

The Urantia Book

<< [Paper 185](#) | [Parts](#) | [Content](#) | [Paper 187](#) >>

Paper 186

Just Before the Crucifixion

186:0.1 (1997.1) AS JESUS and his accusers started off to see Herod, the Master turned to the Apostle John and said: “John, you can do no more for me. Go to my mother and bring her to see me ere I die.” When John heard his Master’s request, although reluctant to leave him alone among his enemies, he hastened off to Bethany, where the entire family of Jesus was assembled in waiting at the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead.

186:0.2 (1997.2) Several times during the morning, messengers had brought news to Martha and Mary concerning the progress of Jesus’ trial. But the family of Jesus did not reach Bethany until just a few minutes before John arrived bearing the request of Jesus to see his mother before he was put to death. After John Zebedee had told them all that had happened since the midnight arrest of Jesus, Mary his mother went at once in the company of John to see her eldest son. By the time Mary and John reached the city, Jesus, accompanied by the Roman soldiers who were to crucify him, had already arrived at Golgotha.

186:0.3 (1997.3) When Mary the mother of Jesus started out with John to go to her son, his sister Ruth refused to remain behind with the rest of the family. Since she was determined to accompany her mother, her brother Jude went with her. The rest of the Master's family remained in Bethany under the direction of James, and almost every hour the messengers of David Zebedee brought them reports concerning the progress of that terrible business of putting to death their eldest brother, Jesus of Nazareth.

1. The End of Judas Iscariot

186:1.1 (1997.4) It was about half past eight o'clock this Friday morning when the hearing of Jesus before Pilate was ended and the Master was placed in the custody of the Roman soldiers who were to crucify him. As soon as the Romans took possession of Jesus, the captain of the Jewish guards marched with his men back to their temple headquarters. The chief priest and his Sanhedrist associates followed close behind the guards, going directly to their usual meeting place in the hall of hewn stone in the temple. Here they found many other members of the Sanhedrin waiting to learn what had been done with Jesus. As Caiaphas was engaged in making his report to the Sanhedrin regarding the trial and condemnation of Jesus, Judas appeared before them to claim his reward for the part he had played in his Master's arrest and sentence of death.

186:1.2 (1997.5) All of these Jews loathed Judas; they looked upon the betrayer with only feelings of utter contempt. Throughout the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas and during his appearance before Pilate, Judas was pricked

in his conscience about his traitorous conduct. And he was also beginning to become somewhat disillusioned regarding the reward he was to receive as payment for his services as Jesus' betrayer. He did not like the coolness and aloofness of the Jewish authorities; nevertheless, he expected to be liberally rewarded for his cowardly conduct. He anticipated being called before the full meeting of the Sanhedrin and there hearing himself eulogized while they conferred upon him suitable honors in token of the great service which he flattered himself he had rendered his nation. Imagine, therefore, the great surprise of this egotistic traitor when a servant of the high priest, tapping him on the shoulder, called him just outside the hall and said: "Judas, I have been appointed to pay you for the betrayal of Jesus. Here is your reward." And thus speaking, the servant of Caiaphas handed Judas a bag containing thirty pieces of silver—the current price of a good, healthy slave.

186:1.3 (1998.1) Judas was stunned, dumfounded. He rushed back to enter the hall but was debarred by the doorkeeper. He wanted to appeal to the Sanhedrin, but they would not admit him. Judas could not believe that these rulers of the Jews would allow him to betray his friends and his Master and then offer him as a reward thirty pieces of silver. He was humiliated, disillusioned, and utterly crushed. He walked away from the temple, as it were, in a trance. He automatically dropped the money bag in his deep pocket, that same pocket wherein he had so long carried the bag containing the apostolic funds. And he wandered out through the city after the crowds who were on their way to witness the crucifixions.

186:1.4 (1998.2) From a distance Judas saw them raise the cross piece with Jesus nailed thereon, and upon sight of this he rushed back to the temple

and, forcing his way past the doorkeeper, found himself standing in the presence of the Sanhedrin, which was still in session. The betrayer was well-nigh breathless and highly distraught, but he managed to stammer out these words: “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. You have insulted me. You have offered me as a reward for my service, money—the price of a slave. I repent that I have done this; here is your money. I want to escape the guilt of this deed.”

186:1.5 (1998.3) When the rulers of the Jews heard Judas, they scoffed at him. One of them sitting near where Judas stood, motioned that he should leave the hall and said: “Your Master has already been put to death by the Romans, and as for your guilt, what is that to us? See you to that—and begone!”

186:1.6 (1998.4) As Judas left the Sanhedrin chamber, he removed the thirty pieces of silver from the bag and threw them broadcast over the temple floor. When the betrayer left the temple, he was almost beside himself. Judas was now passing through the experience of the realization of the true nature of sin. All the glamor, fascination, and intoxication of wrongdoing had vanished. Now the evildoer stood alone and face to face with the judgment verdict of his disillusioned and disappointed soul. Sin was bewitching and adventurous in the committing, but now must the harvest of the naked and unromantic facts be faced.

186:1.7 (1998.5) This onetime ambassador of the kingdom of heaven on earth now walked through the streets of Jerusalem, forsaken and alone. His despair was desperate and well-nigh absolute. On he journeyed through the city and outside the walls, on down into the terrible solitude of the valley of Hinnom, where he climbed up the steep rocks and, taking the girdle of his

cloak, fastened one end to a small tree, tied the other about his neck, and cast himself over the precipice. Ere he was dead, the knot which his nervous hands had tied gave way, and the betrayer's body was dashed to pieces as it fell on the jagged rocks below.

2. The Master's Attitude

186:2.1 (1999.1) When Jesus was arrested, he knew that his work on earth, in the likeness of mortal flesh, was finished. He fully understood the sort of death he would die, and he was little concerned with the details of his so-called trials.

186:2.2 (1999.2) Before the Sanhedrist court Jesus declined to make replies to the testimony of perjured witnesses. There was but one question which would always elicit an answer, whether asked by friend or foe, and that was the one concerning the nature and divinity of his mission on earth. When asked if he were the Son of God, he unfailingly made reply. He steadfastly refused to speak when in the presence of the curious and wicked Herod. Before Pilate he spoke only when he thought that Pilate or some other sincere person might be helped to a better knowledge of the truth by what he said. Jesus had taught his apostles the uselessness of casting their pearls before swine, and he now dared to practice what he had taught. His conduct at this time exemplified the patient submission of the human nature coupled with the majestic silence and solemn dignity of the divine nature. He was altogether willing to discuss with Pilate any question related to the political

charges brought against him—any question which he recognized as belonging to the governor’s jurisdiction.

186:2.3 (1999.3) Jesus was convinced that it was the will of the Father that he submit himself to the natural and ordinary course of human events just as every other mortal creature must, and therefore he refused to employ even his purely human powers of persuasive eloquence to influence the outcome of the machinations of his socially nearsighted and spiritually blinded fellow mortals. Although Jesus lived and died on Urantia, his whole human career, from first to last, was a spectacle designed to influence and instruct the entire universe of his creation and unceasing upholding.

186:2.4 (1999.4) These shortsighted Jews clamored unseemly for the Master’s death while he stood there in awful silence looking upon the death scene of a nation—his earthly father’s own people.

186:2.5 (1999.5) Jesus had acquired that type of human character which could preserve its composure and assert its dignity in the face of continued and gratuitous insult. He could not be intimidated. When first assaulted by the servant of Annas, he had only suggested the propriety of calling witnesses who might duly testify against him.

186:2.6 (1999.6) From first to last, in his so-called trial before Pilate, the onlooking celestial hosts could not refrain from broadcasting to the universe the depiction of the scene of “Pilate on trial before Jesus.”

186:2.7 (1999.7) When before Caiaphas, and when all the perjured testimony had broken down, Jesus did not hesitate to answer the question of the chief priest, thereby providing in his own testimony that which they desired as a basis for convicting him of blasphemy.

186:2.8 (1999.8) The Master never displayed the least interest in Pilate's well-meant but halfhearted efforts to effect his release. He really pitied Pilate and sincerely endeavored to enlighten his darkened mind. He was wholly passive to all the Roman governor's appeals to the Jews to withdraw their criminal charges against him. Throughout the whole sorrowful ordeal he bore himself with simple dignity and unostentatious majesty. He would not so much as cast reflections of insincerity upon his would-be murderers when they asked if he were "king of the Jews." With but little qualifying explanation he accepted the designation, knowing that, while they had chosen to reject him, he would be the last to afford them real national leadership, even in a spiritual sense.

186:2.9 (2000.1) Jesus said little during these trials, but he said enough to show all mortals the kind of human character man can perfect in partnership with God and to reveal to all the universe the manner in which God can become manifest in the life of the creature when such a creature truly chooses to do the will of the Father, thus becoming an active son of the living God.

186:2.10 (2000.2) His love for ignorant mortals is fully disclosed by his patience and great self-possession in the face of the jeers, blows, and buffetings of the coarse soldiers and the unthinking servants. He was not even angry when they blindfolded him and, derisively striking him in the face, exclaimed: "Prophecy to us who it was that struck you."

186:2.11 (2000.3) Pilate spoke more truly than he knew when, after Jesus had been scourged, he presented him before the multitude, exclaiming, "Behold the man!" Indeed, the fear-ridden Roman governor little dreamed that at just that moment the universe stood at attention, gazing upon this unique scene

of its beloved Sovereign thus subjected in humiliation to the taunts and blows of his darkened and degraded mortal subjects. And as Pilate spoke, there echoed throughout all Nebadon, "Behold God and man!" Throughout a universe, untold millions have ever since that day continued to behold that man, while the God of Havona, the supreme ruler of the universe of universes, accepts the man of Nazareth as the satisfaction of the ideal of the mortal creatures of this local universe of time and space. In his matchless life he never failed to reveal God to man. Now, in these final episodes of his mortal career and in his subsequent death, he made a new and touching revelation of man to God.

3. The Dependable David Zebedee

186:3.1 (2000.4) Shortly after Jesus was turned over to the Roman soldiers at the conclusion of the hearing before Pilate, a detachment of the temple guards hastened out to Gethsemane to disperse or arrest the followers of the Master. But long before their arrival these followers had scattered. The apostles had retired to designated hiding places; the Greeks had separated and gone to various homes in Jerusalem; the other disciples had likewise disappeared. David Zebedee believed that Jesus' enemies would return; so he early removed some five or six tents up the ravine near where the Master so often retired to pray and worship. Here he proposed to hide and at the same time maintain a center, or co-ordinating station, for his messenger service. David had hardly left the camp when the temple guards arrived. Finding no one there, they contented themselves with burning the camp and

then hastened back to the temple. On hearing their report, the Sanhedrin was satisfied that the followers of Jesus were so thoroughly frightened and subdued that there would be no danger of an uprising or any attempt to rescue Jesus from the hands of his executioners. They were at last able to breathe easily, and so they adjourned, every man going his way to prepare for the Passover.

186:3.2 (2000.5) As soon as Jesus was turned over to the Roman soldiers by Pilate for crucifixion, a messenger hastened away to Gethsemane to inform David, and within five minutes runners were on their way to Bethsaida, Pella, Philadelphia, Sidon, Shechem, Hebron, Damascus, and Alexandria. And these messengers carried the news that Jesus was about to be crucified by the Romans at the insistent behest of the rulers of the Jews.

186:3.3 (2001.1) Throughout this tragic day, until the message finally went forth that the Master had been laid in the tomb, David sent messengers about every half hour with reports to the apostles, the Greeks, and Jesus' earthly family, assembled at the home of Lazarus in Bethany. When the messengers departed with the word that Jesus had been buried, David dismissed his corps of local runners for the Passover celebration and for the coming Sabbath of rest, instructing them to report to him quietly on Sunday morning at the home of Nicodemus, where he proposed to go in hiding for a few days with Andrew and Simon Peter.

186:3.4 (2001.2) This peculiar-minded David Zebedee was the only one of the leading disciples of Jesus who was inclined to take a literal and plain matter-of-fact view of the Master's assertion that he would die and "rise again on the third day." David had once heard him make this prediction and, being of a literal turn of mind, now proposed to assemble his messengers

early Sunday morning at the home of Nicodemus so that they would be on hand to spread the news in case Jesus rose from the dead. David soon discovered that none of Jesus' followers were looking for him to return so soon from the grave; therefore did he say little about his belief and nothing about the mobilization of all his messenger force on early Sunday morning except to the runners who had been dispatched on Friday forenoon to distant cities and believer centers.

186:3.5 (2001.3) And so these followers of Jesus, scattered throughout Jerusalem and its environs, that night partook of the Passover and the following day remained in seclusion.

4. Preparation for the Crucifixion

186:4.1 (2001.4) After Pilate had washed his hands before the multitude, thus seeking to escape the guilt of delivering up an innocent man to be crucified just because he feared to resist the clamor of the rulers of the Jews, he ordered the Master turned over to the Roman soldiers and gave the word to their captain that he was to be crucified immediately. Upon taking charge of Jesus, the soldiers led him back into the courtyard of the praetorium, and after removing the robe which Herod had put on him, they dressed him in his own garments. These soldiers mocked and derided him, but they did not inflict further physical punishment. Jesus was now alone with these Roman soldiers. His friends were in hiding; his enemies had gone their way; even John Zebedee was no longer by his side.

186:4.2 (2001.5) It was a little after eight o'clock when Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers and a little before nine o'clock when they started for the scene of the crucifixion. During this period of more than half an hour Jesus never spoke a word. The executive business of a great universe was practically at a standstill. Gabriel and the chief rulers of Nebadon were either assembled here on Urantia, or else they were closely attending upon the space reports of the archangels in an effort to keep advised as to what was happening to the Son of Man on Urantia.

186:4.3 (2001.6) By the time the soldiers were ready to depart with Jesus for Golgotha, they had begun to be impressed by his unusual composure and extraordinary dignity, by his uncomplaining silence.

186:4.4 (2001.7) Much of the delay in starting off with Jesus for the site of the crucifixion was due to the last-minute decision of the captain to take along two thieves who had been condemned to die; since Jesus was to be crucified that morning, the Roman captain thought these two might just as well die with him as wait for the end of the Passover festivities.

186:4.5 (2002.1) As soon as the thieves could be made ready, they were led into the courtyard, where they gazed upon Jesus, one of them for the first time, but the other had often heard him speak, both in the temple and many months before at the Pella camp.

5. Jesus' Death in Relation to the Passover

186:5.1 (2002.2) There is no direct relation between the death of Jesus and the Jewish Passover. True, the Master did lay down his life in the flesh on

this day, the day of the preparation for the Jewish Passover, and at about the time of the sacrificing of the Passover lambs in the temple. But this coincidental occurrence does not in any manner indicate that the death of the Son of Man on earth has any connection with the Jewish sacrificial system. Jesus was a Jew, but as the Son of Man he was a mortal of the realms. The events already narrated and leading up to this hour of the Master's impending crucifixion are sufficient to indicate that his death at about this time was a purely natural and man-managed affair.

186:5.2 (2002.3) It was man and not God who planned and executed the death of Jesus on the cross. True, the Father refused to interfere with the march of human events on Urantia, but the Father in Paradise did not decree, demand, or require the death of his Son as it was carried out on earth. It is a fact that in some manner, sooner or later, Jesus would have had to divest himself of his mortal body, his incarnation in the flesh, but he could have executed such a task in countless ways without dying on a cross between two thieves. All of this was man's doing, not God's.

186:5.3 (2002.4) At the time of the Master's baptism he had already completed the technique of the required experience on earth and in the flesh which was necessary for the completion of his seventh and last universe bestowal. At this very time Jesus' duty on earth was done. All the life he lived thereafter, and even the manner of his death, was a purely personal ministry on his part for the welfare and uplifting of his mortal creatures on this world and on other worlds.

186:5.4 (2002.5) The gospel of the good news that mortal man may, by faith, become spirit-conscious that he is a son of God, is not dependent on the death of Jesus. True, indeed, all this gospel of the kingdom has been

tremendously illuminated by the Master's death, but even more so by his life.

186:5.5 (2002.6) All that the Son of Man said or did on earth greatly embellished the doctrines of sonship with God and of the brotherhood of men, but these essential relationships of God and men are inherent in the universe facts of God's love for his creatures and the innate mercy of the divine Sons. These touching and divinely beautiful relations between man and his Maker, on this world and on all others throughout the universe of universes, have existed from eternity; and they are not in any sense dependent on these periodic bestowal enactments of the Creator Sons of God, who thus assume the nature and likeness of their created intelligences as a part of the price which they must pay for the final acquirement of unlimited sovereignty over their respective local universes.

186:5.6 (2002.7) The Father in heaven loved mortal man on earth just as much before the life and death of Jesus on Urantia as he did after this transcendent exhibition of the copartnership of man and God. This mighty transaction of the incarnation of the God of Nebadon as a man on Urantia could not augment the attributes of the eternal, infinite, and universal Father, but it did enrich and enlighten all other administrators and creatures of the universe of Nebadon. While the Father in heaven loves us no more because of this bestowal of Michael, all other celestial intelligences do. And this is because Jesus not only made a revelation of God to man, but he also likewise made a new revelation of man to the Gods and to the celestial intelligences of the universe of universes.

186:5.7 (2003.1) Jesus is not about to die as a sacrifice for sin. He is not going to atone for the inborn moral guilt of the human race. Mankind has no

such racial guilt before God. Guilt is purely a matter of personal sin and knowing, deliberate rebellion against the will of the Father and the administration of his Sons.

186:5.8 (2003.2) Sin and rebellion have nothing to do with the fundamental bestowal plan of the Paradise Sons of God, albeit it does appear to us that the salvage plan is a provisional feature of the bestowal plan.

186:5.9 (2003.3) The salvation of God for the mortals of Urantia would have been just as effective and unerringly certain if Jesus had not been put to death by the cruel hands of ignorant mortals. If the Master had been favorably received by the mortals of earth and had departed from Urantia by the voluntary relinquishment of his life in the flesh, the fact of the love of God and the mercy of the Son—the fact of sonship with God—would have in no wise been affected. You mortals are the sons of God, and only one thing is required to make such a truth factual in your personal experience, and that is your spirit-born faith.

The Urantia Book

<< [Paper 186](#) | [Parts](#) | [Content](#) | [Paper 188](#) >>

Paper 187

The Crucifixion

187:0.1 (2004.1) 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. 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.

187:0.2 (2004.2) 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 (2004.3) What Jesus is now about to do, submit to death on the cross, he does of his own free will. In foretelling this experience, he said: “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 (2004.4) 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

187:1.1 (2004.5) 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 (2004.6) 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. 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 in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic, and it read: “Jesus of Nazareth—the King of the Jews.”

187:1.3 (2005.1) 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 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, “He said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’” 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 (2005.2) 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.

187:1.5 (2005.3) Crucifixion was not a Jewish mode of punishment. Both the Greeks and the Romans learned this method of execution from the

Phoenicians. 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 (2005.4) 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. As he passed by, many of these women bewailed and lamented. And when some of them even dared to follow along by his side, the Master turned his head toward them and said: "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. Behold, the days are coming in which you shall say: Blessed are the barren and those whose breasts have never suckled their young. 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."

187:1.7 (2005.5) 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 (2006.1) 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. 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 (2006.2) 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.

187:1.10 (2006.3) 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 (2006.4) 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

187:2.1 (2006.5) The soldiers first bound the Master's arms with cords to the crossbeam, 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.

187:2.2 (2007.1) 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 (2007.2) 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 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 (2007.3) 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.

187:2.5 (2007.4) 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 (2007.5) 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. 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 (2007.6) 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 (2007.7) 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, had divided his clothes among them, 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 (2008.1) 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

187:3.1 (2008.2) 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.

187:3.2 (2008.3) 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.

187:3.3 (2008.4) 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 (2008.5) 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 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 (2008.6) 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 (2008.7) 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

187:4.1 (2008.8) 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, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And then Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say to you today, you shall sometime be with me in Paradise."

187:4.2 (2009.1) 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.

187:4.3 (2009.2) 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. Luke subsequently heard this story from the converted Roman captain of the guard.

187:4.4 (2009.3) 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.

187:4.5 (2009.4) 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 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 (2009.5) 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 (2009.6) 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. 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. Mary did not live quite one year after the death of Jesus.

187:4.8 (2010.1) After Mary left, 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

187:5.1 (2010.2) Although it was early in the season for such a phenomenon, shortly after twelve o'clock the sky darkened by reason of the fine sand in the air. The people of Jerusalem knew that this meant 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 (2010.3) 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, "I know the Lord will save his anointed," "Your hand shall find out all my enemies," 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; 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 (2010.4) 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 (2010.5) 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 (2011.1) It was just before three o’clock when Jesus, with a loud voice, cried out, “It is finished! Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” 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; truly he must have been a Son of God.” And from that hour he began to believe in Jesus.

187:5.6 (2011.2) 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 at such a death—the Master could truly say, “It is finished.”

187:5.7 (2011.3) Because this was the preparation day for both the Passover and the Sabbath, the Jews did not want these bodies to be exposed on Golgotha. Therefore they went before Pilate asking that the legs of these three men be broken, that they be dispatched, 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.

187:5.8 (2011.4) When these soldiers arrived at Golgotha, they did accordingly to the two thieves, but they found Jesus already dead, much to their surprise. However, in order to make sure of his death, one of the soldiers pierced his left side with his spear. Though it was common for the victims of crucifixion to linger alive upon the cross for even two or three

days, 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 (2011.5) 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 (2011.6) After the death of the Master, John sent the women, in 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 (2011.7) 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.