

JOHN 19 – JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

A. Jesus is condemned to crucifixion.

1. (1-4) Pilate hopes to satisfy the mob by having Jesus whipped and mocked.

a. **So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him:** Previously Pilate said of Jesus, *I find no fault in Him at all*([John 18:38](#)), yet he commanded this severe, brutal punishment for a Man he knew was innocent. It has been suggested that Pilate wanted to *help* Jesus, hoping the mob would be satisfied with the scourging.

b. **Scourged Him:** Pilate gave the order, so Jesus was **scourged** according to Roman practice. The blows came from a whip with many leather strands, each having sharp pieces of bone or metal at the ends. It reduced the back to raw flesh, and it was not unusual for a criminal to die from a scourging, even before crucifixion.

i. Scourging had three purposes. It was used to punish prisoners, and to gain confessions of crimes from prisoners. Also, in cases of crucifixion scourging was used to weaken the victim so he would die more quickly on the cross. Pilate hoped that this punishment of his prisoner would satisfy the crowd. “Neither, then, as part of the capital punishment, nor in order to elicit the truth; but in the ill-judged hope that this minor punishment might satisfy the Jews, Pilate ordered the scourging.” (Dods)

ii. “The victim of this severe punishment was bound in a stooping attitude to a low column and beaten with rods or scourged with whips, the thongs of which were weighted with lead, and studded with sharp-pointed pieces of bone, so that frightful laceration followed each stroke.” (Dods)

iii. “It literally tore a man’s back into strips. Few remained conscious throughout the ordeal; some died; and many went raving mad.” (Barclay)

The soldiers twisted a crown of thorns: Kings wear crowns, but not crowns of torture. The specific thorn-bushes of this region have long, hard, sharp thorns. This was a crown that cut, pierced, and bloodied the head of the King who wore it

· **Put on Him a purple robe:** Kings and rulers often wore **purple**, because the dyes to make fabrics that color were expensive. The **purple robe** was intended as cruel irony

· **“Hail, King of the Jews!”** Kings are greeted with royal titles, so in their spite they mocked Jesus with this title. It was meant to humiliate Jesus, but also the **Jews** – saying, “This is the best King they can bring forth”

Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe: “This crown He continued to wear to the end: both Origen and Tertullian, two of the earliest Fathers of the Church of east and west, assert that He was crucified with it on His head.” (Trench)

Behold the Man: Pilate invited the crowd to *look at this suffering One*, and to look with careful consideration (**behold**). There is a sense in which Pilate spoke for God here, who invites all humanity to **behold the Man**, to see the Man of men, the Perfect Man, the tested and approved Ideal of all humanity.

- i. “*The man* is contemptuous. Pilate is saying in effect ‘Here he is – the poor fellow. Can you really think that such a caricature of a king is really a danger either to Israel or Rome?’” (Tasker)

c. **When the chief priests and officers saw Him:** We aren’t told the immediate reaction of the crowd; perhaps they did feel a moment of sympathy for this remarkable, strong man in such circumstances. Whatever the crowd felt, the religious leaders immediately screamed “**Crucify Him, crucify Him!**” This was pure hatred, man’s hatred of God.

- i. “Some pity may have stirred in the crowd, but the priests and their immediate dependents silenced it by their yell of fresh hate at the sight of the prisoner.” (Maclaren)

You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him: For the third time, Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent of all charges.

- i. “Pilate must have realized that the Sanhedrin could not execute the sentence. His apparent relegation of Jesus to them was an act of sarcasm.” (Tenney)

(7-11) Pilate learns of the charge against Jesus.

.Because He made Himself the Son of God: In John’s account, with this the religious leaders showed their true charge against

- b. **He was the more afraid:** Pilate was not *angry* or *amused* when he learned that Jesus **made Himself the Son of God**, he was **more afraid** of Jesus than ever. Pilate saw something in Jesus – even beaten, bloodied, and spat upon – that made him think that it could be true that the Man before him was more than a man.

Where are You from: Though he already had the answer, one could say Pilate asked the right question. “His question is almost the most pertinent question that can be asked about Him, for to know where Jesus comes from is to know the most important thing about Him.” (Tasker)

4. (10-11) Pilate and Jesus speak about power.

a. **Are You not speaking to me:** Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus would not speak to defend Himself. He couldn't believe that Jesus would not beg for His life as many others had done. Pilate also couldn't believe that Jesus was not awed and intimidated by the representative of Rome who judged Him.

- i. “*Me* is very emphatic in the Greek; it is the refusal of Jesus to speak to one who possesses such supreme human authority that amazes Pilate.” (Tasker)
- ii. The general silence of Jesus before His accusers and judges fulfilled the prophecy of [Isaiah 53:7](#): *And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*

You could have no power at all against Me unless it have been given you from above: Jesus answered, explaining the true nature of power to Pilate. In the thinking of the Roman governor, *Rome* had the power. In reality, *God* held the power.

- i. Jesus understood that Pilate had power; He simply insisted that this power was granted by God and not inherent in Pilate or Rome.

If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend:

- i. “Humanly speaking, the mention of Caesar sealed Jesus' fate.” (Morris)
- ii. “The phrase ‘a friend of Caesar’ was more than a casual allusion to Roman patriotism. It usually denoted a supporter or associate of the emperor, a member of the important inner circle.” (Tenney)

He brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat: Pilate was ready to deliver his final judgment, presenting Jesus both before the crowd and the **judgment seat**. In truth it was *Pontius Pilate* who was on judgment, not Jesus Himself.

i. **Gabbatha:** “That is, *an elevated place*; from *gabah, high, raised up*; and it is very likely that the judgment seat was considerably *elevated* in the court, and that the governor went up to it by steps; and perhaps these very steps were what was called *the Pavement*.” (Clarke)

B. The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

1. (17-18) Jesus is crucified.

And He, bearing His cross: According to Roman custom Jesus carried His cross from the place of sentencing to the place of crucifixion, **the Place of a Skull**. Before the Romans put a man on a cross, they put the cross on the man, forcing him to carry it in a public procession intended to draw attention to the condemned, his crime, and his fate.

i. “It was normally the cross-piece (*patibulum*), and not the complete gibbet, that the condemned man carried into the place of execution; the upright stakes were probably standing there already.” (Bruce)

ii. “Since Tertullian (*adv. Jud.*, 10) a type of this has been found in Isaac’s carrying the wood for the sacrifice.” (Dods)

b. **They crucified Him:** The Persians invented crucifixion, but one could say that the Romans perfected it and made it an institution. It was the form of execution reserved for the worst criminals and the lowest classes. Crucifixion was designed to make the victim die publically, slowly, with great pain and humiliation. This was the form of death God ordained for Jesus to die, and the death that He submitted to in the will of God.

i. Crucifixion was so awful and degrading that polite Romans wouldn't talk about it in public. The Roman statesman Cicero said of crucifixion: "It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is an act of wickedness; to execute him is almost murder: What shall I say of crucifying him? An act so abominable it is impossible to find any word adequately to express." The Roman historian Tacitus called crucifixion "A torture fit only for slaves."

told us that both robbers mocked Him, but [Luke 23:39-41](#) tells us of a change in one of the criminals. The last human voice testifying to Jesus was a criminal converted right before his death. The disciples were gone and all Jesus healed and taught were nowhere to be found. The religious leaders mocked Him and spit upon Him, and even the faithful women were silenced by their grief. Yet there was one lone human voice that told the truth about Jesus when all others were silent

- *Jesus was centered between saved and perishing.* The thief on the cross was the last companion of Jesus on this earth before His death – and Jesus brought Him to salvation. Not with a sermon, but with every sermon He had already preached, every righteous deed He had done before. This was perhaps the only comfort to Jesus on the cross. Still, one thief was saved, but one was lost, and Jesus was in the center between them. To pass between one side and the other, *you must go through Jesus*

- *Jesus was centered between God and man.* Jesus on the cross took all the punishment our sin deserved. At the cross Jesus was both the priest and the offering

- *Jesus was centered in all God's history and work.* We do not look at Jesus in the center with pity, as if we should all feel sorry for poor Jesus. He was the winner at the cross. This was the greatest victory of all time

2. (19-22) Pilate's public description of Jesus and His supposed crime.

Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to

Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.””“ Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

a. **Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross:** This was according to Roman custom. The one to be crucified had his crime written out and the title hung around his neck as he carried his cross to the place of death. Then the **title** was placed at the top of the cross, so all would know the reason for the crucifixion.

i. “It was customary for the condemned person to wear a placard giving his name and the nature of his crime.” (Tenney)

ii. “A board whitened with gypsum such as were commonly used for public notices.” (Dods)

b. **The writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews:** Pilate wrote the *name* of Jesus, the same name by which He was identified and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane ([John 18:5](#)). He also wrote what was said to be the *crime* of Jesus, (at least in the original charge brought to him) that He claimed to be **King of the Jews**([John 18:33-34](#)).

i. Even in His death, Jesus was identified with humble and obscure **Nazareth**. Even in His death, Jesus was recognized as a **King**. Kings of this world take their throne through others dying. Jesus was proclaimed as King to the whole world through His own death.

ii. The title was also a proper justification of the sinless nature of Jesus. On either side were criminals with descriptions of their crimes; on the cross of Jesus it simply described who He was, which was no crime at all *because it was true*.

c. **Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city:** The Romans wanted crucifixion to be a public event. They wanted **many** to see the wretched victim, read of their crime, and be warned. This also confirms that Jesus was crucified outside the walls of the city ([Hebrews 13:12](#)), but close to the city and likely close to an often-used road.

d. **It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin:** Pilate wanted this statement regarding Jesus to be as public as possible. This is also an unknowing prophecy of how the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and reigning as King would be

published to every nation and language, that it was from the beginning intended as a global message.

- i. “Aramaic, for the local inhabitants; Latin, for the officials; Greek, the lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean world.” (Tenney)
- ii. “In Hebrew, for the Jews who gloried in the law; in Greek, for the Grecians who gloried in wisdom; in Latin, for the Romans who most gloried in dominion and power.” (Trapp)

e. **Do not write, “The King of the Jews,” but, “He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’”**: The religious leaders objected to Pilate’s title. They felt it was *false*, because they did not believe that Jesus was **the King of the Jews**. They also believed it was *demeaning*, because it showed Rome’s power to humiliate and torture even the **“King of the Jews.”**

f. **What I have written, I have written**: Pilate finally found the courage to stand up to the Jewish rulers, but on a relatively unimportant matter. One may say that despite himself, Pilate honored the King of Truth ([John 18:37](#)) with this true description of who He was, in both His humility and His glory.

- i. “That is, I will not alter what I have written. The Roman laws forbade the sentence to be altered when once pronounced; and as this inscription was considered as the *sentence* pronounced against our Lord, therefore, it could not be changed.” (Clarke)

3. (23-24) Soldiers divide Jesus’ clothing in fulfillment of prophecy.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

- a. **Then the soldiers**: A Roman crucifixion was supervised by soldiers, both to keep order and to make sure the condemned actually died.

b. **Took His garments:** On the cross, Jesus retained no material possessions. Even the clothes on his back were taken and His tunic was awarded by a bit of petty gambling.

i. “Men were ordinarily crucified naked (Artemidorus II. 61). Jewish sensitivities, however, dictated that men ought not to be publicly executed completely naked, and men condemned to stoning were permitted a loin-cloth (M. *Sanhedrin* VI. 3). Whether the Romans were considerate of Jewish feelings in this matter is unknown.” (Lane, commentary on Luke)

ii. “Apuleius has the comparison ‘naked as a new-born babe or as the crucified.’” (Dods)

iii. This shows that Jesus came all the way down the ladder to accomplish our salvation. He let go of everything – even His last bit of clothing – becoming completely poor for us that we could become completely rich in Him. 2

Corinthians 8:9 says it like this: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

c. **The tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece:** The main garment Jesus wore (**the tunic**) was made well enough that it was better to not tear it into **four parts**, as each of the four soldiers had already received one of His other garments.

i. Jesus’ seamless tunic reminds us of His role as our great High Priest, because Exodus 28:31-32 tells us that the High Priest wore a seamless garment.

d. **Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be:** The soldiers did this in an unknowing fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalms 22:18. As the Son of God died for the sins of the world men carelessly laughed and played games at His feet.

4. (25-27) Jesus entrusts His mother into John’s care.

a. **There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother:** It is difficult to comprehend the agony of Mary as she saw her Son crucified. She was witness to the pain, humiliation, shame, suffering, and death of her Son.

d. **He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son”**: Jesus consciously cared for His mother to the end, showing that even on the cross His attention was directed to others and not upon Himself. If there was ever a moment when Jesus deserved to be *self*-focused, this was it; yet He remained *others-centered* to the end.

e. **From that hour that disciple took her to his own home**: John and Mary each obeyed this solemn command of Jesus from the cross, though it was a remarkable thing that Jesus commanded. Mary had other children born after Jesus, and there are references to both the half brothers and sisters of Jesus ([Matthew 12:46-47](#), [13:55-56](#), [John 2:12](#) and [7:3-10](#)). Despite this, Jesus left the care of His mother Mary to John the disciple and apostle.

ii. “There was no specific direction given to John to entertain Mary. It was quite enough for the Lord to call his attention to her by saying ‘Behold thy mother.’ How I wish we were always in such a state of heart that we did not need specific precepts, a hint would suffice.” (Spurgeon)