

The Passion of Jesus: The Story

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Date: 06 April 2014

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[0 : 00] Lord, open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things from your word, particularly as we look at the death of your son. Please soften our hearts that we might receive that word, transform our wills that we might do it, loose our tongues that we might proclaim your word and we ask this for the glory of your son in whose name we pray.

Amen. Please sit down. Now friends, today's Bible talk is a little different. As you know, we're approaching Easter. And so I thought that what we might do is read through the whole of the passion story from John's gospel.

The apostle Timothy instructs his young protege, Timothy, to pay attention to the public reading of scripture. So we are going to publicly read a big slab of scripture.

Today, we're going to have a look at the whole passage and we're going to read it in four sections. And after each reading, I'm going to make a few brief comments that will help us orient ourselves to the passages and understand some of the background information.

And in the weeks that follow, we're then going to concentrate on various sections of these passages. On Good Friday, of course, we'll concentrate on the death of Jesus. On Easter Day, we'll concentrate on the resurrection.

[1 : 16] But let's get started now. And I'll ask our first reader, Dorothy, to come forward and read our first passage for us. It's the longest of all of them. But please follow in your own Bibles or just listen.

The reading is from John chapter 18 and is found on page 1084.

Page 1084. When Jesus had finished praying, he left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley.

On the other side, there was a garden and he and his disciples went into it. Now, Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.

So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

[2 : 29] Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they replied.

I am he, Jesus said. And Judas, the traitor, was standing there with them. When Jesus said, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again, he asked them, who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they said. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he.

If you are looking for me, then let these men go. This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled.

I have not lost one of those you gave me. Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear.

[3 : 33] The servant's name was Malchus. Jesus commanded Peter, put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the father has given me?

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus.

Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. But Peter had to wait outside at the door.

The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there, and brought Peter in.

[4 : 38] You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you? She asked Peter. He replied, I am not. It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm.

Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

I have spoken openly to the world, Jesus replied. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together.

I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.

When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. Is this the way you answer the high priest? He demanded. If I said something wrong, Jesus replied, testify as to what is wrong.

[5 : 50] But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me? Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there, warming himself.

So they asked him, you aren't one of his disciples too, are you? He denied it, saying, I am not. One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him.

Didn't I see you with him in the garden? Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, a rooster began to crow.

Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning.

And to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, they did not enter the palace because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, what charges are you bringing against this man?

[7 : 02] If he were not a criminal, they replied, we would not have handed him over to you. Pilate said, take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.

But we have no right to execute anyone, they objected. This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? Is that your own idea?

Jesus asked. Or did others talk to you about me? Am I a Jew? Pilate replied. Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me.

What is it you have done? Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders.

[8 : 11] But now my kingdom is from another place. You are a king then, said Pilate. Jesus answered, You say that I am a king.

In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

What is truth? Retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, I find no basis for a charge against him.

But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews?

And they shouted back, No, not him. Give us Barabbas. Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

[9 : 19] The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, Hail the king of the Jews!

And they slapped him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.

When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, Here is the man. As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, They shouted, Crucify! Crucify!

But Pilate answered, You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him. The Jewish leaders insisted, We have a law, and according to that law, He must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.

When Pilate heard this, He was even more afraid, And he went back inside the palace. Where do you come from? He asked Jesus.

[10 : 46] But Jesus gave him no answer. Do you refuse to speak to me? Pilate said, Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?

Jesus answered, Jesus answered, You would have no power over me If it were not given to you from above.

Therefore, The one who handed me over to you Is guilty of a greater sin. From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free.

But the Jewish leaders kept shouting, If you let this man go, You are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king Opposes Caesar.

When Pilate heard this, He brought Jesus out And sat down on the judge's seat At a place known as the stone pavement, Which in Aramaic is Gabbatha.

[11 : 56] It was the day of preparation of the Passover. It was about noon. Here is your king, Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him! Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asked.

We have no king but Caesar, The chief priests answered. Finally, Pilate handed him over to them To be crucified.

Friends, Just a few things I want you to notice About this passage. First, I want you to notice Jesus' attitude To his destiny.

Look at chapter 18, Verse 4. The passage is clear that Jesus knew his destiny. He knew what was going to happen to him. He saw the very visible and large band of soldiers and Jewish officials, And he took the initiative in going out to meet them.

[13 : 09] That's the first thing. Second thing, Let's look at the court proceedings. And we'll look at the parties involved. First, Look at the Jewish party in all of this. Look at verse 19.

There are two aspects that are important for the Jews. There are two things they want to know. So they question Jesus about, One, his disciples, And two, His teaching. And it was important for them to do this, Important to question him about his disciples, Because he had now a sizable group of disciples, And that could provoke the Roman authorities.

So they were interested about his disciples for this reason. It was also important for them to question him about His teaching, Because false teaching leads people astray.

But did you notice the response of Jesus? He only deals with the teaching part. He does not address the disciples' part. In other words, He points out that there were plenty of witnesses Who could be brought to testify to his teaching.

He'd done nothing in private, as it were. But let's think about the Romans for a moment. First thing to notice is the centre of their questions, Which is very different from the centre Of the Jews, In their questioning.

[14 : 22] Their questions centre on the concept of kingship. You can see that in the passage running from verse 33 All the way through to 39. And do you notice the process?

First there is the questioning, 33 to 39. Then there is the first flogging. That occurs in chapter 19, verse 1. That first flogging was probably a lighter sort of flogging That was handed out for lighter offences.

In this case, It was probably a punishment that was designed to allow The Roman officials to release Jesus. Third, there's a mocking. You can see that in verses 2 to 5 of chapter 19.

Fourth, there is a second questioning, Verses 8 through to 11. And after this, Pilate seeks to do what I think he's wanted to do all along, To release Jesus.

But the Jews will have nothing of it. And that leads to a fifth element, A sentencing, Verses 13 to 16. Now we know from Mark chapter 15, Verse 15, That there was a sixth element to this trial, That is a second flogging.

[15 : 31] The second flogging would have been far more severe. Here, we know from historical records, That the victim is stripped, Tied to a post, Beaten by several torturers Until they were exhausted or called off.

The favoured instrument was a leather whip, With thongs fitted with bits of bone, Lead and metal. The beating itself often killed the victim. Eyewitness reports tell us That this scourging would leave bones And even entrails exposed.

Seventh, There was the crucifixion itself. And that's referred to in verse 16 of chapter 19. So we've looked at the court proceedings. Let's take a look at Peter's actions here.

They're infamous, aren't they? You might notice that there are three sorts of people Who question Peter. The first is a servant girl, Chapter 18, verses 15 to 18.

The second appears to be servants and officers Who are standing around, Warming themselves. And that's in verse 25 of chapter 18. And the third is someone Who's a servant of the high priest And who's also a kinsman of Malchus Who had his ear cut off, Back in verse 10.

[16 : 43] In each case, Peter denies knowing Or being associated with Jesus. So there's just a few things to notice in this text. Let's now turn to the death and burial.

So I'll now ask Sue to come up And read our second reading. Okay, the second reading is on page 1086.

And it's John 19, verse 17 to 42. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, He went out to the place of the skull, Which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, And with him two others, One on each side, And Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, The king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read the sign, For the place where Jesus was crucified Was near the city, And the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, Do not write the king of the Jews, But that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.

[17 : 57] Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, They took his clothes, Dividing them into four shares, One for each of them, With the undergarment remaining.

This garment was seamless, Woven in one piece from top to bottom. Let's not tear it, They said to one another. Let's decide by lot who will get it. This happened, That the scripture might be fulfilled, That said, They divided my clothes among them, And cast lots for my garment.

So this is what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus, Stood his mother, His mother's sister, Mary, The wife of Clopas, And Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, And the disciple whom he loved, Standing nearby, He said to her, Woman, Here is your son.

And to the disciple, Here is your mother. And from that time on, This disciple took her into his home. Later, Knowing that everything had now been finished, And so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.

A jar of wine vinegar was there, So they soaked a sponge in it, Put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, And lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, It is finished.

[19 : 15] With that, He bowed his head, And gave up his spirit. Now it was the day of preparation, And the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, They asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, And then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, They did not break his legs.

Instead, One of the soldiers pierced Jesus with a spear, Bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, And his testimony is true.

He knows that he tells the truth, And he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken, And as another scripture says, They will look on the one they have pierced.

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, But secretly, Because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, He gave and took the body away.

[20 : 33] He was accompanied by Nicodemus, The man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, About 75 pounds.

Taking Jesus' body, The two of them wrapped it, With the spices, In strips of linen. This was in accordance with the Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, There was a garden, And in the garden a new tomb, In which no one had ever been laid.

Because it was a Jewish day of preparation, And since the tomb was nearby, They laid Jesus there. Our friends, Again, There's a few things to notice here.

First, Did you notice the scripture quotations all the way through? You see, What that is telling us is, That these things that happened here, On this Easter, So long ago, Happened according to the plan and purpose of God.

It was not done in a corner, It was done, Because God wanted it done. It was done according to scripture. So God had planned this for a long time.

[21 : 42] Then some other things to notice. The sign that Jesus carried, This was generally carried in front of the condemned person, Or even perhaps hung around their neck.

It was then put on the cross, As a warning in three languages. In the case of Jesus, The sign read, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Next thing to see, Has to do with the crucifixion itself.

Let me explain just a little of what went on. At first, There was a flogging, As we heard, And a beating that would reduce the victim, To pulpy weakness. The victim was then stripped naked.

The upright member of the cross, Would often already be in location, Perhaps in place even. The victim would be required to carry the cross member, Of the cross on his shoulders, To the place of crucifixion, If he was able.

When they arrived, The victim would then lie on his back on the ground, With his arms outstretched, Along the cross member. The hands would then be tied, Or nailed through the wrist.

[22 : 41] We know from later on accounts, That Jesus was nailed. Then the cross member, With the victim attached, Would be hoisted up. The feet would then be tied, Or nailed to the upright.

The upright would often, Have a piece of wood, Fixed to it, That served as sort of like a seat. It was designed to prolong the agony, Rather than decrease it. The victim often hung, In the hot Palestinian sun.

And, They would hang there for hours, And even days. In order to breathe, It was necessary to push up with your legs, That often had nails through them, And pull up with the arms, Just to open your chest cavity.

Terrible muscle spasms, Racked the entire body. Collapse though, Letting everything go, Would mean asphyxiation. Sometimes the Romans, In order to speed up the process, Broke the legs of victims, So they could no longer push up.

Here the victim would suffocate, And die. The third and, The last and final thing to notice here, Is the reference to blood and water. Did you see it there in verse 33? It probably is just a way of saying, That Jesus died as humans die.

[23 : 58] That is, He really died. That's what all the testifying is probably about. He really died. Let's turn to our third reading. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. On page 108.7, John 20.

Amen. Amen. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been moved from the entrance.

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, They've taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him.

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

[25 : 00] He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb.

He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Finally, the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went inside. He saw and believed. They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, Woman, why are you crying? They've taken my Lord away, she said, and I don't know where they've put him.

[26 : 19] At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, Woman, why are you crying?

Who is it you are looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.

Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned toward him and cried out in Arabic, Rabboni, which means teacher.

Jesus said, Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord, and she told them that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

[27 : 51] After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. Now Thomas, also known as Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, We've seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

A week later, his disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

[29 : 11] Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. See my hands? Reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Again, just a few comments. The first has to do with the empty tomb. Did you notice that John records that Peter and the other disciples go to look at the tomb? That's important to note.

[30 : 20] It's important to note that two witnesses were needed to corroborate or authenticate the fact of the empty tomb. The Old Testament said two or three witnesses are essential.

And at this time, unfortunately, the testimony of a woman wasn't given that same sort of level of authenticity. Then the position of the grave clothes.

Did you notice the comments regarding the grave clothes in 6 and 7? They seem to be here to emphatically repute the idea that the body was stolen. The body was indeed absent, but not because it was stolen.

Did you notice the resurrected Jesus? He's clearly the same person who was crucified and yet not immediately recognisable all the time. However, his risen body is somewhat different from his human body in some way.

It could apparently pass through grave clothes and perhaps even walls and doors. There are intimations that this might be the case later on in the story. Sorry, earlier on in the story. At the same time, he could be seen and touched.

[31 : 25] In other words, he's still fully human and not a ghost. Did you notice the confession of Jesus in verses 24 to 29?

In many ways, I think the confession of Thomas here is the climax of John's gospel. You see, what's happening is a human being is recognising the truth of what was declared way back in John chapter 1.

Jesus is indeed the Lord and God. He was with the Father in the beginning. He is God. What's more, as readers, the clear intention of verse 29 is that we are meant to join in with Thomas in his declaration.

Yes, Jesus is indeed Lord and God. There is a fifth thing to notice. The stated purpose of John's gospel. Did you see it there?

Look at the words that are used. It's very clear. Believe, Jesus, Christ or Messiah, Son of God, have life in his name.

[32 : 31] You see, Jesus is who Thomas says. He is the Christ, the Messiah. He is the Son of God and through him humans can have life. That is, in the language of John 1, they can become the children of God.

You see, this verse operates as a summary of John's gospel. This is what it is for. Let's have our last reading, 1 to 25. Thanks, Linda.

Page 1088, John's gospel, chapter 21. Afterward, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee.

It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.

I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said, we'll go with you. So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

[33 : 45] Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish?

No, they answered. He said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, it is the Lord. As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, it is the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the water.

The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from the shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish you have just caught. So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many, the net was not torn.

[35 : 09] Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, take care of my sheep. the third time, he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[36 : 14] Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.

Jesus said, feed my sheep. very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Then he said to him, follow me. Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, Lord, who is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he asked, Lord, what about him? Jesus answered, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?

[37 : 23] You must follow me. Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die.

He only said, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.

we know that this, his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Now, Andrew Price is going to spend a little more time on this passage later on, on Easter Day. However, let me just observe a couple of things.

First, why do you think we're told about the fishing? I suspect it implies that the penny hasn't yet dropped for them. They still don't understand what all of this means. My suspicion is that even among us, there are people perhaps who, as this Easter approaches, still don't understand what all of this means.

[38 : 36] If you fall into that category, then make sure you listen in the coming weeks or come and talk to me. Second, what do you think is meant when Jesus asks, do you love me more than these?

Well, these could refer to a number of things, couldn't they? I think about it for a moment. It could refer, I suppose, to the nets. Do you love me more than fishing? But I think that's unlikely.

It probably refers to the disciples, but even then it could have more than one meaning. Jesus could be saying, asking Peter if he loves the other disciples more than he loves Jesus. I don't think that's what's going on either.

What is more likely is that a fault reading, I think, that is that Jesus is asking if Peter loves Jesus more than the other disciples love Jesus. I think that's what Jesus means.

You see, Peter had failed Jesus how many times? Three times. Three times he denied him. And yet now, under the scrutiny of Jesus, he urges Jesus three times that he does indeed love him.

[39 : 42] I reckon the threefold questioning is a terrible reminder for him. And no wonder he's so anguished in his response. Friends, that's been a quick overview of these four chapters.

I think it's a good exercise to read them in one slab as we've done. In the next couple of weeks we're going to look back at various aspects of these chapters. These few weeks, these two weeks in fact, speak about the central facts of the Christian message.

They are therefore especially suitable for outsiders. So I want to encourage you to bring any friends that are not Christians this Easter. Next week would be particularly relevant.

So let's pray. Gracious God, thank you for your word which tells us about your great deeds in your world and particularly this great deed of sending your son to die for us.

And please help us to be reminded of these things and to turn to him in faith and obedience. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 12] On more■.