

John Chapter 19

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

Scourge means to flog or whip.

Pilate appears to have flogged Jesus as a strategy to set Him free (see verses 4-6). He was hoping that the Jews would be appeased by this action and that sympathy for Jesus' suffering would result in their desire that He be released (see Luke 23:13-16).

Scourging was a horribly cruel act in which the victim was stripped, tied to a post and beaten by several torturers. I.e., soldiers who alternated when exhausted. For victims who were not Roman citizens, the preferred instrument was a short wooden handle to which several leather thongs were attached. Each leather thong had pieces of bones or metal on the end.

The beatings were so savage that sometimes victims died. The body could be torn or lacerated to such an extent that muscles, veins or bones were exposed. Such flogging often preceded execution to weaken and dehumanize the victim (Isaiah 53:5). Apparently however, Pilate intended this to create sympathy for Jesus.

Even though Pilate knew in his heart Jesus was innocent of any crime, he still punished Him to please the people. This innocent man was being punished to please an angry crowd.

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,"

This "crown" was made from the long spikes (up to 12 inches), of a date palm formed into an imitation of the radiating crowns which oriental kings wore. The long thorns would have cut deeply into Jesus' head, adding to the pain and bleeding.

The "purple" robe represented royalty. The robe probably was a military cloak flung around Jesus' shoulders, intended to mock His claim to be King of the Jews.

This crown of thorns would be pushed down on His head to drive the thorns deep into his forehead. Blood would be pouring from these wounds. Garlands or wreaths were many times put on Roman soldiers to honor them, but this crown of thorns was a crown of scorn. Little did they know that this crown of thorns crowned the king of all the ages.

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

The crown of thorns, the purple robe, and the mocking hail were used to ridicule His claim to be a king (18:36). When the soldiers hit Him in the face and body it was probably with their fists, contrast with (18:22).

These Roman soldiers were cruel and heartless, striking Jesus to drive the hurt deeper. This purple robe truly was a robe of royalty, even though they thought it to be worthless. It was the garment of the King of all kings.

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.”

Why is Pilate allowing all of this cruel punishment, if he believes Jesus to be innocent? Pilate even tries to wash the guilt from his hands.

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

Pilate dramatically presented Jesus after His torturous treatment by the soldiers. Jesus would have been swollen, bruised and bleeding. Pilate displayed Jesus as a beaten and pathetic figure hoping to gain the people’s choice of Jesus for release. Pilate’s phrase is filled with sarcasm since he was attempting to impress upon the Jewish authorities that Jesus was not the dangerous man that they had made Him out to be.

Pilate is saying in this; have you no pity for this innocent man? To look upon Him would be torture at this moment for anyone who loved Him. The blood was streaming down His face. This Jesus who stood before them would one day be the Judge of each of them.

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.”

When Pilate said unto them, take ye him, the pronouns of (him), have an emphatic force indicating Pilate’s disgust and indignation at the Jews for their callousness toward Jesus.

Notice who the loud cries came from: the chief priests and officers of the temple. They were not satisfied with just punishment; they were afraid of Him taking their power. They wanted Him killed. Pilate knew they couldn’t kill Jesus, but he sarcastically tells them to do it themselves. He declared Jesus innocent of any crime.

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.”

Here the Jews acknowledge the real reason they favor Christ’s crucifixion: He claimed to be God, and they were accusing Him of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16).

These Jews would have been correct, if He had not been the Son of God. He proved at least by a 100 different ways that He was in fact, the Son of God. The miracles should have been enough, especially the raising of the dead.

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

Many Roman officials were deeply superstitious. While Jews interpreted Jesus' claims as messianic, to the Greco-Roman person, the title "Son of God" would place Jesus in the category of "divine men" who were gifted with supernatural powers. Pilate was afraid because he had just whipped and tortured someone who, in his mind, could bring down a curse or vengeance upon him.

Pilate knew Jesus was more than man. What if He is the Son of God? Pilate down deep believes He is the Son of God.

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

Pilate was concerned about Jesus' origins. His superstitious mind was wondering just what kind of person he was dealing with.

Pilate, at this point, is searching for anything he can find so that he might release Jesus. Jesus will not answer.

"No answer", compare this with Isaiah.

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 19:10 "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's assertion and Jesus' response are reminiscent of Jesus' third exchanges with Satan in Matthew.

Matthew 4:8-10 "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Pilate I believe, truly wants to hear from Jesus' own lips who He is. When Jesus doesn't answer, it leaves Pilate questioning himself what to do. Then he almost pleadingly says, don't you know that I can help you, if you would tell me of yourself?

Pilate's power is of this world. He truly can speak death or life to his subjects. I can sense that even here, Pilate seems to know that this Jesus who stands before him is no mere man. If He was just a man, He would be begging Pilate to help Him.

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' statement here indicates that even the worst evil cannot escape the sovereignty of God. Pilate had no real control (verses 10-11), yet still stood as a responsible moral agent for his actions. When confronted with opposition and evil, Jesus often found solace in the sovereignty of His Father.

"He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin", could refer either to Judas or Caiaphas. Since Caiaphas took such an active part in the plot against Jesus (11:49-53), and presided over the Sanhedrin, the reference may center on him (18:30, 35).

The critical point is not the identity of the person but guilt because of deliberate high handed and coldly calculated act of handing Jesus over to Pilate, after having seen and heard the overwhelming evidence that He was Messiah and Son of God.

Notice that Jesus does not back down from Pilate. Jesus reminds Pilate that God was actually the one who arranged for Pilate to be the ruler here at this time. Jesus adds to this that these religious people (who should know better from the Scriptures), have committed a greater sin.

I personally believe these priests knew that this was Messiah, but they did not want to give up their authority in the church. At any rate, they should be guiltier, because they are sinning in full knowledge. Pilate was not a religious man and did not have the books of the law.

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."

This statement by the Jews was loaded with irony, for the Jew's hatred of Rome certainly indicated they too were no friends of Caesar. But they knew Pilate feared Tiberius Caesar (the Roman emperor at the time of Jesus' crucifixion), since he had a highly suspicious personality and exacted ruthless punishment.

Pilate had already created upheaval in Palestine by several foolish acts that had infuriated the Jews, and so was under the scrutiny of Rome to see if his ineptness continued.

The Jews were intimidating him by threatening another upheaval that could spell the end of his power in Palestine, if he did not execute Jesus.

Pilate was thoroughly convinced that Jesus was telling the truth. Pilate wanted to release Him, especially since his wife had dreamed that Jesus was indeed, who He said He was. These Jews were clever and knew where Pilate's weakness was.

Pilate was afraid that Caesar might hear of this and kill him. At the best, Caesar would probably have demoted him. He was like so many today that is more afraid what the world will do than what God will do. Many people miss being saved, because they are afraid how they might look to their friends.

Pilate did not want to be thought of as against Caesar.

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.”

Pilate capitulated under pressure (verse 12), and prepared to render judgment on the original charge of sedition against Rome. This “judgment seat” was the place Pilate sat to render the official verdict. The seat was placed on an area paved with stones known as “The Pavement.”

The irony is that Pilate rendered judgment on the One whom the Father Himself entrusted with all judgment (5:22), and who would render a just condemnation of Pilate.

Here we see, Pilate choosing the world over God. Gabbatha is the Roman tribunal. Pilate will try just one more time to get these Jews to accept Jesus as their king.

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!”

The preparation was on Friday before the Sabbath, so that no work would have to be done on the Sabbath.

“Preparation”: Since this refers to the day before the Passover when preparation for the Passover was done, John presents Jesus as being sent to execution about the time Passover lambs were being slaughtered.

“Sixth hour”: John is here reckoning time by the Roman method of the day beginning at midnight.

Notice here, this does not say it was the sixth hour, it says about, which could have been even an hour earlier. Jesus was the Passover Lamb.

“Behold your King”: That was Pilate’s mockery, that such a brutalized and helpless man was a fitting king for them. This mockery continued in the placard on the cross (verses 19-22). Pilate tells them once more; this is your King.

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.”

“No king but Caesar” is said by the chief priests or Sadducees (politicians). Would any Pharisee have been willing to make such a blasphemous statement when God alone was to have been their King?

One more time I want to remind you: the ones pushing for Jesus to be crucified were the priests of the church. They were supposed to know the Scriptures which clearly told of the coming of Messiah. Jesus fulfilled these Scriptures. Had they really known the Scriptures they would have known this was Christ (the Messiah).

All of Pilate's pleading went unheeded. They (the priests), will settle for no less than to crucify Jesus.

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

Not only do these priests want Jesus crucified, but they want Him killed by a heathen ruler to make Jesus look as shameful as they could in the eyes of the Jews. The mob has ruled again. By this time Pilate has washed his hands of the matter, and the Jewish leaders have said they will take the blame.

The actual crucifixion would be done by Roman soldiers. Even though Pilate believed Jesus innocent, he let this mob cause him to crucify the King of all the world.

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:”

“Bearing His own cross” is a reference to the cross member or the horizontal bar. The condemned man carried it on his shoulders to the place of execution. Jesus carried His cross as far as the city gate, but due to the effects of the previous brutal beating, someone else had to eventually carry it for Him, i.e. Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).

Golgotha is an English transliteration of the Greek which in turn is a translation of the Aramaic word meaning “skull”. The place probably derived its name from its appearance.

Jesus carries His own cross as was the custom, to the place of a skull or Golgotha (Matthew 27:33). His path through Jerusalem has been called the Via Dolorosa (“Sorrowful Way”).

This hill of Golgotha, or Calvary as many called it, is outside the city wall of Jerusalem, to also fulfill prophecy. This cruelest of deaths was suffered for each of us individually by our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The first time you see this place of a skull, or Golgotha, you’ll hardly be able to breathe for the overwhelming impact it will have on you.

John Chapter 19 Questions

1. When Pilate took Jesus in verse 1, what did he do to Him?
2. What does the word above mean?
3. Why did Pilate do this to Jesus?
4. What did the soldiers make the crown of?

5. What color was the robe they put on Jesus?
6. What did the soldiers call Jesus?
7. In verse 4, what judgment did Pilate make of Jesus?
8. In verse 5, what does Pilate call Jesus?
9. What is Pilate saying in this name?
10. What did the chief priests and officers cry out that they wanted done to Jesus?
11. Why did the Jews claim that they wanted Jesus killed?
12. What effect did this have on Pilate in Verse 8?
13. What question did Pilate ask Jesus that Jesus did not answer?
14. What power did Pilate tell Jesus he had?
15. In reply, Jesus tells Pilate his power comes from where?
16. Pilate wants to release Jesus, but is swayed when the Jews tell Pilate, if he releases Jesus he is not _____ friend.
17. Who was Pilate more afraid of than God?
18. What is another name for the Pavement?
19. What were the Jews preparing for?
20. Who did the chief priests say was their only king?
21. What was another name for the place of a skull?
22. Where was this located?
23. Did Jesus die for us as individuals or collectively?