

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#35: “Jesus Is Crucified”

SCRIPTURE: John 19:1-37

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³ They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands. ⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.” ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” ⁶ When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.” ⁷ The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.” ⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

¹² From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.” ¹³ So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic

Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So, they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also, his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

So, the soldiers did these things, ²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold,

your son!”²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

INTRO:

This is John’s account of the crucifixion. As I’ve mentioned previously, John wrote this account of Jesus quite a bit later than Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote theirs, and his gospel is different in that he doesn’t include all the detail that they did.

This 19th chapter begins with

PILATE'S FINAL EXAMINATION AND FINAL ATTEMPT TO RELEASE JESUS.

It's clear that Pilate really wanted to release Jesus. Why? I can think of a few possible reasons.

1. He didn't believe Jesus had really done anything wrong;
2. He didn't really believe that Jesus was any threat to anybody;
3. He didn't really want to do the bidding of the Jewish Council – he didn't like them at all;
4. He didn't want to draw the attention of his superiors in Rome by conducting such a controversial execution;
5. His wife had come to him speaking of dreams and omens concerning this man who claimed to be the Son of God, and since the Romans believed that the gods sometimes manifested themselves in human form, he may have feared that he was dealing with one of the gods.

One of the things that may have finally persuaded Pilate to do what he did, however, was that the Jews threatened to take any refusal before Caesar himself and charge that he's an incompetent governor.

So, as a last-ditch effort, Pilate offers to release the criminal, Barabbas. The release of a Jewish prisoner was customary before the feast of Passover (Mark 15:6). The Roman governor granted clemency to one criminal as an act of goodwill toward the Jews whom he governed. The choice Pilate set before them could not have been more clear-cut: a high-profile killer and rabble-rouser who was unquestionably guilty, or a teacher and miracle-worker who

was demonstrably innocent. The crowd chose Barabbas to be released.

So, Pilate ordered

THE SCOURGING.

Scourging or flogging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution. Only women, senators, or soldiers were exempt, with the exception of soldiers who deserted.

The instrument used was a short whip with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths in which small metal balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied.

The man to be scourged was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post. The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers or by one who alternated positions. The purpose of the flogging was to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death.

As the victim's back was flogged, he would suffer deep lacerations and contusions. The pain and blood loss set the stage for circulatory shock and often determined how long he would last on the cross.

Then came...

...THE CRUCIFIXION.

In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground. Only later was a true cross used. It was an upright post called a *stipes* and a horizontal crossbar called a *patibulum*, and it had several variations.

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls. Jesus was too weak from the flogging to carry his, so got help from Simon of Cyrene. The victim was usually naked, but Jesus wore a loincloth. The weight of the cross was probably well over 300 pounds, so only the crossbar, which weighted 75 to 125 pounds, was carried.

One of the soldiers in the procession would carry a sign on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed.

Outside the city walls were permanently located the heavy upright wooden stipes, on which the patibulum would be secured. To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat, often was attached midway down the stipes.

Once on the lifted cross, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild analgesic. The hands were either tied or nailed to the crossbar through the wrists. The nails that were used to nail Jesus to the cross were 5 to 7 inches long with a square shaft $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch thick. The feet were nailed to a wooden footrest with the legs bent at the knees.

Survival on the cross usually lasted from three or four hours to three or four days, according to the severity of the scourging. The soldiers would often hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees.

Customarily, one of the soldiers would pierce the right side of the chest with his spear, a mortal wound.

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference

with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an exhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. To make a long explanation short, death would result from excruciating suffocation.

The most realistic portrayal of such an execution was in the movie, “The Passion of the Christ.” It was so realistic that many who saw it never want to see it again.

As Jesus suffered on the cross,

THE SOLDIERS IN CHARGE DIVIDED HIS CLOTHING AMONG THEM.

As was customary, the soldiers with “cross duty” were permitted to divide the victim’s clothing among them. However, His tunic was made of one woven piece, with no seams, so they “*cast lots*” for it, which was a fulfillment of a prophecy made centuries before (Psalm 22:18).

And then,

WE COME TO A SAD TENDER MOMENT...

...when Jesus says to Mary, His mother, who was standing next to the apostle John, “*Woman, behold your son!*” Then He said to John, “*Behold, your mother!*” And John comments at this point in his gospel, “*And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*”

Finally,

JESUS DIES AND HIS SIDE IS PIERCED.

In His final moments, Jesus said to the Roman soldiers in charge of all three executions – of Jesus and the two

thieves on either side of Him, *“I thirst.”* So, a sponge filled with sour wine was put on a hyssop branch and held to His mouth. Roman soldiers were known to drink such wine. The sponge no sooner touched His lips when He spoke the words, *“It is finished”* and died.

Many who were crucified took much longer to die than Jesus did. To speed up death through suffocation, the soldiers would break their legs with iron mallets. The Jews requested this, so that the execution could be completed, and the bodies taken down before the Sabbath. When they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so the prophecy that none of His bones would be broken (Numbers 9:12; Exodus 12:46) was fulfilled.

One of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with his spear and blood and water spewed from the wound. This, too, was a fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 12:10). It was also evidence that Jesus died of a literal “broken heart” – a rupture of the heart that allowed blood to flow into the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart) and coagulate.

IN CLOSING...

Picture in your mind Jesus hanging on that cross and remind yourself that it was all for you.