

Paper 187 — The Crucifixion

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Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 187, in the order in which they appear

- (1) Rev. Alfred **Edersheim**, M.A.Oxon, D.D., Ph.D., *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Volume Two) (New York: Longman, Green, & Co., Eighth Edition, Revised, 1899)
- (2) David Smith, M.A., D.D., *Our Lord's Earthly Life* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925)

Note: This source is coded **Smith2**.

- (3) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest Dewitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904, 1932)
- (4) George A. **Barton**, Ph.D., LL.D., *Jesus of Nazareth: A Biography* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1922)
- (5) "Crucifixion," by J. C. Lambert, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings, D.D. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909)

Note: This source is coded **Hastings' DB**.

- (6) Charles **Fiske** and Burton Scott **Easton**, *The Real Jesus: What He Taught: What He Did: Who He Was* (New York and London, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929)
- (7) David Smith, M.A., D.D., *The Days of His Flesh: The Earthly Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Eighth Edition, Revised (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910)

Note: This source is coded **Smith1**.

- (8) Daniel A. **Poling**, *Between Two Worlds: The Romance of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable. The highlights are tentative.)

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PAPER 187 — THE CRUCIFIXION

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.'
 (Edersheim2 582)

187:0.1 After the two brigands had been made ready, the soldiers, under the direction of a centurion, started for the scene of the crucifixion. The centurion in charge of these twelve soldiers was the same captain who had led forth the Roman soldiers the previous night to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane.

Four soldiers would be detailed for each Cross, the whole being under the command of a centurion (E2 582-83).

It was the Roman custom to assign four soldiers for each person to be crucified.

The two brigands were properly scourged before they were taken out to be crucified, but Jesus was given no further physical punishment; the captain undoubtedly thought he had already been sufficiently scourged, even before his condemnation.

THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith2 449)

Two others were to be crucified with Him—two brigands, probably accomplices of Bar Abba who, but for the craft of the High Priests, would now have shared their doom (S2 449).

187:0.2 The two thieves crucified with Jesus were associates of Barabbas and would later have been put to death with their leader if he had not been released as the Passover pardon of Pilate.

Jesus was thus crucified in the place of Barabbas.

187:0.3 What Jesus is now about to do, submit to death on the cross, he does of his own free will.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 187

[John 10:17 Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life,

that I may take it again.

18 No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

This commandment received I from my Father. (§91)]

[Some of [those who followed] were priests who went from hatred; others went from **idle curiosity**; they wanted to **enjoy the horror** of seeing the torture (**Barton** 382).]

In foretelling this experience, he said:¹

“The Father loves and sustains me because I am willing to lay down my life.

But I will take it up again.

No one takes my life away from me—I lay it down of myself.

I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up.

I have received such a commandment from my Father.”

187:0.4 It was just before nine o’clock this morning when the soldiers led Jesus from the praetorium on the way to Golgotha. They were followed by many who secretly sympathized with Jesus,

but most of this group of two hundred or more were

either his enemies or **curious idlers** who merely desired to **enjoy the shock** of witnessing the crucifixions.

Only a few of the Jewish leaders went out to see Jesus die on the cross. Knowing that he had been turned over to the Roman soldiers by Pilate, and that he was condemned to die, they busied themselves with their meeting in the temple, whereat they discussed what should be done with his followers.

1. ON THE WAY TO GOLGOTHA

LXI: THE CRUCIFIXION (Barton 381)

When the cross was ready the soldiers placed the beams on Jesus' shoulders

(it was customary to make those convicted to crucifixion carry their own crosses) and started for the place of execution (B 381-82).

[The cross-beam (*patibulum*), not the whole cross, was then laid on his shoulders, and borne by him to the place of execution ("Crucifixion," in *Hastings DB* 170).]

[[The centurion's] first act would have been to dispatch some of his men to the place of execution, to erect the upright beams of the crosses—three, because two robbers were condemned at the same time (*Fiske & Easton* 187).]

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.' (*Edersheim* 582)

Ordinarily, the procession was headed by the centurion,

or rather, preceded by one who proclaimed the nature of the crime, and carried a white, wooden board, on which it was written (E2 583).

187:1.1 Before leaving the courtyard of the praetorium,

the soldiers placed the crossbeam on Jesus' shoulders.

It was the custom to compel the condemned man to carry the crossbeam to the site of the crucifixion.

Such a condemned man did not carry the whole cross, only this shorter timber.

The longer and upright pieces of timber for the three crosses had already been transported to Golgotha

and, by the time of the arrival of the soldiers and their prisoners, had been firmly implanted in the ground.

187:1.2 According to custom the captain led the procession,

carrying small white boards on which had been written with charcoal the names of the criminals and the nature of the crimes for which they had been condemned.²

[See 187:2.5, below.]

For the two thieves the centurion had notices which gave their names, underneath which was written the one word, “Brigand.”

It was the custom, after the victim had been nailed to the crossbeam and hoisted to his place on the upright timber, to nail this notice to the top of the cross, just above the head of the criminal, that all witnesses might know for what crime the condemned man was being crucified.

The legend which the centurion carried to put on the cross of Jesus had been written by Pilate himself

[The title] was—as might have been expected, and yet most significantly—trilingual: in Latin, Greek, and Aramæan (E2 590).

in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic,

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56. Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16b-37.

John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. And there was written, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

and it read: “Jesus of Nazareth—the King of the Jews.”

21 The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews;

187:1.3 Some of the Jewish authorities who were yet present when Pilate wrote this legend made vigorous protest against calling Jesus the “king of the Jews.”

But Pilate reminded them that

[It was the real charge on which the execution of Jesus had been secured (Barton 384).]

such an accusation was part of the charge which led to his condemnation.

When the Jews saw they could not prevail upon Pilate to change his mind, they pleaded that at least it be modified to read,

but, that he said, I am King of the Jews.

“He said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’”

22 Pilate answered,

What I have written I have written.

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.'
(Edersheim² 582)

Commonly, also, [the procession] took the longest road to the place of execution, and through the most crowded streets,

so as to attract most public attention.

But we would suggest, that alike this long circuit and the proclamation of the herald were, in the present instance, dispensed (E2 583).

The present Damascus Gate in the north of the city seems [to have been close by Golgotha] (E2 585).

In all likelihood [Golgotha] was the usual place of execution (E2 585).

Here the great highway passed northwards; close by, were villas and gardens;

and here also rockhewn sepulchres have been discovered, which date from that period (E2 585).

But Pilate was adamant; he would not alter the writing.

To all further supplication he only replied,

“What I have written, I have written.”

187:1.4 Ordinarily, it was the custom to journey to Golgotha by the longest road

in order that a large number of persons might view the condemned criminal,

but on this day they went by the most direct route

to the Damascus gate, which led out of the city to the north,

and following this road, they soon arrived at Golgotha,

the official crucifixion site of Jerusalem.

Beyond Golgotha were the villas of the wealthy,

and on the other side of the road were the tombs of many well-to-do Jews.

Crucifixion was not a Jewish mode of punishment, although the Maccabee King Jannæus had so far forgotten the claims of both humanity and religion as on one occasion to crucify not less than 800 persons in Jerusalem itself.

[The origin of crucifixion is traced to the Phœnicians, from whom it passed to many other nations, including both Greeks and Romans (“Crucifixion,” in *Hastings' DB* 170).]

But even Herod, with all his cruelty, did not resort to this mode of execution (E2 583).

[[T]he Romans reserved it for slaves and provincials, accounting it a sacrilege that a Roman citizen should endure either the scourge or the cross (Smith 494).]

During the last siege of Jerusalem

hundreds of crosses daily arose, till there seemed not sufficient room nor wood for them, and the soldiery diversified their horrible amusement by new modes of crucifixion (E2 583-84).

[[A]mong the 3,600 victims of the Governor's fury ... were many of the noblest of the citizens of Jerusalem (E2 578).]

187:1.5 Crucifixion was not a Jewish mode of punishment.

Both the Greeks and the Romans learned this method of execution from the Phœnicians.

Even Herod, with all his cruelty, did not resort to crucifixion.

The Romans never crucified a Roman citizen; only slaves and subject peoples were subjected to this dishonorable mode of death.

During the siege of Jerusalem,

just forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus,

all of Golgotha was covered by thousands upon thousands of crosses

upon which, from day to day, there perished the flower of the Jewish race.

A terrible harvest, indeed, of the seed-sowing of this day.

187:1.6 As the death procession passed along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, many of the tenderhearted Jewish women who had heard Jesus' words of good cheer and compassion, and who knew of his life of loving ministry, could not refrain from weeping when they saw him being led forth to such an ignoble death.

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56. Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16b-37.

Luke 23:27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him.

As he passed by,

many of these women bewailed and lamented.

And when some of them even dared to follow along by his side,

28 But Jesus turning unto them said,

the Master turned his head toward them and said:

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but rather weep for yourselves and for your children.

My work is about done—soon I go to my Father—but the times of terrible trouble for Jerusalem are just beginning.

29 For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say,

Behold, the days are coming in which you shall say:

Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck.

Blessed are the barren and those whose breasts have never suckled their young.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

In those days will you pray the rocks of the hills to fall on you

in order that you may be delivered from the terrors of your troubles.”

XLIX: THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith1
491)

[T]he women lamented Jesus, beating their breasts and chanting a dirge, regardless of the law which forbade open lamentation for one sentenced to death.

Their sympathy would be sweet and comforting to His heart (S1 493).

[Even in His hour of anguish it was for others that he cared, even for the city of His murderers (Smith2 452).]

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.'
(Edersheim2 582)

Since the Paschal Supper Jesus had not tasted either food or drink (E2 586).

187:1.7 These women of Jerusalem were indeed courageous to manifest sympathy for Jesus,

for it was strictly against the law to show friendly feelings for one who was being led forth to crucifixion.

It was permitted the rabble to jeer, mock, and ridicule the condemned, but it was not allowed that any sympathy should be expressed.

Though Jesus appreciated the manifestation of sympathy in this dark hour when his friends were in hiding,

he did not want these kindhearted women to incur the displeasure of the authorities by daring to show compassion in his behalf.

Even at such a time as this Jesus thought little about himself, only of the terrible days of tragedy ahead for Jerusalem and the whole Jewish nation.

187:1.8 As the Master trudged along on the way to the crucifixion, he was very weary; he was nearly exhausted.

He had had neither food nor water since the Last Supper at the home of Elijah Mark;

neither had he been permitted to enjoy one moment of sleep.

To Annas, to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, and again to Pilate ... had He been hurried all that livelong night, all that morning (E2 586).

[[The failure of Jesus' strength by the way] must be attributed not to the weight of His burden, but to sheer physical exhaustion aggravated by **loss of blood** through **scourging**.

as well as to the **anguish** which pressed upon His soul ("Crucifixion," in **Hastings' DB** 170).]

XLIX: THE CRUCIFIXION (**Smith1** 491)

Enfeebled by fasting, excitement, and brutal handling, Jesus **staggered** along beneath His burden as far as the city gate, and there His strength utterly failed.

[Then, as we infer, His **strength gave way** under it (Edersheim2 587).]

Tradition says that **He fell** (S1 492).

["Oh, liven Him up a bit," said another **Pharisee**] and **kicked him** (**Poling** 205).]

[Mark 15:21 And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear the cross.]

In addition, there had been one hearing right after another up to the hour of his condemnation,

not to mention the abusive **scourgings** with their accompanying physical suffering and **loss of blood**.

Superimposed upon all this was his extreme mental **anguish**,

his acute spiritual tension, and a terrible feeling of human loneliness.

187:1.9 Shortly after passing through the gate on the way out of the city,

as Jesus **staggered** on bearing the crossbeam,

his physical **strength** momentarily **gave way**,

and **he fell** beneath the weight of his heavy burden.

The soldiers shouted at him and **kicked him**, but he could not arise.

When the captain saw this, knowing what Jesus had already endured, he commanded the soldiers to desist.

Then he ordered a passerby, one Simon from Cyrene, to take the crossbeam from Jesus' shoulders and compelled him to carry it the rest of the way to Golgotha.

He was a Hellenistic Jew named Simon from Cyrene, a North African city where a large Jewish colony resided; and he had come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast.

He had his lodging in the country outside the walls of the city,

and he was on his way to the Temple to join in the morning prayer (S1 493).

Nothing further is recorded of Simon save that he had two sons, Alexander and Rufus,

who were evidently believers in connection with the Church at Rome. Surely Simon also believed (S1 493).

[See 130:6.6.]

[It was nine of the clock when the melancholy procession reached Golgotha... (Edersheim2 582).]

187:1.10 This man Simon had come all the way from Cyrene, in northern Africa, to attend the Passover.

He was stopping with other Cyrenians just outside the city walls

and was on his way to the temple services in the city

when the Roman captain commanded him to carry Jesus' crossbeam.

Simon lingered all through the hours of the Master's death on the cross, talking with many of his friends and with his enemies. After the resurrection and before leaving Jerusalem, he became a valiant believer in the gospel of the kingdom, and when he returned home, he led his family into the heavenly kingdom.

His two sons, Alexander and Rufus,

became very effective teachers of the new gospel in Africa.

But Simon never knew that Jesus, whose burden he bore, and the Jewish tutor who once befriended his injured son, were the same person.

187:1.11 It was shortly after nine o'clock when this procession of death arrived at Golgotha,

and the Roman soldiers set themselves about the task of nailing the two brigands and the Son of Man to their respective crosses.

2. THE CRUCIFIXION

LXI: THE CRUCIFIXION (Barton 381)

When they reached Golgotha, they crucified Jesus. As nearly as we can find out, the process was as follows: First the upright wood was firmly planted in the ground. Next the cross-beam was placed on the ground, the victim laid upon it, his **arms** extended and bound to it.

Then a strong sharp nail was driven first through his right **hand** into the beam, and next through his left.

Then, by means of ropes or by the use of ladders, the sufferer was raised

and the cross-beam bound or nailed to the upright (B 383-84).

Lastly, the **feet** were extended and either a nail hammered into each, or a large spike driven through them **both** (B 384).

[[T]o support its weight which must else have torn the hands, the body rested, as on a **saddle**, on a projecting **peg** (*sedile, cornu*) (Smith1 495).]

[It was **not high**, and probably the Feet of the Sufferer were not above one or two feet from the ground (Edersheim2 589).]

[Hanging thus quite near the ground, Jesus, in the midst of His last agonies, was all the more exposed to the jeers and insults of the bystanders and passers-by ("Crucifixion," in *Hastings' DB* 170).]

187:2.1 The soldiers first bound the Master's **arms** with cords to the cross-beam,

and then they nailed his **hands** to the wood.

When they had hoisted this crossbeam up on the post,

and after they had nailed it securely to the upright timber of the cross,

they bound and nailed his feet to the wood,

using one long nail to penetrate **both feet**.

The upright timber had a large **peg**, inserted at the proper height, which served as a sort of **saddle** for supporting the body weight.

The cross was **not high**, the Master's feet being only about three feet from the ground.

He was therefore able to hear all that was said of him in derision and could plainly see the expression on the faces of all those who so thoughtlessly mocked him.

And also could those present easily hear all that Jesus said during these hours of lingering torture and slow death.

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.'
(Edersheim2 582)

At a distance of six feet from the place of execution the criminal was undressed ...

In the case of Jesus we have reason to think that ... every concession would be made to Jewish custom, and hence we thankfully believe that on the Cross He was spared the indignity of exposure (E2 584).

Avowedly, the punishment was invented to make death as painful and as lingering as the power of human endurance (E2 589).

And so might the crucified hang for hours, even days, in the unutterable anguish of suffering, till consciousness at last failed (E2 589).

THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith2 449)

[I]t is told in the Talmud that there was in Jerusalem a society of charitable ladies

187:2.2 It was the custom to remove all clothes from those who were to be crucified,

but since the Jews greatly objected to the public exposure of the naked human form, the Romans always provided a suitable loin cloth for all persons crucified at Jerusalem.

Accordingly, after Jesus' clothes had been removed, he was thus garbed before he was put upon the cross.

187:2.3 Crucifixion was resorted to in order to provide a cruel and lingering punishment,

the victim sometimes not dying for several days.

There was considerable sentiment against crucifixion in Jerusalem,

and there existed a society of Jewish women

who, taking as their motto the ancient precept: “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul,” provided for deserving sufferers a narcotic of medicated wine to stupefy them and dull their sensibility.

The merciful draught was presented to our Lord and, parched with thirst, He took it and put it to His lips; but when He tasted it and recognised what it was,

He put it aside (S2 453).

[He would meet Death, even in his sternest and fiercest mood,

and conquer by submitting to the full (Edersheim2 590).]

It was usual for the victims, as the nails were driven through their palms, to shriek and entreat and curse and spit at their torturers ... (S2 454).

Luke 23:[34] And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

who always sent a representative to crucifixions for the purpose of offering drugged wine to the victim in order to lessen his suffering.

But when Jesus tasted this narcotized wine, as thirsty as he was,

he refused to drink it.

The Master chose to retain his human consciousness until the very end.

He desired to meet death, even in this cruel and inhuman form,

and conquer it by voluntary submission to the full human experience.

187:2.4 Before Jesus was put on his cross, the two brigands had already been placed on their crosses,

all the while cursing and spitting upon their executioners.

Jesus’ only words, as they nailed him to the crossbeam, were,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

He could not have so mercifully and lovingly interceded for his executioners if such thoughts of affectionate devotion had not been the mainspring of all his life of unselfish service. The ideas, motives, and longings of a lifetime are openly revealed in a crisis.

Matt. 27:37 And they set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

On two of them [Pilate] would write the man's name and after it "brigand," and on the third he should in like manner have written "Jesus, a rebel"; but here he saw his chance of taking a malicious revenge on his tormentors ... (S2 449).

V, XV: 'CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.' (Edersheim2 582)

We imagine, that the Sanhedrists had ... not intended going to Golgotha at all. But when they found that Pilate would not yield to their remonstrances, some of them hastened to the place of Crucifixion,

187:2.5 After the Master was hoisted on the cross,

the captain nailed the title up above his head, and it read in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth—the King of the Jews."

The Jews were infuriated by this believed insult. But Pilate was chafed by their disrespectful manner; he felt he had been intimidated and humiliated, and he took this method of obtaining petty revenge.

He could have written "Jesus, a rebel."

But he well knew how these Jerusalem Jews detested the very name of Nazareth, and he was determined thus to humiliate them. He knew that they would also be cut to the very quick by seeing this executed Galilean called "The King of the Jews."

187:2.6 Many of the Jewish leaders, when they learned how Pilate had sought to deride them by placing this inscription on the cross of Jesus, hastened out to Golgotha,

but they dared not attempt to remove it since the Roman soldiers were standing on guard.

and, mingling with the crowd, sought to incite their jeers,

so as to prevent any deeper impression which the significant words of the inscription might have produced (E2 591).

[*Note:* Edersheim and the UB both hold that John arrived on the scene just in time to witness the Crucifixion, and then left and returned to Golgotha twice after that. Edersheim and the UB differ in that Edersheim has John first arriving on the scene alone, having come from Jerusalem where he had told Mary and the other women about Jesus' condemnation by Pilate. Edersheim says that, after witnessing Jesus being hoisted on the cross, "St. John seems once more to have returned to the City—this time, to bring back with him those women [including Mary, unlike in the UB], in company of whom we now find him standing close to the Cross" [*i.e.* when Jesus commits Mary to John's care]. Edersheim agrees with the UB that, at Jesus' request, John took Mary to where he was temporarily staying, and then returned to the Cross soon before Jesus died. See Edersheim2 601.]

[O]f all the disciples, only St. John witnessed the last scenes ... (E2 592).

THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith2 449)

Not being able to remove the title,

these leaders mingled with the crowd and did their utmost to incite derision and ridicule,

lest any give serious regard to the inscription.

187:2.7 The Apostle John, with Mary the mother of Jesus, Ruth, and Jude, arrived on the scene just after Jesus had been hoisted to his position on the cross, and just as the captain was nailing the title above the Master's head.

John was the only one of the eleven apostles to witness the crucifixion,

and even he was not present all of the time since he ran into Jerusalem to bring back his mother and her friends soon after he had brought Jesus' mother to the scene.

187:2.8 As Jesus saw his mother, with John and his brother and sister, he smiled but said nothing.

Meanwhile the four soldiers assigned to the Master's crucifixion, as was the custom,³ had divided his clothes among them,

[A] Jew had five articles of dress—a cloak (*himation*); a tunic (*chiton*), a short-sleeved vest reaching down to the knees; a girdle, encompassing the waist over the tunic; sandals; and a turban (*tsaniph*). Each of the soldiers took a garment, one the cloak, another the girdle, another the sandals, and the fourth the turban;

But how should they dispose of the superfluous tunic?

The obvious way, which perhaps they had followed in apportioning the brigands' garments, was to slit it into four pieces useful for patching;

but they observed a peculiarity in the Lord's tunic. Tradition says that it was a gift of Mary's, and she had spun it all of a piece without seams. This was a Galilean fashion, but it was a novelty to those Roman soldiers.

They had never seen the like, and thinking it a pity to rend it, they agreed to cast lots for it (S2 454-55).

one taking the sandals, one the turban, one the girdle, and the fourth the cloak.

This left the tunic,

or seamless vestment reaching down to near the knees,

to be cut up into four pieces,

but when the soldiers saw what an unusual garment it was,

they decided to cast lots for it.

Jesus looked down on them while they divided his garments, and the thoughtless crowd jeered at him.

187:2.9 It was well that the Roman soldiers took possession of the Master's clothing. Otherwise, if his followers had gained possession of these garments, they would have been tempted to resort to superstitious relic worship. The Master desired that his followers should have nothing material to associate with his life on earth.

He wanted to leave mankind only the memory of a human life dedicated to the high spiritual ideal of being consecrated to doing the Father's will.

3. THOSE WHO SAW THE CRUCIFIXION

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56.
Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16b-37.

Mark 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

187:3.1 At about half past nine o'clock this Friday morning, Jesus was hung upon the cross.

Before eleven o'clock, upward of one thousand persons had assembled to witness this spectacle of the crucifixion of the Son of Man.

Throughout these dreadful hours the unseen hosts of a universe stood in silence while they gazed upon this extraordinary phenomenon of the Creator as he was dying the death of the creature, even the most ignoble death of a condemned criminal.

John 19:25 But there were standing by the cross of Jesus

his mother

and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas,

and Mary Magdalene.

187:3.2 Standing near the cross at one time or another during the crucifixion were

Mary,

Ruth, Jude, John, Salome (John's mother), and a group of earnest women believers including

Mary the wife of Clopas and sister of Jesus' mother,

Mary Magdalene,

and Rebecca, onetime of Sepphoris.

These and other friends of Jesus held their peace while they witnessed his great patience and fortitude and gazed upon his intense sufferings.

Matt. 27:39 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads,

40 and saying,

Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself:

if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 In like manner also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save.

He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him.

43 He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him:

for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach.

187:3.3 Many who passed by wagged their heads and, railing at him,

said:

“You who would destroy the temple and build it again in three days, save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, why do you not come down from your cross?”

In like manner some of the rulers of the Jews mocked him, saying,

“He saved others, but himself he cannot save.”

Others said,

“If you are the king of the Jews, come down from the cross, and we will believe in you.”

And later on they mocked him the more, saying:

“He trusted in God to deliver him.

He even claimed to be the Son of God—

look at him now—crucified between two thieves.”

Even the two thieves also railed at him and cast reproach upon him.

187:3.4 Inasmuch as Jesus would make no reply to their taunts, and since it was nearing noontime of this special preparation day, by half past eleven o'clock most of the jesting and jeering crowd had gone its way; less than fifty persons remained on the scene.

THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith2 449)

[The soldiers] had with them a beaker of "vinegar," the thin, sour wine which slaves drank and also soldiers on duty, and they were refreshing themselves after their exertions.

And as they drank, they held up their cups and derisively drank to "His Majesty" (S2 455).

The mouth of the beaker was stopped not with a cork but, after the ancient fashion, with a sponge; and this, saturated with the liquor, [one of the soldiers] took and fixing it on the point of his javelin,

reached it up and moistened the parched lips (S2 459).

The soldiers now prepared to eat lunch

and drink their cheap, sour wine

as they settled down for the long deathwatch.

As they partook of their wine, they derisively offered a toast to Jesus,

saying, "Hail and good fortune! to the king of the Jews."

And they were astonished at the Master's tolerant regard of their ridicule and mocking.

187:3.5 When Jesus saw them eat and drink, he looked down upon them and said, "I thirst." When the captain of the guard heard Jesus say, "I thirst," he took some of the wine from his bottle

and, putting the saturated sponge stopper upon the end of a javelin,

raised it to Jesus so that he could moisten his parched lips.

187:3.6 Jesus had purposed to live without resort to his supernatural power, and he likewise elected to die as an ordinary mortal upon the cross. He had lived as a man, and he would die as a man—doing the Father’s will.

4. THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56. Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16b-37.

Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying,

Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us.

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said,

Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:

but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said,

187:4.1 One of the brigands railed at Jesus, saying,

“If you are the Son of God, why do you not save yourself and us?”

But when he had reproached Jesus,

the other thief, who had many times heard the Master teach, said:

“Do you have no fear even of God?

Do you not see that we are suffering justly for our deeds,

but that this man suffers unjustly?

Better that we should seek forgiveness for our sins and salvation for our souls.”

When Jesus heard the thief say this, he turned his face toward him and smiled approvingly. When the malefactor saw the face of Jesus turned toward him, he mustered up his courage, fanned the flickering flame of his faith,

and said,

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Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom [ERV mg.: Some ancient authorities read *into thy kingdom*].

“Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

43 And he said unto him,

And then Jesus said,

Verily I say unto thee,

“Verily, verily, I say to you today,

To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

you shall sometime be with me in Paradise.”⁴

[Soft and melodious the tone, full of love, compassion, and power the words: Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with Me in paradise (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* [1898], p. 750).]

187:4.2 The Master had time amidst the pangs of mortal death to listen to the faith confession of the believing brigand. When this thief reached out for salvation, he found deliverance. Many times before this he had been constrained to believe in Jesus, but only in these last hours of consciousness did he turn with a whole heart toward the Master’s teaching. When he saw the manner in which Jesus faced death upon the cross, this thief could no longer resist the conviction that this Son of Man was indeed the Son of God.

[See note 187:2.7, above.]

187:4.3 During this episode of the conversion and reception of the thief into the kingdom by Jesus, the Apostle John was absent, having gone into the city to bring his mother and her friends to the scene of the crucifixion.

[[The account] of St. Luke reads like the report of what had passed, given by one who throughout had been quite close by, perhaps taken part in the Crucifixion—one might almost venture to suggest, that it had been furnished by the Centurion (Edersheim² 595).]

Luke subsequently heard this story from the converted Roman captain of the guard.

187:4.4 The Apostle John told about the crucifixion as he remembered the event two thirds of a century after its occurrence. The other records were based upon the recital of the Roman centurion on duty who, because of what he saw and heard, subsequently believed in Jesus and entered into the full fellowship of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

X: STRONG SON OF GOD (Fiske & Easton 69)

[The penitent thief] was, possibly, a young man who had become a member of one of the insurrectionist or robber bands that infested the country near Jerusalem. As a youth, he had been captivated by the bold spirit of the leader of such a band; eventually he had joined his company—

perhaps out of pure love of adventure, perhaps out of boyish worship of its daring leader, perhaps because his imagination had been fired by some tale of a social wrong that had made his hero an outcast.

187:4.5 This young man, the penitent brigand, had been led into a life of violence and wrongdoing by those who extolled such a career of robbery

as an effective patriotic protest against political oppression and social injustice.

And this sort of teaching,

plus the urge for adventure,

led many otherwise well-meaning youths to enlist in these daring expeditions of robbery.

This young man had looked upon Barabbas as a hero.

Now he had come to the end of his mistaken career, and he was dying on the cross. Next him hung this fellow prisoner. He knew something of Christ's claims and he heard of his career. He watched the prisoner; and as he watched, slowly he came to see that all his old hero worship had been **misplaced**.

Here was a hero who could inspire his moral respect;

courageous, but large-hearted as well as **brave**; magnanimous, and always bearing himself in a big way.

Christ excited in him a **love** and **loyalty**

that sprang from a sense of his **greatness** of heart and splendid manliness (F&E 69-70).

[See note 187:2.7, above.]

Now he saw that he had been **mistaken**.

Here on the cross beside him he saw a really great man, a true hero.

Here was a hero who fired his zeal and inspired his highest ideas of **moral self-respect**

and quickened all his ideals of

courage, manhood, and **bravery**.

In beholding Jesus, there sprang up in his heart an overwhelming sense of **love**, **loyalty**,

and genuine **greatness**.

187:4.6 And if any other person among the jeering crowd had experienced the birth of faith within his soul and had appealed to the mercy of Jesus, he would have been received with the same loving consideration that was displayed toward the believing brigand.

187:4.7 Just after the repentant thief heard the Master's promise that they should sometime meet in Paradise, John returned from the city, bringing with him his mother and a company of almost a dozen women believers.

John took up his position near Mary the mother of Jesus, supporting her. Her son Jude stood on the other side.

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56. Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16b-37.

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,

he saith to his mother,

Woman, behold, thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple,

Behold, thy mother!

[It seems as if John had fulfilled to the letter the Lord's command: 'Behold thy mother,' and literally 'from that very hour' taken her to his own home. If we are right in this supposition, then, in the absence of St. John—who led away the Virgin-Mother from that scene of horror—[contd five rows down]

And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own *home*.

As Jesus looked down upon this scene,

it was noontide,

and he said to his mother,

“Woman, behold your son!”

And speaking to John, he said,

“My son, behold your mother!”

And then he addressed them both, saying, “I desire that you depart from this place.”

And so John and Jude led Mary away from Golgotha.

John took the mother of Jesus to the place where he tarried in Jerusalem and then hastened back to the scene of the crucifixion.

After the Passover Mary returned to Bethsaida, where she lived at John's home for the rest of her natural life.⁵

Mary did not live quite one year after the death of Jesus.

187:4.8 After Mary left,

the other three women would withdraw to a distance, where we find them at the end, not 'by the Cross,' as in St. John xix. 25, but 'beholding from afar,' and now joined by others also, who had loved and followed Christ (Edersheim² 692).]

the other women withdrew for a short distance and remained in attendance upon Jesus until he expired on the cross,

and they were yet standing by when the body of the Master was taken down for burial.

5. LAST HOUR ON THE CROSS

[See endnote.]

187:5.1 Although it was early in the season for such a phenomenon,⁶

Luke 22:44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, [*Also Matt. 27:45 and Mark 15:33*]

shortly after twelve o'clock the sky darkened

by reason of the fine sand in the air.

XXIII: "SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE" (Fiske & Easton 185)

The people of Jerusalem knew that this meant

It was noon and he had been hanging on the cross three hours, when the sky became overcast—a sirocco from the desert coming up, probably, which presaged the earthquake of which we are told later (F&E 189).

the coming of one of those hot-wind sandstorms from the Arabian desert.

Before one o'clock the sky was so dark the sun was hid, and the remainder of the crowd hastened back to the city.

When the Master gave up his life shortly after this hour, less than thirty people were present, only the thirteen Roman soldiers and a group of about fifteen believers. These believers were all women except two, Jude, Jesus' brother, and John Zebedee, who returned to the scene just before the Master expired.

187:5.2 Shortly after one o'clock, amidst the increasing darkness of the fierce sandstorm, Jesus began to fail in human consciousness. His last words of mercy, forgiveness, and admonition had been spoken. His last wish—concerning the care of his mother—had been expressed. During this hour of approaching death the human mind of Jesus resorted to the repetition of many passages in the Hebrew scriptures, particularly the Psalms. The last conscious thought of the human Jesus was concerned with the repetition in his mind of a portion of the Book of Psalms now known as the **twentieth, twenty-first,** and twenty-second Psalms. While his lips would often move, he was too weak to utter the words as these passages, which he so well knew by heart, would pass through his mind.

Only a few times did those standing by catch some utterance, such as,

Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand (Ps. **20:6**).

“I know the Lord will save his anointed,”

Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. (Ps. **21:8**).

“Your hand shall find out all my enemies,”

Matt. 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

and “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus did not for one moment entertain the slightest doubt that he had lived in accordance with the Father's will; and he never doubted that he was now laying down his life in the flesh in accordance with his Father's will. He did not feel that the Father had forsaken him;

The words have always been regarded as proof of Christ's complete entrance into all human experience. They are a revelation of faith, not of despair; for they are quoted from one of the psalms (the **Twenty-second**) with which he was doubtless comforting himself during his agony—

[My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* (Ps. 22:1)]

an agony which suddenly became so sharp that this one verse rose in a loud sharp cry (F&E 189-90).

§140. THE CRUCIFIXION. Matt. 27:32-56. Mark 15:21-41. Luke 23:26-49. John 19:16*b*-37.

John 19:28 After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst,

29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.

he was merely reciting in his vanishing consciousness many Scriptures, among them this **twenty-second** Psalm, which begins with

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

And this happened to be one of the three passages which were spoken with sufficient clearness to be heard by those standing by.

187:5.3 The last request which the mortal Jesus made of his fellows was about half past one o'clock when, a second time,

he said, “I thirst,”

and the same captain of the guard again moistened his lips with the same sponge wet in the sour wine, in those days commonly called vinegar.

187:5.4 The sandstorm grew in intensity and the heavens increasingly darkened. Still the soldiers and the small group of believers stood by. The soldiers crouched near the cross, huddled together to protect themselves from the cutting sand. The mother of John and others watched from a distance where they were somewhat sheltered by an overhanging rock. When the Master finally breathed his last, there were present at the foot of his cross John Zebedee, his brother Jude, his sister Ruth, Mary Magdalene, and Rebecca, onetime of Sepphoris.

187:5.5 It was just before three o'clock when Jesus, with a loud voice, cried out,

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished:

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:

and having said this,

[John 19:[30] and he bowed his head,]

he gave up the ghost.

47 And when the centurion saw what was done,

he glorified God, saying,

Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts.

“It is finished!

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”⁷

And when he had thus spoken,

he bowed his head

and gave up the life struggle.

When the Roman centurion saw how Jesus died,

he smote his breast

and said:

“This was indeed a righteous man;

Mark 15:[39] Truly this man was the Son of God [ERV mg.: Or, *a son of God*].

truly he must have been a Son of God.”

And from that hour he began to believe in Jesus.

187:5.6 Jesus died royally—as he had lived. He freely admitted his kingship and remained master of the situation throughout the tragic day. He went willingly to his ignominious death, after he had provided for the safety of his chosen apostles. He wisely restrained Peter’s trouble-making violence and provided that John might be near him right up to the end of his mortal existence. He revealed his true nature to the murderous Sanhedrin and reminded Pilate of the source of his sovereign authority as a Son of God. He started out to Golgotha bearing his own crossbeam and finished up his loving bestowal by handing over his spirit of mortal acquirement to the Paradise Father. After such a life—and after such a death—the Master could truly say, “It is finished.”

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation,

187:5.7 Because this was the preparation day for both the Passover and the Sabbath,

that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high *day*),

the Jews did not want these bodies to be exposed on Golgotha.

asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken,

Therefore they went before Pilate asking that the legs of these three men be broken,

[The request of the Jews was really a request that the crucified men should be **despatched** and taken down (**Barton** 388).]

that they be **dispatched**,

and *that* they might be taken away.

so that they could be taken down from their crosses and cast into the criminal burial pits before sundown.

When Pilate heard this request, he forthwith sent three soldiers to break the legs and dispatch Jesus and the two brigands.

32 The soldiers therefore came,

187:5.8 When these soldiers arrived at Golgotha,

and brake the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him:

they did accordingly to the two thieves,

33 but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

but they found Jesus already dead,

much to their surprise.

34 howbeit

However,

in order to make sure of his death,

one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side,

one of the soldiers pierced his left side with his spear.

and straightway there came out blood and water. 35 And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he said true, that ye also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

THE CRUCIFIXION (Smith2 449)

Crucifixion was a lingering doom, and its victims often hung **for days** ere death released them from their agony ... (S2 461).

Though it was common for the victims of crucifixion to linger alive upon the cross **for even two or three days,**

The cause of our Lord's death, [certain distinguished physicians] tell us, was lesion or rupture of the heart, which happens when the organ is distended by strong **emotion** until its walls are torn. The **agony** is intense and utters itself in a parting shriek; and death ensues more or less swiftly according to the extent of the rupture....

And thus in very fact our Lord died of a broken heart—an “o’er fraught heart” swollen with “desperate tides of the whole great world’s **anguish**” (S2 462-63).

the overwhelming **emotional agony** and the acute spiritual **anguish** of Jesus

brought an end to his mortal life in the flesh in a little less than five and one-half hours.

6. AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION

187:6.1 In the midst of the darkness of the sandstorm, about half past three o’clock, David Zebedee sent out the last of the messengers carrying the news of the Master’s death. The last of his runners he dispatched to the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany, where he supposed the mother of Jesus stopped with the rest of her family.

187:6.2 After the death of the Master, John sent the women, in the charge of Jude, to the home of Elijah Mark, where they tarried over the Sabbath day. John himself, being well known by this time to the Roman centurion, remained at Golgotha until Joseph and Nicodemus arrived on the scene with an order from Pilate authorizing them to take possession of the body of Jesus.

187:6.3 Thus ended a day of tragedy and sorrow for a vast universe whose myriads of intelligences had shuddered at the shocking spectacle of the crucifixion of the human incarnation of their beloved Sovereign; they were stunned by this exhibition of mortal callousness and human perversity.

1. [Jesus' refusal to drink the draught] was like His former refusal of the pity of the 'daughters of Jerusalem.' No man could take His Life from Him; He had power to lay it down, and to take it up again (Edersheim2 590).
2. It was the custom that ... a placard should be borne [to the place of execution] before [the one to be crucified] and there fixed over his head—a white board whereon were inscribed in staring black letters his **name** and his crime (Smith2 449).
3. *Contrast:* It is generally stated that this was the common Roman custom. But of this there is no evidence, and in later times it was expressly forbidden (*Ulpianus*, Digest, xlvi. 20, 6) (Edersheim 591-92, fn).
4. I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise. Christ did not promise that the thief should be with Him in Paradise that day. He Himself did not go that day to Paradise. He slept in the tomb, and on the morning of the resurrection He He said, "I am not yet ascended to My Father." John 20:17. But on the day of the crucifixion, the day of apparent defeat and darkness, the promise was given. "Today" while dying upon the cross as a malefactor, Christ assures the poor sinner, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* [1898], p. 751).
5. *Contradicts 134:1.6:* Accordingly, a few days after Jesus left with the caravan, Mary and Ruth moved to Capernaum, where they lived for the rest of Mary's life in the home that Jesus had provided.
6. *Contradicts 123:4.5:* The hot winds, carrying blasts of fine sand, usually blew during the rainy season, especially in March and April.
7. The final words remind us again that Jesus was probably comforting his soul by repeating passages out of the sacred writings, as a sufferer today might whisper psalms, familiar hymns, or oft-used devotions. The psalm from which these words are taken is the Thirty-first, long used in the offices of the church at compline, the evening office: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth." In Jesus' day the verse is said to have been used, especially by children, in the evening devotions. Is it not as if Jesus' last words were said as one might now go back to the prayers said years before at a mother's knee, "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep"? (Fiske & Easton 190, fn)