the painter to be painted, my Lord met me, and asked whether I was going. And when I had disclosed to Him the cause of my journey, He asked of me the cloth, and gave it back to me impressed with the image of His venerable face. Therefore, if thy lord will devoutly gaze upon His face, he shall obtain forthwith the benefit of health. And he said to her: Is a picture of such a sort procurable by gold or silver? She said to him: No; but by the pious influence of devotion. I shall therefore set out with thee, and shall carry the picture to be seen by Caesar, and shall come back again.

Volusianus therefore came with Veronica to Rome, and said to Tiberius the emperor: Jesus, whom thou hast been longing for, Pilate and the Jews have delivered to an

unjust death, and have thorough envy affixed to the gibbet of the cross. There has therefore come with me a certain matron, bringing a picture of Jesus himself; and if thou wilt devoutly look upon it, thou shall immediately obtain the benefit of thy health. Caesar therefore ordered the way to be strewn with silk cloths, and the picture to be presented to him; and as soon as he had looked upon it, he retained his former health.

Pontius Pilate, therefore, by the command of Caesar, is taken and brought through to Rome. Caesar, hearing that Pilate had arrived at Rome, was filled with exceeding fury against him, and caused him to be brought to him. But Pilate brought down with the seamless tunic of Jesus; and he wore it on him in presence of the emperor. And as soon as the emperor saw him, he laid aside all his anger, and forthwith rose up to meet him. Nor was he able to speak harshly to him in anything; and he who seemed so terrible and fierce in his absence, now in his present is somehow found to be mild. And when he had sent him away, immediately he blazed out against him terribly, crying out that he was a wretch, inasmuch as he had not at all shown him the fury of his heart. And immediately he made him be called back, swearing and declaring that he was the son of death, and that it was infamous that he should live upon the earth. And as soon as he saw him, he forthwith saluted him, and threw away all the ferocity of his mind. All wondered; and he himself wondered that he should thus blaze out against Pilate when he was absent, and that while he was present he could say nothing to him roughly. The, by a divine impulse, or perhaps by the advice of some Christian, he caused him to be stripped of that tunic, and immediately resumed against him his former ferocity of mind. And when at this the emperor wondered very much, it was told him that that tunic had belonged to the Lord Jesus. Then the emperor ordered him to be kept in prison, until he should deliberate in a council of the wise men what ought to be done him. And a few days after, sentence was therefore passed upon Pilate, that he should be condemned to the most disgraceful death. Pilate, hearing this, killed himself with his own knife, and by such a death ended his life.

When Caesar knew of the death of Pilate, he said: Truly he has died by a most disgraceful death, whom his own hand has not spared. He is therefore bound to a great mass, and sunk into the river Tiber. But malignant and filthy spirits in his malignant and filthy body, all rejoicing together, kept moving themselves in the waters, and in a terrible manner brought lightnings and tempests, thunders and hail-storms, in the air, so that all men were kept in horrible fear. Wherefore the Romans, drawing him out of the river Tiber, in derision carried him down to Vienna, and sunk him in the river Rhone. For Vienna is called, as it were *Via Gehennae*, the way of Gehenna, because it was then a place of cursing. But there evil spirits were present, working the same things in the same place. Those men therefore, not enduring such a visitation of demons, removed froth themselves that vessel of malediction, and sent him to be buried in the territory of Losania. And they, seeing that they were troubled by the aforesaid visitations, removed him from themselves, and sunk him in a certain pit surrounded by mountains, where to this day, according to the account of some, certain diabolical machinations are said to bubble up.

The Fate of Some of the Lord's Followers

James

The only Apostle whose death the Bible records is James (Acts 12:2). King Herod had James put to death "with the sword", likely a reference to beheading.

The circumstances of the death of the other Apostles are based only on church traditions, so we should not put too much weight on any of the other accounts.

Peter

The most commonly accepted church tradition states that the Apostle Peter was crucified upside-down on an x-shaped cross, in Rome, in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy (John 21:18).

Following are the most popular "traditions" in regard to the deaths of the other Apostles:

Matthew

Matthew suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.

John

John faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The Apostle John was later freed and returned to what is now modern-day Turkey. He died as an old man, the only Apostle to die peacefully.

James

James, the brother of Jesus (not officially an Apostle), the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When his enemies discovered that he survived the fall, they beat him to death with a club. It was the same pinnacle that Satan had taken Jesus to during the temptation.

Bartholomew

Bartholomew, also known as **Nathanael**, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed in present-day Turkey and was martyred for his preaching in Armenia when he was flayed to death by a whip.

Andrew

Andrew, the brother of Peter, was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers, Andrew's body was tied to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: "I have long desired and expected this

happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it.” He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he died.

Thomas

Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church there.

Matthais

Matthias, the Apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded.

Paul

Paul/Saul was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in AD 67.

Many traditions regarding the other Apostles abound as well, but none with reliable historical or traditional support. How the Apostles died is not so important. What is important is the fact that they were all willing to die for their faith. The disciples would have known if Jesus had not been resurrected. Few will die for something that is known to be a lie. The fact that all the Apostles were willing to die a horrible death, refusing to renounce their faith in Christ, is tremendous evidence that they had truly witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Caiaphas was high priest for 18 years, AD 18-36. The Caiaphas family tomb was accidentally discovered by workers constructing a road in a park just south of the Old City of Jerusalem. Archaeologists were hastily called to the scene. When they examined the tomb, they found 12 ossuaries (limestone bone boxes) containing the remains of 63 individuals. The most beautifully decorated of the ossuaries was inscribed with the name “Joseph son of Caiaphas.” It was the full name of the high priest who arrested Jesus as documented by Josephus (*Antiquities* 18:2, 2; 4, 3). Inside were the remains of a 60-year-old male, almost certainly those of the Caiaphas of the New Testament. This remarkable discovery has, for the first time, provided the physical remains of an individual named in the Bible who interacted with Jesus.



Resignation of Caiaphas as High Priest

To the Sanhedrim Regarding the Resurrection of Jesus

To You, Masters of Israel:

“As I have made a former defense to you, and you have approved the same, I feel in duty bound to communicate to you some facts that have come to my knowledge since that communication.

"A few days after the execution of Jesus of Nazareth the report of his resurrection from the dead became so common that I found it necessary to investigate it, because the excitement was more intense than before, and my own life as well as that of Pilate was in danger. I sent for Malkus, the captain of the royal city guard, who informed me he knew nothing personally, as he had placed Isham in command of the guard. But from what he could learn from the soldiers the scene was awe-inspiring, and the report was so generally believed that it was useless to deny it. He thought my only chance was to suppress it among the soldiers, and have John and Peter banished to Crete, or arrested and imprisoned, and if they would not be quiet, to treat them as I had treated Jesus. He said that all the soldiers he had conversed with were convinced that Jesus was resurrected by supernatural power and was still living, and that he was no human being, for the light, and the angels, and the dead that came out of their graves all went to prove that something had happened that never occurred on earth before.

"He said that John and Peter were spreading it all over the country, and that if Jesus would appear at the head of a host, and declare for the king of the Jews, he believed all the Jews would fight for him, I sent for the lieutenant, who gave a lengthy account of the occurrence that morning, all of which I suppose you have learned, and will investigate. From this I am convinced that something transcending the laws of nature took place that morning, that cannot be accounted for upon natural laws. I find it useless to try to get any of the soldiers to deny it, for they are so excited that they cannot be reasoned with. I regret that I had the soldiers placed at the tomb, for the very things that they were to prevent they have helped to establish.

"After questioning the soldiers and officers to my satisfaction, my mind being so disturbed that I could neither eat nor sleep, I sent for John and Peter. They came, and brought Mary and Joanna, who are the women that went to embalm Jesus' body the morning of the resurrection, as it is called. They were very interesting as they related the circumstances.

"Mary says that when they went day was just breaking. They met the soldiers returning from the sepulcher, and saw nothing strange until they came to the tomb, and found it was empty, The stone that covered the sepulcher was rolled to one side, and two men dressed in flowing white were sitting, one at each end of the sepulcher. Mary asked them where her Lord was. They said, 'He is risen from the dead. Did he not tell you He would rise the third day and show himself to the people, to prove that he was the Lord of life?' Go tell his disciples, said they.

"Joanna said she saw but one man; but this discrepancy must have been due to their excitement, because they say they were much alarmed. They both say that as they returned they met the Master, who told them that he was the resurrection and the life. All that will accept shall be resurrected from the second death, 'We fell at his feet, all bathed in tears, and when we rose up he was gone.'

"Both these women wept for joy while relating these circumstances, and John shouted aloud, which made me tremble in every limb, for I could not help thinking that something that was the exclusive work of God had occurred, but what it all meant was a great mystery to me. It might be, I said, that God had sent this message by the mouth of this stranger; it might be that he was the seed of the woman, and we his people had executed him.

"I asked John and Peter if they could give me any further evidence in regard to this man; that I wished to be informed of his private history. Peter said that Jesus passed by where he was, and bade him follow him, and he felt attracted to him, but at first it was more

through curiosity than anything in the man; that he soon became acquainted with Mary, who told him that he was her son, and related to him the strange circumstances of his birth, and that she was convinced that he was to be the king of the Jews. She spoke of many strange things concerning his life, which made Peter feel more interested in him than he would have been otherwise.

"He said that Jesus was a man so pleasant in his character, and so like a child in innocence, that no one could help liking him after he got acquainted with him; that though he seemed to be stern and cold, he was not so in reality; that he was exceedingly kind, especially to the poor; that he would make any sacrifice for the sick and needy, and would spare no effort to impart knowledge to anyone that would call on him, and that his knowledge was so profound that he had seen him interrogated by the most learned doctors of the law, and he always gave the most perfect satisfaction, and that the sopher or scribes, and the Hillelites, and Shammaites were afraid to open their mouths in his presence. They had attacked him so often and been repelled that they shunned him as they would a wolf; but when he had repelled them he did not enjoy the triumph as they did over others of whom they had gotten the ascendancy. As to his private life, he seemed not to be a man of pleasure, nor of sorrow. He mingled with society to benefit it, and yet took no part at all in what was going on.

"I had heard many tell of what occurred when he was baptized, and from what his mother told me I was watching for a display of his divine power, if he had any, for I knew he could never be king of the Jews unless he did have help from on high. Once when we were attending a marriage-feast, the wine gave out, and his mother told him of it. He said to the men to fill up some water-pots that were sitting near, and they put in nothing but water, for I watched them, but when they poured it out it was wine. It was tasted by all at the feast, and when the master found it out he called for Jesus to honor him, but he had disappeared.

"It seemed that he did not want to be popular, and this spirit displeased us, for we knew if he was to be king of the Jews he must become popular with the Jews. His behavior angered his mother, for she was doing all she could to bring him into notice, and to make him popular among the people. The people could not help liking him when they saw him. Another peculiarity was that in his presence everyone felt safe. There seemed to be an almighty power pervading the air wherever he went so that everyone felt secure, and believed that no harm could befall them if Jesus were present.

"As we were in our fishing-boat, I saw Jesus coming out toward us, walking on the water. I knew that if he could make the waves support him, he could me also. I asked him if I might come to him; he said to me to come. But when I saw the waves gathering around me, I began to sink, and asked him to help me! He lifted me up, and told me to have faith in God.

"On another occasion, we were sailing on the sea, and there was a great storm. It blew at a fearful rate, and all on board thought they would be lost. We awakened the master, and when he saw the raging of the storm, he stretched out his hand and said, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased to blow. The thunder stopped. The lightnings withdrew, and the billowing sea seemed as quiet as a babe in its mother's arms - all done in one moment of time.

"This I saw with my own eyes, and from that time I was convinced that he was not a common man. Neither did he work by enchantment like the Egyptian thaumaturgists, for

in all their tricks they never attack the laws of nature. In vain might they order the thunder to hush, or the winds to abate, or the lightnings to cease their flashing.

"Again, I saw this man while we were passing from Jericho, There was a blind man, who cried out to him for mercy, and Jesus said to me, "Go, bring him near," and when I brought him near Jesus asked him what he wanted. He said he wanted to see again. Jesus said, "Receive thy sight," when he was not near enough for Jesus to lay his hands upon him or use any art.

"Thus were all his miracles performed. He did not act as the Egyptian necromancers, They use vessels, such as cups, bags, and jugs, and many other things to deceive. Jesus used nothing but his simple speech in such a way that all could understand him, and it seemed as if the laws of nature were his main instruments of action, and that nature was as obedient to him as a slave to his master.

"I recall another occasion when a young man was dead, and Jesus loved his sisters. One of them went with Jesus to the tomb. He commanded it to be uncovered. The sister said, "Master, by this time he is offensive; he has been dead four days." Jesus said, "Only have faith," and he called the young man by name, and he came forth out of the tomb, and is living today,' and Peter proposed that I should see him for myself, "Thus argue Peter and John, If Jesus had such power over nature and nature's law, and power over death in others, he would have such power over death that he could lay down his life and take it up again, as he said he would do. As he proposes to bring hundreds of witnesses to prove all he says, and much more - witnesses whose veracity cannot be doubted - and as I had heard many of these things before from different men, both friends and foes (and although these things are related by his friends - that is, the friends of Jesus - yet these men talk like men of truth, and their testimony corroborates other evidence that I have from other sources, that convinces me that his is something that should not be rashly dealt with). And seeing the humble trust and confidence of these men and women, besides, - as John says, thousands of others equally strong in their belief, - it throws me into great agitation. I feel some dreadful foreboding - a weight upon my heart. I cannot feel as a criminal from the fact that I was acting according to my best judgment with the evidence before me. I feel that I was acting in defense of God and my country, which I love better than my life, and if I was mistaken, I was honest in my mistake, As we teach that honesty of purpose gives character to the action, on this basis I shall try to clear myself of any charge, yet there is a conscious fear about my heart, so that I have no rest day or night. I feel sure that if I should meet Jesus I would fall dead at his feet; and it seems to me if I went out I should be sure to meet him.

"In this state of conscious dread I remained investigating the Scriptures to know more about the prophecies concerning this man, but found nothing to satisfy my mind. I locked my door and gave the guards orders to let no one in without first giving me notice, While thus engaged, with no one in the room but my wife and Annas, her father, when I lifted up my eyes, behold Jesus of Nazareth stood before me.

"My breath stopped, my blood ran cold, and I was in the act of falling, when he spoke and said, 'Be not afraid, it is I' You condemned me that you might go free. This is the work of my Father. Your only wrong is, you have a wicked heart. This you must repent of.

"This last lamb you have slain is the one that was appointed before the foundation. This sacrifice is made for all men. Your other lambs were for those who offered them. This is for all. This is the last. It is for you, if you will accept it. I died that you and all mankind might be saved, At this he looked at me with such melting tenderness that it seemed to

me I was nothing but tears, and my strength was all gone. I fell on my face at his feet as one that was dead. When Annas lifted me up Jesus was gone, and the door still locked. No one could tell when or where he went.

"So noble Masters, I do not feel that I can officiate as priest any more. If this strange personage is from God, and should prove to be the Savior we have looked for so long, and I have been the means of crucifying him, I have no further offerings to make for sin; but I will wait and see how these things will develop. If he proves to be the ruler that we are looking for, they will soon develop into something more grand in the future. His glory will increase. His influence will spread wider and wider, until the whole earth shall be full of his glory, and all the kingdoms of the world shall be his dominion. Such are the teachings of the prophets on this subject.

"Therefore you will appoint Jonathan, or some one, to fill the holy place."

Conclusion

The Gospel of Luke contains the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Paul during the time that he was still a Pharisee. With that in mind. It is easy to understand why many of the personal stories of Jesus that are included in the other Gospels are missing from this one. However, this Gospel contains unique information within its pages to identify the year of Jesus' birth and death and compare them to recent archeological discoveries and established world historical records. Luke will write another letter to Theophilus soon after the completion of this Gospel. In that letter, Luke will tell the story of Paul's conversion and ministry as the Apostle out of season and compares it to that of Simon Peter.