

A WEEK OF WONDERS GOLGOTHA TO THE GARDEN TOMB MATTHEW 27, JOHN 19

One of the most colorful heroes of British history was a general named [Charles “Chinese” Gordon](#). He stood a mere 5’ 5”, and lived just 51 years, from 1833-1885.

In his short lifetime, Gordon *led a band of Chinese guerrilla fighters... he was a colonel in the Egyptian army... he fought the slave trade in Sudan... he built forts along the Thames River in England...* And despite some eccentric and quirky beliefs, everywhere General Gordon traveled he tried to spread the Christian faith.

Gordon had more than his share of adventure.

When an actor was cast to play the larger-than-life Gordon in a 1966 movie, [“Khartoum,”](#) they got Charlton Heston. It took *the cinematic Moses* to play Gordon.

But Chinese Gordon is best known for popularizing a theory regarding the site of Jesus’ crucifixion.

In 1883, *exhausted from his exploits*, Gordon visited the Holy Land for some needed rest and relaxation.

While in Jerusalem, he grew interested in the site of Jesus’ crucifixion. After studying the evidence, he rejected *the traditional site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher*, and concluded that an outcropping of rock, just beyond the northern wall, was the actual location.

Today, this hill is known as [“Gordon’s Calvary.”](#)

And today, many archeologists believe Ole Chinese Gordon was right. Ancient Jews

referred to this place as "Beth-has-sekîlah" or "house of stoning." In Bible times this area was known as a site for executions.

We know the Romans carried out crucifixions next to major thoroughfares - as an example to the masses.

Imagine, making your morning commute down Stone Mountain Freeway and seeing the road lined with crucified criminals. It produced maximum shock effect.

And Gordon's Calvary was along the major road from Jerusalem to Damascus. Even today the spot is a transportation hub. There's an adjacent bus station.

Hebrews 13:12 indicates Jesus was crucified outside the walls. Again, Gordon's Calvary was just outside the northern wall of Jerusalem near the Damascus Gate.

The Gospels don't say, but either Jesus was crucified along the road, *at eye-level to passers-by* - or on the top of the cliff, *visible from a far distance*.

Matthew 27:33 says simply, "When they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull..." Locals still call Gordon's Calvary, "Skull Hill."

The face of the cliff has a skull-like shape.

If you stand at the base of Gordon's Calvary and look back toward the Old City of Jerusalem you notice bedrock under the walls. This was the mountain that once extended across the street to include Skull Hill.

In the days of King Solomon this area between the walls and Golgotha served as a rock quarry. The stones excavated here were used to build the Temple.

It was actually a single mountain from the Temple all the way to Skull Hill - its OT name was "Mount Moriah."

And this was the same mountain to which God commanded Abraham to go and offer His son, Isaac.

If Abraham went to the top of the mountain to sacrifice His son - *which I'm sure he did* - then he climbed to the spot that General Gordon identified as the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Amazing, where Abraham offered up his son, God the Father sacrificed Jesus.

The bizarre story of Abraham and Isaac was actually a glimpse into the heart of God. It was a preview of what God endured the day His Son was crucified.

Over the last four weeks we've been tracing the final earthly footsteps of Jesus... from [His Grand Arrival to the Garden of Gethsemane](#) - from [the Garden to Pilate's headquarters](#) - from [Gabbatha to Golgotha](#)...

And today, from [the cross to the Garden Tomb](#).

This leg of the journey will take your breath away!

A quartet of Roman soldiers have been in charge of Jesus out of the Praetorium to His place of execution.

Now He's handed over to trained executioners.

These soldiers have crucified thousands of men.

They're brutal and callous. Their consciences have been seared. As they report for duty that morning, they assume that today will be just another day at the office.

The first step in a crucifixion was to offer the victim a pain-killer, a narcotic. Matthew 27:34 tells us, **“they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.”** We'll come back to this later, but Jesus refused to

knock the edge off His pain. There'd be no *valium* for the Savior!

Verse 35 reads, "Then they crucified Him..."

In 1968 the bones of a crucifixion victim were discovered at an Israeli settlement north of Jerusalem.

The archeology shed light on Roman crucifixion, and validated the Gospels' account of the cross of Christ.

First, the victim was laid on the ground and seven inch iron spikes were nailed through his wrists into a olive wood beam. This crossbeam was raised, and attached to a standing post. His legs were pushed up under his torso, so his heels were touching his buttocks. A single spike was driven through both heels.

And since an olive tree doesn't grow very high the cross' height was just a few inches taller than its victim.

Medical Doctor and historian, Truman Davis, gives us a description of the agonizing pain the crucified person endured once He'd been nailed to the cross...

"As his body slowly sags down it puts more weight on the nails in the wrists - excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As he pushes himself upward, he places his full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves...

As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but it can't be exhaled. The crucified fights to raise himself up in order to get even one small breath.

Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs, and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically he's able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in some life-giving oxygen.

He endures hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing pain. Tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down the rough timber.

Then another agony begins. He experiences a crushing pain deep within the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and compresses the heart.

It is almost over now... the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues - the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The victim can feel the chill of death... Finally he can allow his body to die."

Often I ask myself the question, *why crucifixion?*

It's one thing for God to die, but why did the Son of God suffer the most hideous death ever invented?

Why did God not send His Son at a time when lethal injections were the mode of execution... or even the electric chair? A means that's quick... easy... painless.

And the short answer is that our sin is *not quick... or easy... or painless...* Our sin grieves God. Sin not only *breaks God's law* - but far worse, it *breaks His heart*.

In God's eyes, our sin deserves the most brutal death imaginable. This is why Jesus refused the pain-numbing potion. He bore the full brunt of our penalty.

Realize, the cross demonstrates two big truths: **the severity of my sin and the sincerity of God's love.**

Though the penalty of sin demanded a steep price - Jesus paid it in full. Romans 5:8 announces the good news, **“God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

How much does Jesus love us... (Spread arms)

Once a little boy went to church with his dad. The church had a cross at the front of the sanctuary. The boy asked, **“Dad, what’s the meaning of that cross?”**

His father replied, **“Son, Jesus died because people nailed Him to a cross.”** That’s when the little guy’s eyes grew big as saucers. He looked around at the room-full of church-folk and asked, **“You mean, these people?”**

And if the father had answered honestly... he would’ve responded, **“Yes son, these people!”**

Who crucified Jesus? The Jews? Well yes, they played a part. **The Romans?** Yes, they had a role. **But who really crucified Jesus?** The answer is you and me.

We drove the nails into His hands and feet.

It’s said, **“Every man is born with a fist full of nails, and he dies with his hands empty.”** We’re all guilty!

Luke and John tell us two other men were crucified that day with Jesus. Criminals were hung to His right hand and to His left. Jesus died between two thieves.

Did you hear about the old pastor on his death bed. He kept asking his nurse, **“Please, call my Congressman and Senator. I want to die in peace.”**

The nurse thought it was a strange request, but she complied. When the two politicians entered the room the pastor told each of them to stand on either side of his bed. He told the nurse, "Now I can die in peace."

The nurse had to ask, "*Pastor, how does having your Congressman and Senator by your side enable you to die in peace?*" The old pastor answered, "Nurse, now I can die like my Lord Jesus - **between two thieves!**"

Realize, Jesus made seven statements from the cross. None of the Gospel writers mention them all. It takes *all four Gospels* to gather *all seven statements*.

Jesus utters His first words in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." This is amazing grace - especially in light of the situation...

A plague on the cross - the Romans called it the "titulus" - listed the victim's crimes. Jerusalem was a cosmopolitan city, so Pilate wrote the charge against Jesus, in the three major languages - Hebrew, Greek Latin - "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

It's interesting, at the time, *Hebrew* was the language of religion. *Greek* was the language of culture and philosophy. And *Latin* was the language of government and law. And all three had a hand in crucifying Jesus...

Of course, this title incensed the Jews. Pilate knew they'd rejected Jesus as their king. This was a final dig.

He wanted to anger the Jews for forcing him to crucify an innocent man. Yet they took out their frustrations on Jesus. They mocked and blasphemed...

"He saved others, let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." These mockers wanted a *Christ*, just not a *crucified Christ*. Jesus was proving He

was Messiah by going to the cross. But in their minds, being a Savior and King meant coming off the cross.

The Jews wanted *miracles* not *sacrifice*.

And the same is true today. Folks look for heroes. People who'll champion the human spirit, and make us feel good about ourselves. They want poster boys for the good in man. Folks don't mind a miracle working Christ - or moral example - or an embodiment of love...

But a suffering Savior is another matter. Folks today, *like the Jews of old*, prefer a Christ without a cross.

A Crucified Christ means we've all messed up. Something is terribly wrong with the human race. The cross spotlights *human depravity*, not *human potential*.

Only humble and repentant people - who admit their sin and need for forgiveness - desire *a crucified Christ*.

The Jews at the foot of the cross screamed, "**Crucify Him!**" Now they're mocking and hurling insults... **The Romans** are pounding in nails and manufacturing pain... **His disciples** have forsaken and denied Him...

And Jesus prays for them all - and for every sinner who's held a hammer. He's praying for our forgiveness.

From the Garden of Eden onward man has rebelled against His Creator, yet God keeps loving, and wooing, and reaching, and longing for us to return to Him.

If people had known God's heart. If they'd taken the time to listen to Jesus, *it would've never come to this...*

They would've fallen on their faces in gratitude, and surrendered. Instead, they were blinded by ignorance.

And apparently while the Jews were sneering, the Roman soldiers were shooting craps for Jesus' cloak.

Matthew 27:35 tells us the soldiers *“divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: ‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’”*

It's a quote from Psalm 22. Over and over as Jesus suffers, He fulfills Scripture. All that occurred on the cross was foretold by God thousands of years before.

Luke 23:39 gives us the dialogue between the two thieves... *“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’”* This guy joined the jeering Jews.

“But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’” Like Pilate this fellow saw that Jesus was innocent. *Yet he goes further than the Governor...*

He acts on the truth He knows. A thief has faith. *“He said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’”* And Jesus said to him, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

The Greek word Luke chooses for *“criminal,”* meant *“one who uses violence to rob openly.”* Which means this man wasn't being crucified for credit card theft.

He wasn't a white-collar criminal. He was an armed robber - guilty of murder and

mayhem. On earth he undoubtedly deserved a capital sentence, but in eternity Jesus promises Him Paradise... *And why?*

Obviously, His salvation has nothing to do with *the works of his hands* - they're nailed to a piece of wood.

And it has nothing to do with *the places he'll go for Jesus' sake* - his feet are also nailed to that wood.

And it certainly wasn't because *he joined a church* - if you're nailed to a cross, you can't get out to church...

There's only one thing this man could do - and that was believe. He looked to Jesus for His salvation. *This was all he could do, but it was all he had to do!* We all come to God the same way - *by grace through faith.*

I often think of this boy's poor parents. They went to bed every night after this day thinking their son was frying on the grill in hell... *But you never really know what happens in a person's heart in their final seconds.*

There is such a thing as a death bed conversion.

I've heard it put, *"God included one death bed conversion in the Bible to give us hope, but only one not to create any false hope."* You may die an instant death and not get a final chance. There're no guarantees. That's why if you don't know Jesus, come to Him today. It really could be your last opportunity.

It's fitting that John mentions a touching act by Jesus on behalf of his mother. John 19:26, *"When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by (which was John's way of referring to himself), He said to His mother, "Woman,*

behold your son!"

Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"

And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." Mary's husband, Joseph, had died earlier.

Jesus was her oldest son, and now He turns over the care of his mother to the Apostle John. Obviously, this was a big honor. Jesus trusted John. Also, since John was the youngest disciple, he stood to live the longest.

It's appalling what Roman Catholicism has done to Mary. She wasn't sinless, or a perpetual virgin, or a Savior, or divine, and she has no more clout with God than any other believer...*Mary was just a wonderful girl!*

Of all Jesus' disciples it's possible Mary made the greatest sacrifices to follow Jesus. Three decades earlier, her whole world had been turned upside down by the news that she would miraculously birth a child.

Now at the foot of the cross she watches that child brutally tortured and executed. Though her sacrifice had no atoning side-effects, her surrender to the will of God is an example to us all of true, costly commitment.

Imagine, Mary's thoughts at the cross... Did she remember the myrrh, the embalming fluid the wise men brought to her baby – *she now realizes it's purpose!*

The words of Simeon in the Temple at His dedication are now ringing in her ears, "Yes, a sword will pierce through you own soul also." She now feels the sting!

Mary had surrendered all her dreams to the will of God, and now Jesus *rewards her sacrifice by insuring her future.* He turns her care over to the Disciple John.

Mary would spend the rest of her life under his roof.

Mark 15:25 tells us the crucifixion commenced at the “third hour” or 9:00 AM. He’s been on the cross now for three hours. Sometimes the crucified hung on for days. They were still alive as birds pecked at their flesh.

This won’t happen to Jesus. Matthew 27:45 reads, “Now from the sixth hour (or at noon) until the ninth hour (3:00 PM) there was darkness over all the land.”

It was *midnight at midday*. Dark blankets the land.

Remember, when Jesus was born the wise men saw a star, a light in the heavens. Now when Jesus dies, the sky turns pitch black. God turns out the lights!

And there was a reason for the darkness. Matthew 27:46, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!” Here Jesus spoke in Aramaic, the language of the common person.

The aristocratic Jews and chief priests mistook His words as a cry for Elijah... instead He cried for God.

Jesus’ shout from the cross was an expression of an unprecedented alienation. Philip Yancey writes, “Some inconceivable split had opened up in the Godhead.”

God the Son felt abandoned by *God the Father*.

Imagine, Isaac’s reaction when he saw his father, Abraham, raise the knife to make him the sacrifice.

In John 8:29, Jesus had recounted His unbroken fellowship with the Father, "He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." Since before time began, the Son of God lived in perfect harmony with His Father.

Now suddenly, Jesus senses the pains of rejection.

Jesus feels what He has never felt before. This is the most mysterious, and monumental moment in history...

When Jesus utters the words, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*"... Suddenly, the sin of all mankind is thrust upon Jesus' sacrificial shoulders.

Jesus was the spotless lamb. He was innocent. Morally, his heart was as tender as a baby's behind.

Imagine His shock to sense a single speck of sin.

Now imagine the piercing fright - the staggering horror - to sense every sin that's ever been committed.

For the first time, Jesus felt not only the sting of a single sin - but He felt all sin - *the sin of the rapist, the serial killer, the child molester, the secret gossip...* All mankind's sin came crashing down on Jesus at once.

1 Corinthians 5:21 explains the plan of God, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus was God. He never ceased being God. He lived forever with God the Father in warm, unbroken fellowship. From eternity past nothing had interrupted the Godhead's *holy harmony*. Yet for a moment on the cross *the Son of God* became *an orphaned child*.

It boggles the brain, but God was separated from God, so that through Jesus, you and I can be restored.

When my son, Zack, was two years-old he contracted an infection, and had to be hospitalized.

They wanted to feed him antibiotics through an IV.

The nurse told Kathy and I we needed to leave the room. It would be painful for Zack, and he would associate the pain with his parents if we were present.

Kathy was smart. Being a nurse she knew what was coming. She walked down the hall - but I stood outside the door of the operating room to be close to my son...

Suddenly the screaming started... I'll never forget it!

It probably lasted a few seconds, but for me it was an eternity. My little guy kept crying "I want my Daddy, where is my Daddy?" Trust me, I could've clawed through that door - or jerked it off its hinges - but love made me wait outside until the procedure was done!

And standing in the hall that day, with tears rolling down my cheeks, God spoke to my heart as clearly as He's ever spoken to me in my life. "Now Sandy, you know what I endured, when My Son died for You!" I've never known God's love as strong as in that moment!

When Jesus cried, "*I want My Daddy! Where is My Father?*" Love for us, made God wait outside the door!

John 19:28 tells us, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now

accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth." This was the cheap wine the soldiers drank.

Earlier, Jesus rejected the narcotic the Romans offered. This "*sour wine*" was not to deaden the pain. It moistened Jesus' lips so He could utter His final words.

The liquid was applied with hyssop - a spongy leaf.

Verse 30 "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" This is just one word in the original language, "Tetelestai." It means "*finished, completed.*" And it was used in a number of ways...

A **servant** completing a task uttered... "*Tetelestai.*"

A **priest** pronouncing a lamb faultless... "*Tetelestai.*"

When an **artist** placed the last brushstroke on the canvas to complete his work, he sighed... "*Tetelestai.*"

When a **customer** paid the balance of his bill, the merchant would write "*Tetelestai*" across the ledger.

On the cross Jesus did all this and more...

He completed the task He was sent to do...

He was the flawless, sinless sacrifice...

He perfected God's masterpiece of redemption...

He settled our account. The penalty for our sin is now paid in full... On the cross Jesus tied up all the loose ends of our salvation. All that had been dangling unfinished since the beginning of time... Jesus finished the puzzle. He filled up all that had been lacking.

On the cross Jesus perfected God's redemption. All that comes afterward is the realization of that work.

Once, an eccentric old evangelist named, Alexander Wooten, was visited by a desperate, young man, who asked frantically, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?"

Wooten replied, "*It's too late!*"

The man wouldn't take no for an answer. He begged, "Please, is there anything I can do to be saved?"

The evangelist explained, "*It's too late for you to do anything. The work has already been done. All you have to do is believe!*" This is our glorious Gospel!

In Luke 23:46 we find Jesus' seventh and final statement. "When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." (And) Having said this, He breathed His last."

John 19:30 tells us, Jesus "bow(ed) His head" as He gave up His spirit. The word translated "*bowed*" means "*to recline your head on a pillow.*" Jesus has finished His work, now He's laying His head in His Father's lap.

Jesus was nobody's *victim*. He was the *victor!*

He called the shots throughout His crucifixion. No one took His life. Our Lord laid it down voluntarily.

And though most of the crowd *on earth* was oblivious to what had just happened *in heaven*, God's creation knew. Nature itself erupted with appropriate praise!...

Matthew records *three miracles* that occurred...

First, the colossal Temple veil was torn. This curtain was huge, heavy - it took an

army of priests to move.

This veil represented the separation between God and man. But once Jesus paid the penalty for our sin, God opened the door. Heaven held an open house!

And Matthew is specific, it tore “**from top to bottom.**”

Salvation flows downward. It's initiated by *God's grace*, not *our goodness*... Today, all that can separate you from God is your refusal to trust in Jesus Christ!

And Matthew writes of more miracles, “**and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened...**” Nature reacted to our glorious redemption...

The earth realized that sin's curse was temporary. The ground rumbled and rocks broke out with praise!

A few of the graves in Jerusalem popped open.

Notice... **it was snap** (the veil tore), **crackle** (rocks split), **pop** (graves opened)! It was **snap, crackle, pop!**

Matthew writes, “**and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.**” We're told of it here, but apparently it didn't occur until after Jesus' resurrection.

But Jesus' victory over death, hell, and the grave shook up the underworld. It sent some Jerusalem corpses bursting to life in a gesture of celebration and praise! It's Jesus who holds the keys to life and death!

Nature was impressed, *as was a crusty centurion...* Matthew 27:54 tells us, “So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

This was a hard, battle-scarred man. He’d callously come to work that day thinking it would be just another day at the office. Earlier he’d gambled for Jesus’ shirt.

But something happened in his heart. The centurion heard Jesus’ seven statements... He watched His composure... *This sarge was softened by the Savior.*

And Jesus still has this effect on rough and tumble men. When He gets hold of a heart the most hard-boiled, calloused person becomes putty in His hands.

I love Matthew’s final observation from Golgotha, “many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene...” This Mary was the bad girl - a prostitute possessed by seven demons.

Yet Jesus set Mary free - gave her a new life. Jesus *softens stubborn men*, and He *heals tortured women*.

Under special circumstances Rome hastened the crucified’s death by breaking their legs. No way to push up, and expand the lungs, caused quick asphyxiation.

But when they came to administer this mercy to Jesus, He was already dead. It fulfilled a prophecy, Psalm 34:20, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.”

Just to be certain, one of the soldiers poked a spear into Jesus’ ribcage, and out flowed blood and water.

Medical doctors tell us the only time blood separates into water and plasma is when the heart muscle ruptures. **The Savior literally died of a broken heart!**

It's no surprise all four Gospel writers go to extremes to detail the burial of Jesus. It was important that there was no mistaking what had been done with His body...

John 19:38, **“Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus...”** Notice, Joseph was a *secret follower, an undercover Christian.*

Yet how do you stay silent after such a sacrifice? It's the Savior's suffering that coaxed him out of the closet.

And in a day when anybody and everybody with a twisted perversion feels free to come out of the closet and flaunt their sin, it's high time those of us who love Jesus *came out - went public - got vocal* with our faith.

There's an ancient record of Pilate's conversation with Joseph. He asked him, ***“Joey, you're usually pretty stingy. Do you really want to give away a perfectly good tomb?”*** Joseph replied, ***“Oy vey Governor, He'll only need it for the weekend.”*** It was a three day lease.

Joseph steps up to bury the body, which prompts a another secret believer to follow suit. ***“Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.”***

Here's the biggest waste in history. Forget the Army's \$5000 hammer. *Burial spices for Jesus was a needless expense!* Nick's wife was well stocked with aloe vera.

“Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as

the custom of the Jews is to bury.” It was a rushed job. Matthew implies all they did was lay the linen shroud over Him. They were fighting the clock. They’ll return Sunday to finish.

“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus...”

Our Lord was buried in *an unused, Garden Tomb...*

Which makes ole Chinese Gordon’s observations all the more convincing - for just a hundred yards from Gordon’s Calvary is a Garden Tomb that dates back to the time of Christ. It’s an exact match to John’s specs.

Matthew says Joseph and crew then “rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed...”

It appears that Hell has triumphed... The chief priests have had their way... Romans have done their job...

But a few of the Jews still aren’t satisfied. The next day they book an appointment with Governor Pilate...

Jesus said He would rise again in three days!

The Jews warn Pilate the disciples might try to steal the body, and concoct a ruse. They ask for a security detail to be assigned to the tomb... Pilate complies...

As the sun sets Saturday night *an official Roman seal and trained Roman soldiers* now stand guard.

No way are the chicken-little disciples going to risk death - *by seal or by sword* - just to foster a hoax from which they'll never prosper. Besides, which of the timid disciples are going to overpower special-op Romans?

There's one certainty, what happens next has nothing to do with His fumbling followers! Rather than staged by disciples, the empty tomb was an inside job.

Jesus has saved His greatest miracle for last!

When the sun comes up on Sunday, news from the Garden Tomb will begin to spread around the world.

Life will change for billions. Hope has come!