

# The King Exchanged For A Criminal: Jesus is King – Week 19

## HOOK

**Illustration:** By the time the fire department was called that Friday morning, it was already too late. When the three firetrucks arrived at the scene, the building was passed the point of being saved. Violent criminals were holding up inside, and the police had surrounded the building. Those inside had been shooting at the gathered law enforcement, but that had stopped by the time the firefighters were at the scene. Something had gone wrong inside and a fire had broken out. The windows were shattering from the heat, and the ceiling was collapsing one piece at a time. The fire chief made the call not to enter the building. By now the criminals had been overwhelmed by the smoke and were dead or dying inside. A news helicopter hovered in the air filming the black smoke pouring through the roof and the idle circle of onlookers behind the police line.

Everyone stood in shock as a lone police officer suddenly sprinted past the barricade toward the burning building. Haddock James had been off duty and with his family when we had been called in. The front door easily collapsed with Haddock's first kick. He dropped to his knees and crawled beneath the thick, blinding smoke. Breathing was difficult, and his sweat soaked the inside of his vest and uniform. The further he moved from safety, the hotter the air became. Part of the ceiling had collapsed blocking him from the next room. However, he could see between the rubble the bodies of the perpetrators who were now victims of their own recklessness. With great effort and incurring burns of his own, he forced his body through the fallen rafters. The heat of the air burned his throat. Haddock rushed to the first body. Dead. The second and third were the same, but the fourth had a pulse.

The fugitive was unconscious, bleeding terribly, and his legs were pinned under a beam. The hero shoved his shoulder into it. Pieces of the ceiling and glowing cinders fell onto him from the roof. The hot shards worked their way under the collar of his jacket sending shocks of pain down his neck and back. Again, he pressed his shoulder against it; Again and again.

Finally, the prisoner was free. The police officer dislodged a pistol from the victim's fingers, and straining, lifted the limp criminal onto his shoulders. He turned to the left and right looking for an exit. He could see a window in the next room and lunged forward operating in sheer adrenaline. Haddock's vision tunneled. He could only see the daylight.

Those outside reported they could see his figure through the smoke coming toward the window. They cheered! The figure was carrying someone, but suddenly Haddock's silhouette collapsed. They squinted. Why wasn't he emerging? He was so close to daylight, to oxygen, to salvation. What they couldn't see was deep in the smoke, the criminal had come to consciousness. He woke up on the strong shoulders of the policeman. He saw the badge and the waiting law enforcement outside. Justice had surrounded him and was demanding complete surrender. In a last-ditch effort at freedom, he had grabbed his savior around the throat and strangled him. The ceiling caved in on top of them both. From the perspective of those outside, Haddock was a hero, but he wasn't fast enough to escape before the building collapsed.

## INTRO

Humanity, believing it to be freedom, has plunged itself into rebellion against God. (C.S. Lewis) **“Human history is the long, terrible story of man trying to find something besides God to make him happy” and free.** So sovereign God, in righteousness, spoke a just curse over our representatives, Adam and Eve. And God in righteousness spoke a loving, merciful promise.

- **Genesis 3:14b-15** – *...on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*
  - Out of great grace, God offers mercy and promises victory. The Savior will be human. He’ll be struck by the tempter with a less than fatal wound, but He’ll strike the prince of darkness with a lethal blow.

## The Path of God’s Promises (just a few of the many)

- **Genesis 3:14-15** – His first promise of mercy and grace.
- **Genesis 12:1-2** – God continues His promises begun in the garden.
  - Out of God’s grace, He will bless the rebels through the seed of Abraham.
  - His impact will be worldwide.
- **Genesis 49:8** – Judah is the chosen tribe and the savior will be a king.
- **2 Samuel 7:12-16** – From David’s family, He’ll reign forever: Human but divine.
- **Numbers 24:9** – He’ll be identifiable because His birth will be marked by a star.
- **Isaiah 7:14** – He’ll be identifiable by being born in an impossible way.
- **Micah 5:2** – He’ll be born in a specific but unusual place.
- **Deuteronomy 18:28** – He’ll be like Moses: prophet, priest, judge, king.
- **Psalms 22** – He’ll be mocked, suffer, and his clothes gambled for.
- **Daniel 9:24-26** – He’ll die at a specific time.
- **Isaiah 53** – He’ll be pierced and die for sin, but death can’t hold Him.
- **Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19, 26:2** – Four self-prophesies of death.
  - Where, when, how, who, why

## BOOK

**Romans 5:6-8** - *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

## LOOK

Matthew has three major themes. **1)** Jesus is the King who surpasses David **2)** King Jesus came to break the curse of sin & death. **3)** King Jesus offers entrance to His kingdom – redemption - to anyone, especially the unlikely.

- All are present tonight, but our focus will be on the third. **Jesus' love and grace is profoundly shown by who He offers redemption to.** **Who were the unlikely?**

### Overview of [Matt. 26-27](#)

- Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, Peter's denial foretold.
- Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, Betrayal, and Arrest. The disciples abandon Him.
- Judas (Jesus' Ahithophel) regrets his action and throws the 30 pieces of silver into the temple. He, then, commits suicide by hanging himself (echoing [Zech. 11](#) and [2 Sam. 17](#)).
- Jesus is tried by the high priest/council where false witnesses were brought in.
- Eavesdropping on the sham court case, Peter denies knowing Jesus (fulfilling Jesus' prophecy) and invokes curses on himself if he's lying.

They, unable to legally put anyone to death, plotted to have the Romans execute Him for them. They took Jesus and presented Him to governor Pilot as an insurgent against Rome.

Pilot was commissioned to govern Judea by Roman appointment. It was his job to keep peace. Any uprisings were his job to quell or he'd suffer punishment. But He finds himself in a strange position. He believes Jesus to be innocent, but the people are demanding His death. Pilot asks Him specifically if He is the King of the Jews. Jesus responds, "*You have said so.*" ([27:11](#)) Other than this, Jesus continues to be silent leaving him in awe. He's had Jesus scourged hoping it would satisfy them, but they've only escalated to the point of insurgence. Here, he comes up with a strategy.

### [MATTHEW 27:15-26](#)

[v.15](#) *Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.*

- Barabbas was a notorious criminal who had committed robbery, murder, and tried to lead a revolt against Rome. He was sentenced to be crucified for committing the very crimes Jesus (who was innocent) was accused of.
- One of Pilot's strategies to win favor with the people is by annually setting free one of their prisoners at the Passover feast. **Perhaps he can free Jesus this way?**

**v.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.*

- Pilot sees why they’re plotting to have Jesus murdered. The religious leaders basked in their self-righteousness and held power over the Jews. Jesus threatened their power, so they became envious and hated Jesus.
  - **Ex. Pharoah:** God, and His servant Moses, threatened his sovereignty over the Israelites. Pharoah only became harder towards God but was powerless against God’s sovereign will and power.

**v.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.”*

- What’s happening is so cosmic that even a pagan unrelated to the court case had a disturbing dream of Jesus’ innocence. (More happenings to come.)

**v.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.”*

- This is the power the wicked chief priests/elders liked to feel over the people.
- **BUT**, we can’t see the crowd as innocent and simply deceived by the leaders. We’re seeing the fulfillment of Zechariah’s story (from last week). The sheep have become wicked themselves and it’s bubbling to the surface.
- **Just like the criminal in the opening story, they are determined to murder the very one who has come to save them.**

**This is a critical moment.**

**v.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!”*

- **Irony:** A pagan who prays to Caesar as god recognizes the innocence of Jesus while the Jews who are chosen by the living God to whom God gave the law, prophets, and promises pronounce Him guilty and call for His death sentence.

**This is a highly symbolic and critical moment.** This mob reveals the rebellion of every man and woman’s heart when pressed to the limit. **That would have been us!**

**Before our hearts experienced the metamorphosis of atonement...** Before we went through the chrysalis of spiritual death and resurrection with Christ, our greatest “goodness” was only a façade, a mask covering our sin and selfishness.

- **Don't we want the same thing?** Just like the crowd shouted for the freedom of the rebel Barabbas, **we grapple for our own autonomy.** We want freedom FROM authority. “No one can tell me what to do with MY life!”

**v.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.”*

- This was a symbol of finding no guilt in Jesus and putting responsibility wholly on the crowd. **THEY are responsible.**
- Pilate was the last resistance to sin having full reign over the situation. Jesus is being handed over to abuse and murder by the very people He came to save.
- **Those in the crowd will now be accountable to God for the murder of His Son.**

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

- Think of Abel’s blood crying out to God against Cain. This is the most terrifying statement imaginable, but it’s the actually fate all who reject Jesus.
- **John 3:17-19** – *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*
- They confirm their responsibility with their own mouths and invoke a curse on themselves with unimaginable severity. **If there are degrees of God’s judgement and punishment in hell, how horrifying would the fate be for those who called for the death of His Beloved Son, the Jewel of Heaven, the Innocent Lamb?**

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

- **What’s going on with the Barabbas-for-Jesus exchange?** He became the substitute for Barabbas’ crimes, and Barabbas was freed, and He became the substitute for our sin, so we could be free.

## Then, Matthew hits us with a barrage of kingly symbolism echoing his themes.

**Matthew 27:27-31** - 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.

**Matthew 27:32-44** – Story of Simon of Cyrene and offering Jesus stale wine.

**Matthew 27:35-44** - 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.

**Matthew 27:45-50** - 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?"

- Jesus is quoting **Psalm 22** of David where David feels completely alone but finds hope that he hasn't been forsaken. His Lord has never left him.
- **Matthew 27:47-49** – Some think Jesus is calling on Elijah & bring Him sour wine.

### **Side Note: Was Jesus forsaken by the Father at the Cross?**

- Jesus was AS forsaken as David was. Not at all.
- The only verse used of separationism is from **Ps. 22:1** – a prophetic psalm.
- Separationism denies the interpermeation of the Trinity.
- Separationism denies the immutability of God.
- **Jer. 16:17** – God doesn't look away from sin.
- **John 16:32** – The Father is continually with Jesus
- **Eph 5:2** – Jesus' offering/sacrifice was a sweet-smelling aroma to the Father. The Father who said, "this is my beloved Son" was never so pleased with Jesus than at the cross.
- **Ps.22:24** – David opens with his feelings of being separated from God but closes with "nor has He hidden His face from him." Jesus wasn't forsaken at all. Quite the opposite.

**Matthew 27:50** - And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

- **Spoken in a way that shows Jesus was in complete control.**

- He didn't lose His life; He gave it. All his detractors – the chief priests, the crowd, the armies of hell – believed they had won, but God had predestined it all according to His will for His greatest victory.

**Acts 4:24-28** – (Prayed TO God) *And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,*

*'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'—*

*27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

**Matthew 27:51-54** - *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!"*

- Nature, the spiritual realm, the dead, and even the hearts of the Gentiles respond to this cosmic event. King Jesus the Christ has died.

## STORY ARC OF THE CROWD

You know the end of the story which we'll cover at length next week, but I'd like to **follow a certain story arc** that has taken place here in front of us over the past weeks. It's a subtle one, but clearly and beautifully announces Matthew's themes of **1) Jesus broke the curse of sin/death AND 2) Jesus offers redemption to the unlikely.**

**Context:** This was the week of Passover. Tens of thousands of Jews had traveled from around the world to be in Jerusalem this week. Here are three sightings of the "crowd" at the end of Jesus' life, and it's made up of a majority of the same people.

1. **Matthew 21:8-11** – (Jesus was riding into Jerusalem riding in on a donkey as prophesied in **Zechariah 9:9**.) *Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” 10 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” 11 And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

2. **Matthew 27:24-25** – *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!”*

- **What happened to this wicked crowd under the severest of God’s punishment?**

3. **Acts 2:5-6,14,22-24, 32, 36-39, 41** – *5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.*

*14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.*

*22 ...Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **YOU** crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.*

*32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

*36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **YOU** crucified.”*

*37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 **For the promise is for YOU and FOR YOUR CHILDREN** and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

*41 So those who received his word were baptized, and **there were added that day about three thousand souls.***

- **Can you remember someone else who invoked curses on himself? Peter!**

They couldn’t be saved unless Jesus had given His life for them. When they cried out “Crucify Him,” they meant evil. But what they meant for evil, God meant for good. And God’s “meant” was bigger than their “meant.”

It was through their wicked action PLUS God's loving mercy (not receiving the punishment we deserve) and grace (receiving blessing we don't deserve) they were saved. His "blood on their heads" was a curse unto damnation, yet through the loving cross of Jesus, their salvation would be through His redemptive "blood on their heads." The spotless Lamb they would sacrifice would provide the blood to be painted on the spiritual doorposts of their hearts so God's infinite wrath would "Pass over" them.

**What kind of love is this? WHO is like our God?!**

**John 10:11** - *I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (The mutinous, biting sheep)*

**Romans 5:6-8** - *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Matthew has three major themes. **1)** Jesus is the King **2)** King Jesus came to break the curse of sin & death. **3)** King Jesus offers redemption to anyone, even the unlikely.

- Peter, who denied Jesus three times was unlikely.
- The Roman soldier was unlikely.
- Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, was unlikely.
- The crowd was certainly unlikely.
- You and I were unlikely. Jesus left His throne, became flesh, and died for **US**.

## TOOK

**Spurgeon Illustration** (sermon: Love's Commendation): When sinful mankind rebelled against God, it was necessary and right for God to punish sin. God who is holy and cannot lie spoke that the one who sins must be cursed to die, and He will, by no means, clear the guilty. For God to ransom His people and reclaim them from death, someone else would have to die.

A daydream: Imagine God calling a parliament in heaven. What if the countless thousands of seraphim, cherubim, flaming spirits & elders gathered to hear God's voice and an awful question.

"Man has sinned", God may have said. "He stands opposed to Me, and there is no pardon for his crime. **Is there anyone who can carry the necessary suffering and death? Further, who can faultlessly endure the crushing weight of My infinite wrath against sin?** This is the only way to free my people from the curse. **Who shall it be?"**

I can only imagine all of heaven holding its breath. Every soul present, who would be ready to take flight at the direction of their Creator. Imagine the mightiest of the mighty, who could shake worlds should their Lord command it, being motionless in self-reflection. Gabriel, the great messenger unable to speak. The warrior, Michael, who valiantly stood against the armies of hell

frozen in his place. There's nothing he wouldn't give for his Lord but knew he could never bear the guilt of the world upon his shoulders. **Who was worthy?** No one was found who could fill such an impossible commission. They knew they were powerless to redeem, to ransom mankind from sin.

I can't imagine they would have conceived God Himself would take on flesh! **How could they even imagine that the mighty Maker of the skies would bow His awesome head and sink into the grave?** But, the Second Person of the Godhead, the eternal Word, the Son of God, stood up from His throne and said, "**I will.**" He then took off His mighty robes of eternal glory to dress Himself in the weakness of human flesh. He humbled Himself to be a slave, setting aside glory to offer grace... not for good people, but for rebels. "**I will,**" He said. "**I will die.**"

**I enjoy imagining the shock?!** Every eye might have been wide. Never could they have conceived such sacrifice and love. Therefore, **God would be both just and the justifier.**

**Romans 5:6-8** - *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

It would take a lot to shock the angels. They had seen worlds created and light come into being. They had heard the Voice Over Creation speak and stars were born. Yet, they had never witnessed anything like this. **How much deeper their understanding of God's character must have become when they witnessed this? Will the King of Kings become a slave? Will the everlasting God endure death? Will Holiness become sin so the sinful could live again? Would the Creator become a man and die?**

**Elevate, do you ever stand in awe? Are you ever shaken to your core by the love of God? Does His sacrifice ever leave you wondering at His grace? How can we treat the incarnation and crucifixion as a small thing? Who is like our God who, yet while we were still sinners, died for us? Before we knew Him, before we ever did anything righteous or evil, He loved us that much.**

**Challenge:** Write the next seven dates on the top of the next 7 pages of your Elevate notebook. Have a bible study during your God-time on each portion of **Matt.26-28**.

- Day 1 - Matt. 26:1-29
- Day 2 - Matt. 26:30-56
- Day 3 - Matt. 26:57-27:10
- Day 4 - Matt. 27:11-31
- Day 5 - Matt. 27:32-61
- Day 6 - Matt. 27:62-28:15
- Day 7 - Matt. 28:16-20