



**FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**

# **“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 64”**

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**Pastor Darryl R. Curtis**

Family Life Baptist Church

909 West Saginaw Street

Lansing, Michigan 48915

Phone: (517) 393-9399

Email: [info@familylifebc.com](mailto:info@familylifebc.com)

Website: <http://www.familylifebc.com>

***Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.***



### The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 64

**Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-12, John 18:28-38**

**After saying this, Pilate went out again to the Jews and said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find this Man guilty of nothing.”**

Let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, we studied Jesus’ Jewish trials before Annas, Caiaphas and then the entire Sanhedrin. After the Jews found Jesus guilty of blasphemy for confessing to be the Christ, the Jewish leadership took Jesus to the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, in hopes of getting Pilate to crucify Jesus. At this point, the Biblical account of Jesus’ Passion pauses to recount the final activities of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, in the lection **Matthew 27:3-10**, which begins:

**When Judas, who had betrayed [Jesus], saw that Jesus was condemned, he was overcome with remorse. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders and said to them, “I have sinned by betraying the blood of an innocent man!”**

**“What does that matter to us?” they replied. “Deal with that yourself.”**

As a matter of objective fact, Judas’ betrayal of Jesus was no worse than Peter’s six denials of Jesus in the courtyard. Both Judas and Peter were forewarned that that which they were about to do was disloyal, but they both acted disrespectfully towards Jesus anyway. One might argue that since Judas was worse than Peter because Judas betrayed Jesus for money while Peter denied Jesus out of fear, but that argument assumes that cowardice is better than avarice. That assumption doesn’t actually hold water. At any rate, Peter shouldn’t have been afraid. There was no indication that there would have been any negative repercussions to Peter in the courtyard for just saying that he knew Jesus. No crowd was hunting Peter down to do something to him, and the guards clearly had the chance to arrest Peter for a real cause when he cut off the High Priest’s servant’s ear, and they did not. Jesus protected the disciples, and Peter was clearly not in danger.

When Peter realized that Jesus was watching him as he cursed and swore that he didn’t know Jesus, **Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:56-62, John 18:26-27** records:



Then Peter remembered what the Lord had told him: **“Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times,”** and, **“Before it crows the second time, you will deny Me three times.”**

**Peter went out and wept uncontrollably, with bitter tears.**

Peter’s tears showed his remorse for that which he said just as Judas’ words showed his remorse for that which he did. There was, however, one difference between Peter and Judas. Peter decided to face the music for that which he had done. He realigned himself with the disciples, visited Jesus’ empty tomb, and, after the resurrection, faced Jesus, apologized and was reunited with Him.

Judas made a completely different decision. The lection in **Matthew 27:3-10** continues:

**Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the temple, left, and went out and hung himself.**

Judas hung himself because although he had remorse, remorse is only part of repentance. Repentance involves having remorse for your action, taking responsibility for your action, resolving to not repeat your action, and repairing your action to the best of your ability. Judas chose to not take responsibility by facing Jesus and the other disciples, although Judas could have chosen to do so. Judas’ thinking was revealed in his very confession, in which he said, **“I have sinned by betraying the blood of an innocent man!”**

Judas confessed that Jesus was an innocent man. But even after seeing all of Jesus’ miracles, Judas did not acknowledge that Jesus was more than a man; Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Judas could have been saved from his sin. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that His mission as the Christ was not one of condemnation, but of love and forgiveness of sin, as **John 3:16-17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

Paul explains the outcome of Jesus’ mission more fully, in **Romans 8:1-4**:

**1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

**2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**

**3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,**

**4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Paul makes the point that God will not condemn Christians regardless of



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what sin we commit, as long as we believe in Jesus Christ and do not blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Now most Christians don't agree with Paul. Most Christians believe that if someone does something heinous enough, they cannot be saved. Timothy McVeigh, who blew up the Murrah Federal Building in Missouri, killing 168 people and injuring 450 more, is an example of someone that many Christians don't think could have been saved. But Jesus made it clear that even McVeigh could be saved when He saved the thief on the Cross. The thief's crimes were the same as those of Timothy McVeigh's, insurrection and murder, and the thief was saved even as he was in the process of being executed.

Understand that there is not little sin and big sin, but all sin is sin. **James 2:10-11 tells us:**

**10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**

**11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

Regardless of which law of God you choose to break, breaking any law makes you a sinner. It does not matter that you have never killed 168 people; if you have lived less than a perfect life in any way, you are just as sinful before God as Timothy McVeigh. We may compare ourselves to one another to establish who is better and who is worse, but, before God, the points that we give ourselves for being better than others will not count. As I said last week, our entrance into Heaven does not depend upon how well we compare to other people, but how well we compare to the absolute standard of sinlessness. But God, in His wisdom, developed the sacrificial system, and Jesus Christ's sacrifice satisfies the sentence of every single sinner.

Judas could have been forgiven. Judas could have reunited with the disciples and been in the Upper Room after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus came in and told them all, including the ones that fled while He was being arrested and the one that denied Him, "Peace be with you". But **Matthew 27:3-10** tells us why Judas was not saved:

**Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the temple, left, and went out and hung himself.**

It's not that Jesus' sacrifice was impotent to save Judas, but, as the Scripture says, Judas chose to hang himself rather than repent. Sinners are not lost because the Lord can or will not save them; sinners are lost because they refuse salvation.

You might have a lot of peer pressure in your life. All of your friends might laugh at you for being a Christian, for following the dictates and doctrines of Christ, and for curtailing your activities and choosing to spend a couple hours on Sunday morning listening to a boring old bald-headed dude talk about something that happened two thousand years ago rather than getting together with them



and having a few beers before the football game. And the rules. Why do you follow those old fogey rules? You've got to be kidding me. Don't get drunk and party? With all of the fun we have when we are high and fine as a Georgia pine? No sex outside of marriage? With all of these willing girls (or guys) around here?

Well, Christian, be careful. Peter sinned by denying the Christ, but he was saved because he was close enough to Jesus to repent. Judas sinned by betraying the Christ, but he was lost because he was not close enough to Jesus to repent. And that's the key to the situation. That's the difference. How close are you to Christ?

Some of us had a discussion after Church last Sunday about divorce. My wife and I have had the same type of marital problems that other people have, but if we can stay married until December 30<sup>th</sup> of this year, we will celebrate our 37<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. My brother, who was raised in the same house as me and who had the same parental influences as did I, has been divorced twice. Am I a better husband than he was? Probably not. Is Marie a better wife than the women that he married? Probably not. The Bible says that we are all sinners, so I'm a sinner too, just like everyone else. I once heard a preacher say that there are two kinds of sinners; the caught and the uncaught. It's just my good fortune that I happen to fall in the latter category.

Some years ago, I had a really good chance to divorce Marie, but two things stopped me. Now, I thought that the Lord would approve of my reason for divorcing her, because she wasn't supporting my ministry. Of course, I, being a Baptist, married a Catholic, and I guess that if I had really wanted a wife to support my ministry, I should have married one that was at least of the same denomination as me. But, that was in the past, and my ministry was in the present, so I decided to consult with the Lord to see if He would let me out of my mistake, although the mistake was my fault. I looked up divorce in my Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge, which is the book that I use to do topical studies in the Bible, and **Malachi 2:16** caught my eye. It says:

**16 "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."**

Gee, I said to myself, The Lord hates divorce. Not exactly that for which I was looking. As a preacher of the gospel, maybe I shouldn't do that which the Lord hates. Then, the Spirit spoke to me and said, "Not only that, but you would have to tell your dad that you are getting a divorce."

When I was a kid, Dad's brother got a divorce. I remember how disgusted Dad was with his brother for doing so. After looking at this one verse, I had both the Lord and Dad telling me not to get a divorce, regardless of the grounds that I thought that I had. So I asked the Lord to help me. "Lord", I prayed, "if you want me to stay married, make Marie receptive to our staying married when I call her



to discuss it. If she's not receptive, I'll take that as a sign that I can get divorced." So I called, talked to her, and the rest is history.

But, fortunately for me, like Peter, I was close enough to the Lord to repent. I had completed a study of the history of Jesus Christ; I was convinced that He actually lived, died and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and I considered that which He said as relevant advice for my life. When faced with a struggle, I consulted Him and tried to follow His instructions. Even now, I don't always follow through properly; sometimes I am too insecure to obey and I rationalize my disobedience and deny Jesus as Peter did. But eventually I get in enough trouble that I find myself, like Peter, weeping bitterly on my way back to Jesus to confess my sin and repent.

That's how those of us that commit sin stay saved; not by being perfect, but by confessing our sin and being repentant. We saved sinners believe in the reality of Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity for forgiveness, regardless of how stupidly we have acted. We live by **1John 1:8-9**, which says: **8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

People who are not saved are like Judas. They may know that they are wrong and they may have remorse, but they are not close enough to the Lord to return to Him and confess, repent and do better. So they refuse the Lord's grace, and rather than allowing the Lord to restore them after they repent as He did Peter, they remain in despair over that which they have done and may end up doing something self-destructive as did Judas. Judas didn't believe that Jesus would forgive him, and His unbelief was His undoing.

So let me ask you: When you do wrong, do you believe that the Lord will forgive you if you confess your sin to Him? Or do you act defensively, try to justify your disobedience, and endeavor to put up a good front in the vain hope that the Lord won't figure out that you're a sinner? Do you deny the truth, as did Peter, to maintain appearances for the crowd? If you do, I would advise you to spend some time in prayer and the study of the Word so that you can get closer to the Lord. You'll find that He is a merciful savior. **Psalms 103:12** tells us:

**12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

Do you understand this simile? Let me explain. Suppose you have an airplane with unlimited fuel, and can travel as far as you want. Let's say that you start travelling north. Eventually, you will get to the north pole and from there, wherever you go, you will be travelling south. Suppose you start travelling south. Eventually, you will get to the south pole and from there, wherever you go, you will be travelling north. North and south eventually meet at one pole or the other. But if you start travelling east, you will never reach the point that you will have to start travelling west, and if you start travelling west, you will never reach the point



that you will have to start travelling east. So, from the east, you never get to the west and from the west, you never get to the east. The simile is that once as the Lord removes the condemnation for your sin, you can never be condemned for that sin again. That is what being saved from our sins means. As long as we take our sins to Jesus and repent, whether we just commit regular sins like Peter, or we are as bad as Timothy McVeigh, like Judas, we will never be condemned.

But Judas didn't repent. Judas felt remorse, but he didn't repent. Judas didn't trust Jesus Christ enough to return to Him and repent. Judas believed that Jesus was an innocent man, but the fact is different, as **1 Timothy 2:5** tells us: **5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**

It's not enough to just believe in the history of Jesus Christ, Biblical or otherwise, but we have to also believe, as **John 20:31** tells us:

**31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**

So, repentance ultimately means that we confess our sins to the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust Him to clear our sins in Heaven with God, as the hymnologist said:

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' Blood and His Righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name  
On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

As the lection, **Matthew 27:3-10** continues:

**The chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It isn't legal to put these in the treasury since this is blood money."**

**(After discussing the matter they used the money to buy the potter's field as a burying ground for foreigners. That is why even today it is called the Field of Blood. In this way the words of Jeremiah the prophet were fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price at which He was valued by the sons of Israel, and used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.")**

It is very likely, that, in addition to fulfilling prophecy, Judas bought his own grave with the money that he received from betraying Jesus. We should be careful about how we disobey the Lord, because in doing so, we may be sowing the seeds of our own destruction.

After this episode, the Scripture returns to the discussion of Jesus' trials. **Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-3, John 18:28-38** continues:

**Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman judgment hall, where Jesus stood before the governor. Because it was early, they did not**



go into the judgment hall. (They didn't want to become defiled and be unable to eat the Passover.)

So Pilate went out to them. "Of what are you accusing this Man?" he asked them.

Pilate, as a professional judge, asked a pertinent question. Before you can judge a man, you have to know the nature of his crime. But the Jews condemned Jesus for identifying Himself as the Christ, and they knew that Pilate would not find that charge sufficient to condemn Jesus. So, they started out by asking Pilate to sign a blank check. The lection continues:

**Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-3, John 18:28-38**

**"If He were not a criminal," they answered, "we wouldn't have brought Him to you."**

Wrong answer. In the last lesson, I related the fact that there were three jurisdictions in the Palestine, those being the civil and political, controlled by Pilate and Herod, the financial, controlled by the tax collectors, and the religious, controlled by the Jewish religious hierarchy. From the answer that the Jews gave, Pilate immediately recognized that the prisoner's infraction was not a civil crime but a religious dispute, so Pilate deferred judgment to the religious authorities. The lection continues:

**Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-3, John 18:28-38**

**"Take Him and judge Him according to your law," Pilate replied.**

The Jewish leadership had already judged Jesus guilty, and had beaten Him severely, but their plan for Jesus was not just a beating, but death. As I mentioned in our last lesson, the Jewish leadership wanted Jesus executed, not stabbed in the back. Jesus professed that He was the Christ, and performed miracles worthy of His claim. In so doing, Jesus changed the religious landscape in Judaism, and the Jewish leaders wanted to change it back. They tried mocking Jesus in the many discussions that they had with Him in the Temple, but every debate that the Jewish leadership had with Jesus ended up badly for them.

The Jewish leadership needed a different venue for their challenge to Jesus than the debate stage. So their plan was to have the Roman procurator condemn Jesus and have Him crucified, which would enable them to sufficiently challenge Jesus' claims to be the Christ, as **Matthew 27:39-44, Mark 15:29-32, Luke 23:35-37 23:39-44** tells us:

**The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders mocked [Jesus].**

**"He 'saved' others," they said, "yet He can't save Himself."**

**"Let Him save Himself, if He's the Christ, the chosen One of God!"**

**"If He's the King of Israel, let the Messiah come down now from the cross so we may see and believe!"**

**"He trusted in God; let God deliver Him now if He wants Him—since He said, 'I'm the Son of God.' "**



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But Pilate was not a Jew, and was not particularly interested in participating with the plan of the Jewish leadership. Since Pilate was uncooperative, the Jews went to plan “B”, and began charging Jesus with insurrection, a charge which Pilate would not be able to ignore. The lection continues:

**Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-3, John 18:28-38**

**“We aren’t permitted to execute anyone,” the Jews responded. (In this way they were fulfilling what Jesus said about the kind of death He would suffer.) They began accusing [Jesus], saying, “We found this man subverting our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar. He says He’s the Messiah, a king.”**

The chief priests and elders continued making many accusations against Jesus. But [Jesus] made no reply.

**“Do You refuse to answer?” Pilate said. “Don’t You hear how many accusations they’re charging You with?”**

Jesus remained silent, not answering a single charge. The governor was astonished.

Jesus was an unusually restrained prisoner. But **Isaiah 53:7** tells us: **7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.**

Jesus is not participating in the drama of the Jewish leadership, but is rather doing the Will of God, sacrificing Himself for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is not guilty of any sin, but since Jesus is not trying to avoid execution, there is no reason for Him to protest the unfair accusations made against Him. In fact, the main point of the accusations made against Jesus is true; Jesus is the Messiah and the Messiah is a king. As Pilate registers Jesus’ calmness as a contrast to the frenetic, emotional, almost incoherent accusations of the Jews, Pilate is astonished by and more attracted to Jesus than to His accusers. Jesus’ demeanor makes Pilate wary of participating in a miscarriage of justice, so Pilate decides to question Jesus privately to get to the bottom of the situation, as the lection continues:

**Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-12, John 18:28-38**

Pilate then went back to the judgment hall and called Jesus. **“Are You the King of the Jews?”** he asked Him.

Jesus replied, **“It’s just as you say. Are you asking this on your own, or did others tell you about Me?”**

**“Am I a Jew?”** Pilate answered. **“Your own nation and the chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?”**

Jesus said, **“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight to keep Me from being handed over to the Jews. But at present My kingdom is not from here.”**



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“Then You really are a king?” Pilate said.

Jesus answered, **“It’s just as you say. I am a king—I was born for this, and for this I came into the world, so I might testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth hears My voice.”**

“What is truth?” Pilate asked.

After saying this, Pilate went out again to the Jews and said to the chief priests and the crowds, **“I find this Man guilty of nothing.”**

And that is the bottom line. Jesus is guilty of nothing.

To worship God means that we recognize that God is the designer of our environment, and that the specifications that God gives us for living accurately describes the best way for us to live our lives. Our big problem is that we want to live by our own specifications, rather than by the design. Jesus actually displayed the intent of God for our lives. He says to us, in **John 5:30**:

**30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

But, the Jewish religious leadership thought that their design for worshipping God was better than God’s own design. The Jews redefined worship by adding and deleting commandments, rules and regulations, ostensibly to improve their worship of God, but they failed to recognize that their revised rules reduced their ability to interact with God. John explains to us that God does not want His plan amended, in **Revelation 22:18-19**:

**18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.**

**19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

So, when Jesus came, He restored the original rules and threw out all of the Jewish leaders revisions of the rules. The Jewish leaders hated Him for it, as Jesus was able to back up His condemnation of their rules, showing His power with God through the success of His miracle ministry and the approval of the people. For example, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day. The Jews tried to convince the people that Jesus’ healing was actually sin. **John 9:16** tells us:

**16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.**

Jesus never committed any actual sin, but He transgressed the Jew’s revised rules, like the rule of no healing on the Sabbath day, all of the time. The Jewish leader’s condemnation of Jesus was not for violations of God’s law, but of their laws.



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But when Pilate, who was the Roman ruler and not a Jew, objectively evaluated Jesus, he found, quite correctly, that Jesus was guilty of nothing. **Mark 15:10** tells us:

**10 For [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed [Jesus] over because of envy.**

And that's the problem.

Man envies God. The reason that we can't obey or worship God is that we envy God; we want to be God. God has given us a limited dominion over the beasts and birds on earth, but we envy God's dominion over the universe. In Genesis, God allowed us to decide what crops to cultivate and consume, but we wanted the ability to decide the difference between right and wrong. In the gospels, Jesus came in the flesh, and displayed the power of God in order to show us the plan of God for life and worship, but the men that interacted with Him wanted to institute their own plan for worship. They did not have the power of God on their side as did Jesus, and so they rejected Jesus because they were envious of Him.

People only reject Jesus, and by extension, God's plan, for two reasons. The first reason is that people reject Jesus is ignorance. Ignorance can be rectified by study, because there is sufficient available evidence to prove the truth of the deity of Jesus Christ and the content of the Bible beyond the shadow of any reasonable doubt. But the second reason that people reject Jesus is that people have their own plans and don't want to live by God's plan. They are envious of God's control of the universe, and want to be able to make their own decisions and rule their own lives.

The Jewish leadership thought that they could restore their rule if they could just get rid of Jesus, so they prevailed upon Pilate to execute Him. As our lessons continue, we will see that God will allow us rule our own lives, to the point of running them into eternal condemnation, as did Judas, but, if we yield our lives to His design, God will show us His power and glory through Jesus Christ and save us from the trials and tribulations of this temporary existence, bringing us to Jesus' everlasting Kingdom, as **John 3:16-17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis  
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