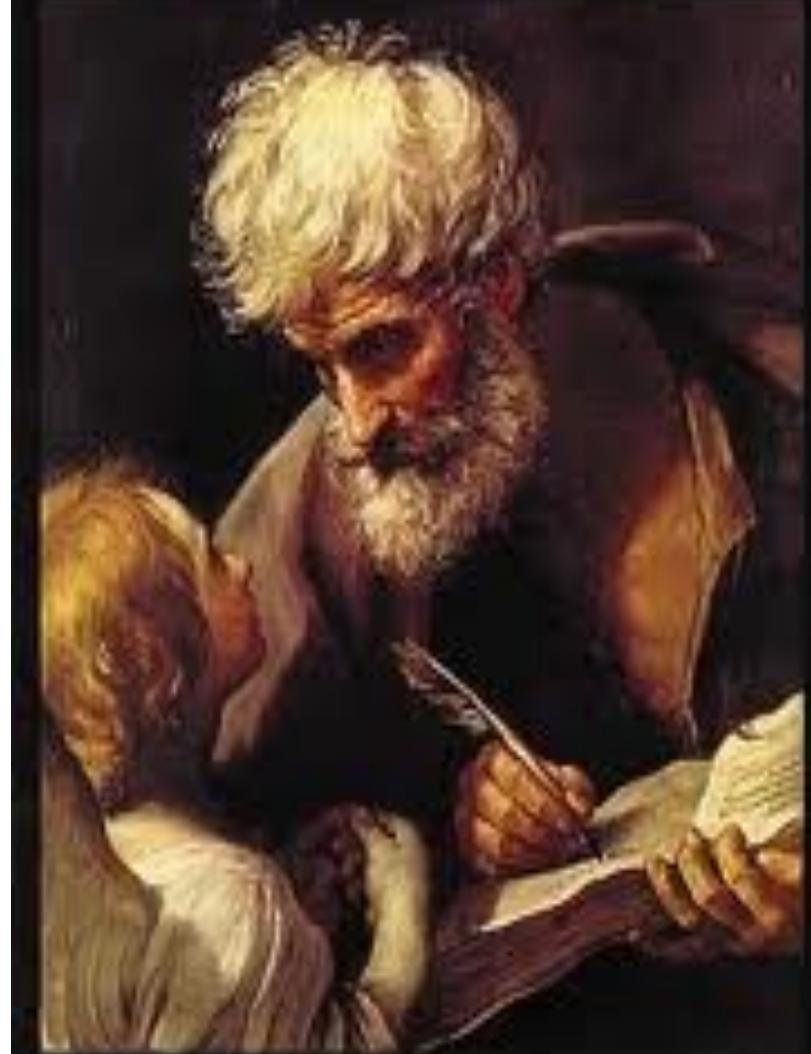


# A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



**CHAPTER 27: 1-20**

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that *He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## Matthew 27: 1-20

Douay Rheims Version

*The continuation of the history of the passion of Christ. His death and burial.*

1. And when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus, that they might put him to death.
2. And they brought him bound and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.
3. Then Judas, who betrayed him, seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients,
4. Saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it.
5. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed and went and hanged himself with an halter.

*should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.* The Chief Priests used the time which Pilate had given the people for consideration in persuading them to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus, as the most dangerous person of the two.

Notice here the effect of anger and malice, and the false and perverted judgments of the world. Jesus, the author of salvation, was to suffer; but Barabbas, the murderer, was to be spared. But God undoubtedly so ordered it that the Innocent should suffer, and thus atone for the guilt of sinners, whom Barabbas represented.

*Which is called Christ.* Pilate was in earnest, wishing the Jews to demand His deliverance, as being their promised Messiah.

**Verse 18-** *For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.* From their general bearing and demeanour, and also from his own knowledge of His holiness, and teaching, and boldness in reproof.

**Verse 19-** *When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day (this night) in a dream because of Him.* This act of Pilate's wife is a fresh effort to deliver Him. Her dreams were full of threats against her husband and herself, if he condemned Christ. Some suppose them to have been the work of an evil angel, wishing to prevent His death, lest sinners should be saved by Him. (*See the Sermon on the Passion, apud S. Cyprian; S. Bernard, Serm. i. in Pasch; Lyranus, Dionys. Carthus., Rabanus, and others.*)

Origen, S. Hilary, S. Chrysostom, S. Augustine, S. Ambrose, and others more correctly suppose that it was the work of a holy angel, and that the dream was sent to Pilate's wife (not himself): 1. That both sexes (as well as all the elements afterwards) might witness to Christ's innocence. 2. That she might make it publicly known by telling her husband. 3. Because she appears to have been a noble, tenderhearted, and holy woman. Origen, S. Chrysostom, and others consider that she was in this way brought to a true belief in Christ. S. Augustine (*in Aurea Catena*) says, "that both husband and wife bore witness to Christ;" "thus presaging," says S. Jerome, "the faith of the Gentiles." And S. Augustine (*Serm. cxxi. de Temp.*), "In the beginning of the world the wife leads the husband to death, in the Passion she leads him on to salvation." Joanna, too, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, was one of those who ministered to Christ of their substance.

The Greek Menology terms her Procula; some suggest that she was Claudia (2 Tim. iv. 21), as she probably remained at Rome when he was banished. S. Augustine implies that she converted him (*Serm. iii. de Epiph.*). "The Magi came from the East, Pilate from the West. They accordingly witnessed to Him at His birth, he at His death, that they might sit down with Abraham, &c., not as their descendants in the flesh, but as grafted into them by faith." Tertullian, too (*Apol. cap. xxi.*), speaks of Pilate as a Christian.

But all this is at variance with what others say of his banishment and his self-inflicted death.

When Pilate then is termed a Christian, it must mean a favourer and protector of His innocence. He yielded, it is true, at last to the threats of the Jews; and so it was that by the just retribution of God he was himself the victim of the like false charge from the Jews, who caused him to be exiled.

**Verse 20-** *But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they*

**6.** But the chief priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them into the corbona, because it is the price of blood.

**7.** And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field, to be a burying place for strangers.

**8.** For this cause that field was called Haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day.

**9.** Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was prized, whom they prized of the children of Israel.

**10.** And they gave them unto the potter's field, as the Lord appointed to me.

**11.** And Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus saith to him: Thou sayest it.

**12.** And when he was accused by the chief priests and ancients, he answered nothing.

**13.** Then Pilate saith to him: Dost not thou hear how great testimonies they allege against thee?

**14.** And he answered him to never a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly.

**15.** Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would.

**16.** And he had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas.

**17.** They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to You: Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?

**18.** For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

**19.** And as he was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

**20.** But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas and make Jesus away.

**21.** And the governor answering, said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But they said: Barabbas.

**22.** Pilate saith to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? They say all: Let him be crucified.

**23.** The governor said to them: Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let him be crucified.

**24.** And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it.

**25.** And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children.

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

**27.** Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto him the whole band.

**28.** And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him.

29. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews.

30. And spitting upon him, they took the reed and struck his head.

31. And after they had mocked him, they took off the cloak from him and put on him his own garments and led him away to crucify him.

32. And going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross.

33. And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary.

34. And they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted, he would not drink.

35. And after they had crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: They divided my garments among them; and upon my vesture they cast lots.

36. And they sat and watched him.

37. And they put over his head his cause written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38. Then were crucified with him two thieves: one on the right hand and one on the left.

39. And they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads,

40. And saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41. In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking said:

42. He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross: and we will believe him.

43. He trusted in God: let him now deliver him if he will have him. For he said: I am the Son of God.

44. And the selfsame thing the thieves also that were crucified with him reproached him with.

45. Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour.

46. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? That is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47. And some that stood there and heard said: This man calleth Elias.

48. And immediately one of them running took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink.

49. And the others said: Let be. Let us see whether Elias will come to deliver him.

50. And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom: and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent.

52. And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose,

53. And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many.

54. Now the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God.

records Jesus being sent to Herod, Pilate and Herod being reconciled, and His coming back again in a gorgeous or white robe. This was the dress of candidates for an office, of royal persons, and also of buffoons: Herod mocking in this way at the supposed ambition of Jesus in affecting to be a king.

*Symbolically:* The white garment represented the innocence, victory, immortality, glory, &c., of Christ, which He purchased by His sufferings and insults. "Let thy garments be always white" (Eccles. ix. 8). And so S. Ambrose, "He is arrayed in white, in evidence of His immaculate Passion," and that as the spotless Lamb of God He took on Himself the sins of the world. Pilate then saw what was Herod's object in sending Him back, and said to the Chief Priests (Luke xxiii. 14), "Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people . . . I will therefore correct Him, and let Him go," that is, chastise and punish Him, not for His offence (for He is guiltless), but to satiate your rage against Him. Shortly afterwards he proposed another plan for His deliverance, viz., by releasing some one to them at the Passover, having little doubt, if the choice were given them, whom they would prefer. This Paschal custom was introduced in memory of the deliverance from Egypt. But did Pilate really wish to release Christ? Rupertus thinks it was mere pretence, for that he had secretly agreed with the Jews to put Him to death, having given Him up to their will. But S. Augustine and the rest suppose, more correctly, that Pilate was sincere (see Luke xxiii. 20 and Acts iii. 13). This is clear also from the many occasions on which he laboured to save Him (see John xviii. 31, 38; Luke xxiii. 7, 15).

**Verse 16-** *For he had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas.* Notorious, that is, for his crimes. S. John terms him "a robber." S. Mark and S. Luke, "one who had committed murder in the insurrection." "Notorious," says S. Chrysostom, "for his bold bearing, and stained with many murders." Now to be thus compared with Barabbas, and counted his inferior, was a great dishonour and pain to Christ. And His patience under this wrong is a fitting pattern to all Christians when slights are put on them.

**Barabbas.** In Hebrew "the Son of a father, of Adam, i.e., the first father of all sinners." And Christ was made lower than Adam when He took on Himself to atone for his disobedience and sin.

S. Jerome explains it less correctly as Barabbas, the son of a Master.

**Verse 17-** *When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus?* "That if the Chief Priests wished through envy to destroy Him, the people, who had experienced His manifold benefits, might ask for His life," saith Druthmar; or if, as S. Chrysostom says, "they did not wish to pronounce Him innocent, they might release Him, though guilty, in consideration of the feast."

power: 1. In its origin, for God gave it to Christ. 2. In its stability, for it cannot be overcome, and abides for ever. 3. In its object, as extending to all created beings, even to angels (see Rev. xix. 16; i. 5; Matt. xxviii. 18). This was His, as man, by reason of His hypostatic union with the Word or Son of God. And accordingly this sovereignty is peculiar to Christ as man, nor has He communicated it to any one, not even to S. Peter and the Pontiffs his successors.

It will be asked whether Christ as man had a human claim to the Jewish kingdom? And I say, He had; for He was the son, the successor, and heir of David. He did not, it is true, enter on His kingdom, nor was He inaugurated as King. But yet He furnished an instance of what He was by His triumph and entry into Jerusalem. He did not actually enter on His kingdom, both because the family of David had long ceased to reign, and the kingdom had by common consent passed into other hands.

**Verse 12-** *And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.* 1. Because all the charges against Him were false, and deserved not an answer. So S. Augustine (*Serm. cxviii. de Temp.*), "The Lord by keeping silence does not confirm the charge, but makes light of it. For far better is that cause which is undefended, and yet is successful; that justice is most complete which is not supported by words but is based on truth. The Saviour, who is Wisdom itself, knew how to conquer by silence, to overcome by not replying." 2. Jesus knew that any answer would be useless, and would only make the Jews more eager for His death. 3. For fear He should excuse His crime, and obtain His deliverance, and so the benefit of His death be deferred, says S. Jerome, "for He wished to be condemned through keeping silence, and to die for the salvation of men." So S. Ambrose (*in Luc. xxii.*), "He rightly keeps silence who needs not a defence. Let those who fear defeat be eager for defence. But why should He fear who wished not to escape? He sacrificed His own single life for the salvation of all." 4. To atone thus for all faults of the tongue, and teach men to keep their tongues from all evil words.

**Verse 13-** *Then saith Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?* For Pilate had brought Him forth from his house to hear the accusations of the Chief Priests, as they would not enter the hall, lest they should be defiled (see John xviii. 28).

**Verse 14-** *And He answered him to never a word, insomuch that the Governor marvelled greatly.* Pilate marvelled at His silence in this His extreme peril, when assailed by vehement accusations and clamour. He marvelled at His gentleness, calmness, and contempt of death, and, recognising more fully His innocence and holiness, he laboured the more earnestly to deliver Him. [Pseudo-]Athan. *de Cruce*, says, "It was a marvellous thing that our Saviour was so effectual in His persuasion by keeping silence, and not by answering, that the judge acknowledged of His own accord that it was a mere conspiracy against Him." And thus do the Saints often in like manner refute the false charges against them.

**Verse 15-** *Now at that feast the Governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner whom they would.* There comes in before this verse Luke xxii. 5, which

55. And there were there many women afar off, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

56. Among whom was Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57. And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus.

58. He went to Pilate and asked the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded that the body should be delivered.

59. And Joseph taking the body wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth:

60. And laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument and went his way.

61. And there was there Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

62. And the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate,

63. Saying: Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again.

64. Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away and say to the people: He is risen from the dead. And the last error shall be worse than the first.

65. Pilate saith to them: You have a guard. Go, guard it as you know.

66. And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards.

**Verse 1-** *But when the morning was come (Syr. when it was dawn), all the chief priests, &c.* "See here," says S. Jerome, "the eagerness of the Priests for evil," *their feet were swift to shed blood* (Ps. xiv. 6). They were urged on by their bitter hatred of Christ, and by Satan's instigation. It was the morning of Friday, only a few hours before His crucifixion, when Caiaphas, who had already tried and condemned Him the night before, summoned thus early the great Council of the Sanhedrin. It was to obtain His condemnation by the whole Body, which would ensure the subsequent condemnation by Pilate. S. Matthew omits the proceedings of this Council, as being a mere repetition of what he had already recorded (chap. xxvi. 59 seq.). But the narrative is supplied by S. Luke (xxii. 26 seq.), as explained above (see ver. 59).

S. Leo says strikingly, "This morning, O Jews, destroyed your Temple and altars, took away from you the Law and the Prophets, deprived you of your kingdom and priesthood, and turned all your feasts into unending woe" (*Serm. iii. de Pass.*).

*To put Him to death.* That is, how they could do it without hindrance or tumult, and also by what kind of death, as, e.g., that of the Cross, the most

ignominious of all. Some members of the Council were probably Christ's followers and friends; and these most likely absented themselves, or were not summoned, or sent away elsewhere, for fear they should defend Him. But if any of them were present, they either gave sentence in His favour, or were forced by the clamour of the rest to remain silent; as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa (Luke xxiii. 51). Here notice, this wicked Council erred not only in fact, but in faith. For it gave sentence that Jesus was not the Christ nor the Son of God, but that He was guilty of death, as having falsely claimed to be both: all which statements are erroneous and heretical. This, however, was only a small and particular, not an Ecumenical Council. These latter, as representing the whole Church, have the gift of inerrancy by the power of the Holy Ghost and by Christ's own promise. But you will say the whole Jewish Church at that time fell away from the faith. It was not so, for many of Christ's converts in Judæa remained steadfast, and there were true believers among the Jews who were converted at the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.).

**Verse 2- And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.** "For," as S. Jerome says, "it was the Jewish custom to bind and deliver to the judge those they had condemned to death." Here then was Samson bound by Delilah, Christ by the Synagogue. Origen says truly, "They bound Jesus who looseth from bonds; who saith to them that are in bonds, I Go forth" (Isa. xlix. 9); who looseth the fetters, and saith, 'Let us break their bands asunder.'" For Jesus was bound that He might set us free by taking on Himself the bonds and the punishment of our sins.

**They brought.** Caiaphas, i.e., and all the other members of the Council, to crush by the weight of their authority both Jesus and Pilate alike. For if Pilate refused to ratify their sentence, they would be able to accuse him of aiming at the sovereignty of Judæa, and being thus an enemy of Cæsar, and so force him in this way, even against his will, to condemn Him to death.

**Delivered to Pontius Pilate.** Why? Some think from what is said in the Talmud that the Jews were forbidden to put any one to death. But see Deut xxi. 23; Num. xxv. 4; Josh. xiii. 29; 2 Sam. xxi. 6 and 9.

But the fact was that the Romans had taken away from the Jews the power of life and death (John xviii. 31). Ananus was deposed from the High-Priesthood for killing James the Lord's brother and others, without the consent of the Roman governor. The stoning of S. Stephen was only an outbreak of popular fury.

There were also other reasons. 1. To remove from themselves the discredit of His death, as though it had arisen merely from envy. 2. To dishonour Him as much as they could, by getting Him condemned by Pilate to the ignominious death of crucifixion, the punishment of rebels. They themselves had condemned Him of blasphemy, which was punished by stoning (Lev. xxiv. 16). 3. To dishonour Him the more by causing Him to be put to death as a profane person, by one, too, who was himself profaning the holy feast of the Passover (see S. Chrysostom, *Hom. lxxxvi in Matt.*; S. Augustine, *Tract. cxiv. in John*; and S. Cyril, *Lib. xii in Joan. cap. 6*).

He forbade them to give tribute to Cæsar, and maintained that He was Himself a King. Pilate, it would seem, put aside the first two as false and malicious, and dwelt only on the third. He simply asked Him whether he were the King of the Jews, as being of royal descent, or as the promised Messiah, or on any other ground. Jesus asked him in reply, "Sayest thou this of thyself?" (John xviii. 34). He knew very well the nature of the charge. But he wished to mortify Pilate by suggesting that this must be a mere calumny of His enemies, since he who was bound to maintain the authority of the Emperor, and had hitherto been most vigilant in the matter, had heard nothing of the kind. Pilate was irritated, and replied, "Am I a Jew, so as to know or care anything about Thy family or descent, or aught else relating to Thyself, who art a Jew born? Thine own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee to me. What hast Thou done?" This was the very answer which Jesus wished to obtain from him, and He clearly and directly replied, "My kingdom is not of this world," &c. (John xviii. 36).

He explained that it was not to be supported by human agency or force of arms (so that Tiberius need not fear that he would lose the kingdom of Judæa, but that it was heavenly, spiritual, and transcendental,—a kingdom wherein He would reign in the hearts of the faithful by grace, and bring them to His kingdom in Heaven. S. Matthew, omitting all other points for the sake of brevity, assigns this last as the true cause of Christ's death, merely saying, *The Governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.* He meant by this, I am Messiah the King. He might have said truly, I am not the King of the Jews, I am no temporal King, nor do I aim at being one. But the Jews understood the title King of the Jews to mean the Messiah, and as He could not deny His Messiahship, He confessed that He was the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah.

It will be asked, What is the nature of Christ's kingdom, and its manifold relations? Christ, then, as man had a twofold kingdom even when on earth. 1. A spiritual kingdom, i.e., His Church, which He instituted as a commonwealth of the faithful, and founded with certain laws, ordinances, and sacraments. He rules it by S. Peter and his successors, as His Vicars, and makes it spread through all nations. This kingdom David and the Prophets foretold would be given to Christ (S. Aug. *Tract. cxvii. in John*). 2. As S. Thomas (*Lib. i. de Reg. Princ. cap. xii.*) and others rightly teach, in opposition to Abulensis [Tostatus] on *Matth. xxi.*, it is physical and of this world. For Christ, from His very conception, had properly and directly dominion over the world, so as to depose and appoint kings, though as a fact He did not exercise such power on earth.

Here observe there is a threefold dominion and sovereignty. 1. The highest of all, which God exercises over all creatures, being peculiarly His Own. 2. The human authority, which earthly kings and princes exercise. 3. Between these two is the authority of Christ as man, which far surpasses all kingly

benefit not Jews only, but strangers, the Gentiles, *i.e.*, who would hereafter believe on Him. So Hilary, "It belongs not to Israel, but is solely for the use of strangers."

**Verse 8-** *Wherefore that field was called Arcedama.* A Chaldee word. The Ethiopic and Persian versions agree as to its meaning. Adrichomius (*Descr. Jerus. Num.* 216) describes the spot, and a peculiar property of the soil, that it destroys within a few hours the dead bodies which are placed in it, a property which it preserves even when taken elsewhere. Some of it the Empress Helena is said to have taken to Rome, where it forms the Campo Santo. "It still retains," says Cornelius, "the same property."

*Tropologically:* "The field bought for strangers with Christ's Blood is the Church (S. Chrysostom *in loc.*; S. Augustine, *Serm. cxiv. de Temp.*), and particularly the state of 'Religious,' who count themselves strangers upon earth, and citizens of Heaven, and of the household of God," &c. See also 1. Pet. ii. 11, where S. Chrysostom says, "Nothing is more blessed than this burial, over which all rejoice, both angels and men, and the Lord of angels. For if this life is not our life, but our life is hidden, we ought to live here as though we were dead." So S. Paul, Col. iii. 3. It was perhaps for this symbolical reason that this soil possessed the remarkable property mentioned above. See Comment. on Acts i 18, 19.

**Verses 9, 10-** *Then was fulfilled, &c.* See on Zech. xi. 12, 13.

*The price of Him that was valued;* Gr. τὴν τιμὴν τοῦ τετιμημένου. Christ, who is beyond all price (Theophyl.), Whom the Chief Priests bought of the sons of Israel, of Judas, *i.e.*, who was one of them. (So Titelman and Barradeus.) This is stated to add to the ignominy of the transaction, viz., that He was sold not by a Gentile, but by an Israelite, and one, too, who was called after the Patriarch's eldest son. The plural is here put for the singular. Theophylact explains it otherwise, that Christ was valued, or bought, by the Chief Priests for the thirty pieces. Euthymius and others, that this price was put on Christ by those who were of the sons of Israel, *i.e.*, Israelites.

The Syriac version has the first person, agreeing with Zechariah, "And I took," &c. (Zech. xi. 13).

*As the Lord appointed me.* These words can be taken: 1. As the words of Christ speaking by the Prophet, and signifying that God would suffer nothing which concerned Him to come to nought, so that even the field purchased with the price of His Blood should not be unoccupied, but serve for the burial of strangers. 2. As the words of the Prophet, "God ordained that I should by my own act, as well as by my word, prophesy and foretell this, and even the goodly price," as he says in irony, "at which Christ should be valued."

**Verse 11-** *But Jesus stood before the Governor.* S. Matthew having recorded the fate of Judas, now returns to the main narrative, omitting, however, several incidents, which are to be found in John xviii. 19. It appears from S. Luke xxiii. 2 that the Jews brought three definite charges against Jesus—that He was perverting the people, that

But a retaliatory punishment was inflicted on the Jews; for as they delivered up Christ to Pilate, so were they in turn delivered up to be destroyed by Titus and Vespasian (S. Cyril on John, cap. xviii.; Theophylact, and Victorinus on Mark xiv.).

**Verses 3, 4-** *Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, &c.* Judas, when he sold Christ, did not expect that He would be killed, but merely seized, and either render them some satisfaction, or in some way escape, as before, out of their hands. But on finding Him condemned to death, he felt the gravity of his sin. And repenting, when too late, of what he had done, he was self condemned, and hanged himself. "The devil is so crafty," says S. Chrysostom, 'that he allows not a man (unless very watchful) to see beforehand the greatness of his sin, lest he should repent and shrink from it. But as soon as a sin is fully completed, he allows him to see it, and thus overwhelms him with sorrow and drives him to despair. Judas was unmoved by Christ's many warnings; but when the deed had been wrought, he was brought to useless and unavailing repentance.'

*That He was condemned.* By Caiaphas, *i.e.*, and the whole Council, and that he would shortly be condemned by Pilate on their authority, and by their urgent importunity.

*Repented himself.* Not with true and genuine repentance, for this includes the hope of pardon, which Judas had not; but with a forced, torturing, and despairing repentance, the fruit of an evil and remorseful conscience, like the torments of the lost. In Gr. μεταμεληθεῖς.

*Brought again the thirty pieces or silver to the Chief Priests.* To rescind his bargain. As if he had said, "I give back the money; do ye, on your part, restore Jesus to liberty." So S. Ambrose (in Luc. xxii.), "In pecuniary causes, when the money is paid back, justice is satisfied." And S. Hilary, "Judas gave back the money that he might expose the dishonesty of the purchasers." And S. Ambrose, "Though the traitor was not absolved himself, yet was the impudence of the Jews exposed; for though put to shame by the confession of the traitor, they insisted wickedly on the fulfilment of the bargain."

*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent Blood;* Gr. ἀθῶον; for what more innocent than the immaculate Lamb? what purer than the purity of Jesus Christ?

*But they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.* Carry out what thou hast begun. Bear the punishment of the guilt thou ownest. We own no fault in ourselves. But He is guilty of death as a false Christ, and therefore we insist on it. Now, as they refused to take back the money, Judas cast it down in the Temple, and hung himself, despairing of the life of Jesus and of his own salvation. For assuredly he would not have thus acted had the Chief Priests

taken the money back and set Jesus free. Up to a certain point, then, his repentance was right, but when it drove him to despair it was wrong. "See how unwilling they were," says S. Chrysostom, "to see the audacity of their conduct, which greatly aggravated their fault. For it was a clear proof that they were hurried away by audacious injustice, and would not desist from their evil designs, foolishly hiding themselves the while under a cloak of pretended ignorance."

**Verse 5-** *And he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

He first took them to the house of Caiaphas, or certainly to that of Pilate, where the Chief Priests were prosecuting their case; and afterwards, on their refusing to take them, threw them down in the Temple for the Priests to pick up. Some of the Chief Priests were probably there, but anyhow by throwing them down in the Temple he devoted them, as the price of the Most Holy Blood, to sacred and pious uses, if the Priests refused to take them back.

*And he went and hanged himself.*

The Greek writers are mistaken in thinking that he did not die in this way, but was afterwards crushed to death (see on Acts i. 18). Judas then added to his former sin the further sin of despair. It was not a more heinous sin, but one more fatal to himself, as thrusting him down to the very depths of hell. He might, on his repentance, have asked (and surely have obtained) pardon of Christ. But, like Cain, he despaired of forgiveness, and hung himself on the self-same day, just before the death of Christ. For he could not bear the heavy remorse of an accusing conscience. So S. Leo (*Serm. de Pass. iii.*; S. Augustine, *Quæst. v.*, and *N. Test. xciv.*). David had prophesied respecting him, "Let a sudden destruction," &c. (Ps. xxxv. 8). Thus S. Leo, "O Judas, thou wast the most wicked and miserable of men, for repentance recalled thee not to the Lord, but despair drew thee on to thy ruin!" And again, "Why dost thou distrust the goodness of Him who repelled thee not from the communion of His Body and Blood, and refused thee not the kiss of peace when thou camest to apprehend Him? But thou wast past conversion (a spirit that goeth and returneth not); and with Satan at thy right hand, thou followedst the mad desire of thy own heart, and madest the sin which thou hadst sinned against the King of Saints to recoil on thine own head; that thus, as thy crime was too great for ordinary punishment, thou mightest pronounce, and also execute, the sentence on thyself."

Some say that Judas hung himself from a fig-tree, the forbidden tree of Hebrew tradition, and one of ill-omen. Hence Juvencus—

"Even as his own wild punishment he sought,  
He hung with deadly noose on fig-tree's height."

Now it was avarice that drove Judas to this fate. "Hear ye this," says S. Chrysostom; "hear it, I say, Ye covetous. Ponder it in your mind what he suffered. For he both lost his money, and committed a crime, and lost his soul. Such was the hard tyranny of

covetousness. He enjoyed not his money, nor this present life, nor that which is to come. He lost them all at once, and having forfeited the goodwill even of those to whom he betrayed Him, he ended by hanging himself."

This confession of Judas, then (not in word, but in deed), was a clear proof of Christ's innocence, and it assuredly ought to have kept the Jews from killing Him, if they had only had the smallest amount of shame. But their obstinate malice could not be restrained even by this strange portent.

*Symbolically:* Bede remarks (in *Acts i.*), "His punishment was a befitting one. The throat which had uttered the word of betrayal was throttled by the noose. He who had betrayed the Lord of men and angels hung in mid-air, abhorred by Heaven and earth, and the bowels which had conceived the crafty treachery burst asunder and fell out." S. Bernard, too (*Serm. viii. in Ps. xc. [vci.]*), says, "Judas, that colleague of the powers of the air, burst asunder in the air, as though neither the Heaven would receive nor the earth endure the betrayer of Him who was true God and man, and who came to work salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. lxxxiii. 12, Vulg.). Again, S. Augustine (*Lib. Hom. 1., Hom. xxvii.*), "That which he wrought on his own body, this was also wrought on his soul. For as they who throttle themselves cause death, because the air passes not within them, so do they who despair of the forgiveness of God choke themselves by their very despair, that the Holy Spirit cannot reach them."

**Verse 6-** *But the chief priests said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury. Corban is the same as offering. It here signifies the treasury into which the offerings were cast. In Arab. the house of offerings (see Joseph de B. J., i. 8).*

*Because it is the price of blood.* What hypocrisy! They suffer not the price of Christ's blood to be paid into the treasury, whereas they had taken money out of it to procure His betrayal and death.

**Verse 7-** *And they look counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.* "They saw," says Origen, "that it was most fitting that, as the price of blood, it should be expended on the dead and their place of burial."

*Strangers:* for the inhabitants had their own burial-places. And God so ordered it that this field should be a standing witness both of Judas' repentance and of Christ's innocence. "The name," says S. Chrysostom, proclaims their bloody deed with trumpet tongue, for had they cast it into the treasury, the circumstances would not have been made so clearly known to future generations."

*Symbolically:* It was thus signified that the price of Christ's Blood would