

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 15TH-16TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE SENTENCE (JOHN 19:1-16)

Jesus had been brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, by the Jewish religious leaders.

- They didn't have an official charge against Jesus, yet they still wanted Pilate to issue the death penalty (18:29-31).
- To satisfy the Jewish leaders and the growing mob, Pilate has Jesus flogged, beaten, and mocked (vs. 1-4).

The instrument for a Roman flogging was a short whip with several leather lashes on the end and at the end of each piece of leather was usually small iron balls or sharp pieces of bones or shell.

- For flogging, a man was stripped of clothing and his hands were tied to an upright post.
- The back, buttocks, and legs were whipped, usually by two soldiers in tandem.

As the victim's back was struck, the metal and bone on the end of the whip would cut into the skin and would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles.

- Pain and blood loss set the stage for circulatory shock, and the extent of blood loss determined how long the victim would survive on a cross.
- Jesus was then dressed up to look like a king and cruelly mocked and beaten (vs. 2-3).

After Jesus was flogged and beaten, Pilate presented Him to the crowd (vs. 4-5).

- It appears that Pilate had Jesus beaten hoping the Jews would see the trail, blood-soaked, battered man and be satisfied.
- When the chief priests and temple servants see Jesus, they're not satisfied—they begin to cry out for Him to be crucified (vs. 6), to which Pilate refuses on account of Jesus' innocence.

The Jewish leaders bring a new charge against Jesus, one that Pilate hasn't yet heard—Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which was blasphemy and against the Jewish law (vs. 7; Lev. 24:14-16).

- Pilate hears this and is deeply troubled: perhaps because this was a claim against the sovereignty of Caesar, or perhaps because Pilate saw something more in Jesus (vs. 8).
- Jesus is brought back inside Pilate's headquarters with a new question: "Where are you from?" (vs. 9).
- Jesus had already told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world (18:36), so He didn't answer.
- Pilate seems amazed that Jesus wasn't intimidated by his power and authority to judge and sentence Him to death (vs. 10).

Jesus makes it very clear to Pilate—the only authority Pilate possessed was the authority that God had granted Him (vs. 11).

- Rome wasn't in control; God was in control.
- All human authority that exists is instituted by God (Rom. 13:1).
- Jesus then extends to Pilate a measure of forgiveness, telling him that the one who handed him over is more guilty than Pilate.

We can sense panic in Pilate as he seeks to release Jesus (vs. 12)—Matthew's Gospel tells us that Pilate's wife had a dream about Jesus (Matt. 27:19-20).

- "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend." If Pilate were to exonerate Jesus, the high priest would report to Rome that Pilate refused to bring a political rival to justice, which could end Pilate's career (or possibly his life).

Pilate was now ready to deliver his final judgment, so he presented Jesus both before the crowd and the judgment seat (vs. 13).

- It was "preparation day for the Passover...around noon" when the Judean Jews were preparing to slaughter their Passover lambs, even as they were now preparing to sacrifice Jesus (vs. 14).
- Pilate brings Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, before the mob one last time.

"HERE IS YOUR KING!" (VS. 15)

- In response, the crowd cried out, "Take him away!...crucify him!"
- Of all people, the chief priests cry out that Caesar was their only king.
- Jesus is taken away from the judge's seat to be crucified as the shouting mob no doubt rejoices in His death—not understanding that He's dying for them.

THE CRUCIFIXION (JOHN 19:17-27)

Crucifixion was a barbaric form of execution.

- When someone was crucified, the vertical pole was usually already at the site of the crucifixion, and the victim would've been forced to carry their own crossbeam, which would've weighed between 70-90 lbs.
- Jesus had been awake all night, beaten, flogged, and abused by soldiers—He must've been physically exhausted.

Jesus carried His crossbeam to the execution site, Golgotha (vs. 17, the "place of a skull," Latin, calvaria), where the upright stakes would've already been planted in the ground.

- There Jesus was crucified with two others on either side of Him (vs. 18), while those who passed by the cross mocked and verbally abused Him (Matt. 27:39-44).
- What happened during a crucifixion?

A victim of crucifixion would be stripped naked and normally tied to the cross or nailed through the wrists if a quicker death was desired.

- The cross beam would then be lifted-up and tied to the already affixed pole where a small wooden block was placed halfway up to provide a seat for the body lest the nails tear open the wounds or the ropes force the arms from their sockets.
- Finally, the feet were tied or nailed to the post.

Death was caused by the loss of blood circulation and coronary failure.

- Especially if the victims were tied, it could take days of hideous pain as the extremities turned slowly gangrenous; so often the soldiers would break the victim's legs with a club, causing massive shock and a quick death.
- Such deaths were usually done in public places, and usually the body was left to rot for days, with carrion birds allowed to degrade the corpse further.

Above Jesus' cross, there was a sign that publicly described Jesus and His supposed crime in three

languages for all to see (vs. 19-20).

- The religious leaders objected to Pilate's title for Jesus, stating that Jesus only claimed to be the king (vs. 21).
- Pilate won't change the sign, and in so doing he actually affirms Jesus as the Messiah, in both His humility and His glory (vs. 22).

From verse 23, we can guess that four soldiers oversaw Jesus' execution because His clothes were divided into four shares.

- They cast lots to decide who got to keep the seamless tunic of Jesus (vs. 24), which is a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22:18.
- The tunic of Jesus could've been special because it was like that of a priest's ephod (Ex. 28:31-32) or a gift from His mother when He left home.

Four women are standing near the cross, including Jesus' own mother (vs. 25).

- Jesus looks down and sees His mother standing next to the "disciple he loved" (John) and says to Mary that John is her son now, and Mary is his mother (vs. 26).
- From that moment on, John acted upon Jesus' words and took her home (vs. 27).

IT IS FINISHED (JOHN 19:28-37)

Jesus knew that the work of His life and His death was nearing completion in accordance with God's plan of redemption (vs. 28).

- In Psalm 69, David wrote of the disgrace that the Messiah would someday endure: "...they gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar" (Ps. 69:21).
- Jesus is thirsty, and what happens next is another fulfillment of prophecy.

A sponge is placed on a hyssop stalk and sour wine that's been turned into vinegar is given to Jesus (vs. 29).

- As Jesus tastes the vinegar, He announces: "it is finished"—tetelestai, "paid in full."
- The debt owed for the sins of the world was paid in full by the sacrificial death of Jesus.
- Then bowing His head, Jesus gave up His spirit—no one took it from Him (vs. 30).

Normally the bodies of those who had been executed by crucifixion would be left on the cross as an example to others, but because of the approaching Sabbath, the religious leaders requested Pilate to have the men's legs broken and the bodies taken away (vs. 31).

- To break the legs of someone on the cross would prevent them from being able to push up and take a breath, thus causing suffocation.

In Psalm 34, David wrote, "One who is righteous has many adversities, but the LORD rescues him from them all. He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken."

- In preparing the Passover Lamb, the legs also cannot be broken (Ex. 12:46).
- The Roman soldier broke the legs of the other two prisoners, but when he came to Jesus, he saw that He'd already died and didn't break His legs.

Instead, the Roman soldier took a spear and pierced His side, and as He did, water and blood came out (vs. 34).

- There are medical explanations for this, as well as theological explanations (blood and water as cleansing agents for priestly atonement), but this is a sign that Jesus truly died a physical death.

- This is also a fulfillment of Zech. 12:10—"that they will look at the one they pierced."

John was a personal eyewitness of the death of Jesus (vs. 35-36) and all the prophetic fulfillments within the twenty-four period of His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion (20 Old Testament prophecies).

- These details are given to us so that we would believe—ours is a reasonable faith, and we've been given evidence from God Himself. There was nothing random in these events!

THE BURIAL (JOHN 19:38-42)

Two very courageous Pharisees appear in the narrative to claim the body of Jesus—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

- These two were "secret" disciples of Jesus, who, for fear of their religious colleagues, hadn't been open about their allegiance to Jesus.
- But now these two take the body of Jesus along with seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloe and begin to prepare it for burial (vs. 38-39).

The burial custom for the Jews was a two-step process: the body would be wrapped in spices and linen clothes and left in the tomb for a year while the flesh decomposed and fell away from the bones (vs. 40-41).

- After a year, the bones would then be washed and placed in an ossuary (bone box).
- Jesus is placed in a new tomb where no one else had been placed.

Jesus is dead—His lifeless body had been placed in a tomb (vs. 41) with a two-ton rock blocking the entrance and, eventually, a Roman guard of 16 soldiers who went to seal and guard the tomb (Matt. 27:65-66).

- It seems like Jesus has been stopped in a dramatic, violent fashion and the story is over.
- But Jesus had accomplished the greatest work of all on the cross, and the story isn't over.

EVEN IF IT APPEARS that God is absent and not at work in the world around you, Jesus has already completed a work for you on the cross through His death by conquering sin, the curse of the law, and death itself.

EVEN IF IT APPEARS in the world around us that God's mission has been stopped and His plan thwarted, God is still in control and He's in the business of doing more miraculous things than any of us can possibly imagine.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

- The penalty of our sin required death, and that God is just and holy (Rom. 6:23).
- That God proved His love in that Jesus stood in our place and took our penalty for sin upon Himself when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:7-8).
- We can be forgiven, cleansed, and have peace with God.

TETELESTAI: "PAID IN FULL" (VS. 30)

- The entire work of salvation was taken care of by Jesus on the cross; our redemption has been accomplished and applied.
- Understanding this motivates faith because it's the only response we have!
- Your standing before God has been settled by the blood-soaked sacrifice of Jesus; you didn't earn it, so receive the gift in faith.