

John 19

The tragedy we have studied moves rapidly on. The chief priests and Sanhedrin court had prepared their charges well. So well, Pilate with all his well-meant endeavors, found it impossible to spare Jesus. A great crowd surrounded his palace crying for the murder of Jesus. Pilate was accustomed to the inflammatory temper of the Jews, and he feared an uprising. Passover had brought two to three million people to the city, which could easily overwhelm the Roman garrison of 600 men. He also feared even more the accusations they proposed to bring to Caesar should he spare Jesus. Pilate begins to yield to the demands which he opposed and knows to be cruel and unjust.

John 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*.

Scourging was the usual Roman punishment preliminary to execution by crucifixion. The Greek writer Horace calls the whip “the horrible fla-gel-lum”, three separate prophecies foretell the scourging of Jesus the Messiah cf:

Psalms 129:3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Isaiah 53:5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

The Roman soldier was the most brutal that ever existed in the history of the world. Even savage Indians were better than the Roman legion. This was a nation that chose brutality for its sports. Combat of gladiators in the arena or prisoners and Christians with ferocious beasts in the Amphitheatre, reached its climax in these men whose trade was war. The laws of self-preservation protected Roman citizens from such, but the prisoner of a subject race might as well appeal to a tiger in the jungle for pity. Pilate had become strangely interested in Jesus, but the soldiers subjected Jesus to much shame and mockery.

John 19:2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

John 19:3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

The crown of thorns was an instrument of torture. To this was added a purple robe, which was an emblem of royalty. Matthew account is fuller and adds, cf:

Mat 27:26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified. 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band *of soldiers*. 27:28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 27:29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Thus, Jesus was mocked and abused in that vast hall of the fortress of Antonia, by hundreds of ferocious soldiers!

John 19:4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Pilate now hopes that the pitiful, torn condition of the bloody prisoner, along with His humiliation, will satisfy the Jews and they will allow Pilate to release Him.

John 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man!

Such abuse should show the Jews He is only a man and they have nothing to fear from Him.

John 19:6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: for I find no fault in him.

Pilate makes repeated declarations that Jesus is guilty of no crime according to Roman law. Pilate again angrily answers them, but the Jews had no power to to carry out a death sentence and crucify Him.

John 19:7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

The Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death, because He declared He was the Son of God.

Leviticus 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, *and* all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death.

John 19:8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

The calmness and majesty of the prisoner had profoundly moved Pilate.

John 19:9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

All those stories in Pilate's heathen mythology of the gods taking human form alarmed him. What if this marvelous and different prisoner was the son of one of the gods? The phrase "whence art thou?", is asking "Are you of earth or heaven? Are You Human or Divine?"

John 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Pilate is baffled by Jesus' calm silence, and the prisoner would do well to please him by answering. The prophets had foretold the Messiah would be silent before His enemies; Isaiah says cf:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

John 19:11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Jesus breaks the silence, and assumes the position of Pilate's Divine judge. His language shows that Pilate is the poor, powerless victim of his Jewish environment. Pilate was not the greatest sinner. The Jews, who were filled with devilish hate, should have known better than the untaught Gentile Pilate. Now we see Jesus the prisoner who is to be crucified pities the judge who sends Him to the cross.

John 19:12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

The thought of releasing Him brings forth a threatening cry of the Jews. They will accuse him before Tiberius Caesar that he overlooked treason. This might prove fatal to Pilate, but it would certainly end his public career. The risk was too great. He would rather sacrifice an innocent man than himself.

John 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

The judgment seat was a raised platform, or a kind of throne, in front of the tower of Antonia.

John 19:14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

John writing many years later, marks the time of this judgment scene as about six in the morning, counting from midnight, as the Greeks and Romans reckoned time. In Mark's Gospel he counts the time of the actual nailing to the cross according to the Hebrew clock as about nine AM.

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

Christ ate His Passover the evening before in the upper room.

The Jews had not eaten their Passover at that time, for we saw last week cf:

John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

Christ ate His Passover in advance of the usual time in order that He, the true Paschal Lamb "our Passover", might be offered on the same day that all the Passover lambs were being slaughtered.

I Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

John 19:15 But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

Pilate was full of resentment against the Jews, and his words were designed to taunt them, when he said, “Behold your King”.

The Jews chose Caesar as their King instead of the Christ the Lord’s Anointed. To Caesar’s tender mercies they commit themselves and in about a generation, Caesar will trample them in the wine press of the wrath of God Almighty.

John 19:16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led *him* away.

He gave the Jewish leaders a guard of Roman soldiers, cf:

Isaiah 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Crucifixion was regarded by the ancients as the most awful form of punishment known. It was never inflicted on a Roman citizen.

Burning was considered preferable.

Upon arrival, the sufferer was stripped naked, he was thrown on the ground, and nails driven through the wrist part of His hands, and, through the feet.

A medicated cup of gall was offered before the nailing, cf:

Psalms 69:21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

The Lord refused the gall so that He might meet His fate with His senses clear, He suffered for you and me.

Think of the love of Him who endured these things when He had the power to destroy them in a moment!

John 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

It was customary for the condemned to carry the timbers to the place of execution. Golgotha is a Hebrew word meaning a skull.

Mar 15:22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

From the Latin cal-var-i-a, comes our English word Calvary, found in our New Testament in Luke 23:33.

John 19:18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Psalms 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Isaiah 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

Mark 15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

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

It was Roman custom to place a sign on the cross stating the crime for which the condemned suffered.

Mark 15:26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

All three chief languages were used so all the spectators could read it.

John 19:20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.

Hebrew was spoken orally by the Jews, Greek was the universal language of literature, and Latin was the language of the Roman Empire.

John 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate intended the inscription should have a sting in it for the chief priests, elders, and scribes.

John 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Pilate took his revenge by flashing the idea before the public's mind that it was a crime in the estimation of the priests to have a Jewish King.

Thus, the cross proclaimed the Kingship of Jesus.

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

John 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

The Romans did not gamble with cards, but with dice. This fulfilled the prophecy of King David about the coming Messiah cf:

Psalm 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

While the apostles were mostly afar off, the women were near the cross.

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Jesus, in that awful hour, thought of others and not of Himself.

The original Greek should be translated, "Woman look! Thy son I."

John 19:27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

Mary was, no doubt, a widow by this time, and Jesus commends her to the care of John when He said, literally, "Look! Thy mother!"

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

Again in fulfillment of the prophecy cf:

Psalm 69:21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

John 19:29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth.

This was sour wine, and Jesus did not refuse the vinegar.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

This is a cry of triumph. The victory had been won, and He had reached the end of the cruel path. All of the Gospel writers dwell upon the loudness of the cry, for it was the triumphant note of a Conqueror! The record does not say that He died. He, voluntarily, surrendered up His own Spirit. As we have studied, Jesus said: cf

John 10:15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. **10:16** And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. **10:17** Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. **10:18** No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. **This commandment have I received of my Father.**

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.

John has explained what he means by “preparation” in verse 14, where he says, “it was the preparation of the Passover.”

It was the Roman custom to leave the executed on the cross for the birds, but, this was forbidden by Jewish Law, cf:

Deuteronomy 21:23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

Breaking the legs was a barbarous method to hasten death. With broken legs you could not push yourself up to take a breath.

Notice the second part of that verse the curse: (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance. Paul says about that curse cf:

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

John 19:32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

John 19:33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

Just like the Paschal Lambs were being slain that very hour, and eaten that evening, were preserved with bones unbroken, cf:

Exodus 12:46 In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

The Lord, our Passover, descended from the cross, pierced and mangled but not a bone of His was broken. For the scripture teaches Christ is our Passover cf:

I Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

When they came to break His legs, He was lifeless, and it occurred to one of the soldiers He might have passed out. To put Christ's death beyond any doubt, he thrust his spear into the left side, the side of the heart. The water with clots of blood can only be accounted for naturally by the victim being already dead from a previous rupture of the heart ... the blood having already clotted in the body cavity so it could be clearly seen as separate from the water.

John 19:35 And he that saw *it* bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

The writer here identifies himself as an eyewitness, as one standing near the cross, as in fact, the Apostle John. The reader cannot help but notice what he just recorded with regard to the spear thrust, and the blood and water.

Already, in the days of John, there had developed the Agnostic non-believing theory that Jesus did not really die, but only seemed to die.

John's testimony equally destroys the suggestions of modern skeptics that Christ merely fainted. John later states that three bare witness, cf:

I John 5:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The water of baptism mirrors and so bears witness to the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Romans 6:3-6 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

John 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

Exodus 12:46 In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

John 19:37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

John 19:38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

We know very little of Joseph of Arimathaea except he was a rich man, and a member of the Sanhedrin, like Nicodemus. The death of Christ seems to have given new courage to both him and Nicodemus. Matthew also says: cf:

Matthew 27:57-60 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: **27:58** He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. **27:59** And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, **27:60** And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, cf:

Isaiah 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

John 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.

This is the third mention of Nicodemus, cf:

John 3:1ff There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

John 7:50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

The great quantity and mixture of myrrh and aloes shows that his very couch was formed with spices.

John 19:40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

The Jews did not embalm as did the Egyptians.

John 19:41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

Matthew 27:57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: **27:58** He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. **27:59** And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, **27:60** And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

John 19:42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day*; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

It is probable that the approach of the Sabbath hurried the preparation of the body, and it seems that the return of the women after the Sabbath shows that they did not consider the burial rites fully completed.

Isaiah 49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. **49:2** And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; **49:3** And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. **49:4** Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: *yet* surely my judgment *is* with the LORD, and my work with my God. **49:5** And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. **49:6** And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Isaiah 52:13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. **52:14** As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: **52:15** So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

Sources: KJV, e-Sword, Clarke's Commentary, and B.W. Johnson Commentary.