

## John 19 Chapter Study

### INTRO

A question comes up as we study the trial & execution of Jesus.

Bible teachers regularly say that the reason why the priests took Jesus to Pilate was because the Romans had taken the right of capital punishment away from the Jews.

But when we read the Book of Acts or some of the history of the Early Church, we find the Jewish authorities DID execute some people.

In Acts 7 we see Stephen, the first martyr stoned by the Sanhedrin.

History tells us James, the Lord's brother & leader of the Church in Jerusalem was also stoned a few years later.

It certainly looks like the Jews were able to carry out executions here – so why did they haul Jesus before Pilate?

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Look at John 18:31-32

**31 Then Pilate said to them, “You take Him and judge Him according to your law.”**

The Romans *had* withdrawn the right of Jewish civil government to practice capital punishment, for criminal matters & for acts of sedition or rebellion.

But the Romans knew the Jewish *religion* demanded stoning for certain kinds of heresy.

The Romans were loath to interfere with people religious beliefs.

The only time they did so was when those beliefs directly affect the security of Rome.

So they had allowed the Jewish authorities the right to judge religious matters – and to execute those who'd been proven guilty of heresy.

Pilate knew the tiff between the priests and Jesus was a religious matter – so he told them to deal with it – they had that authority.

The problem was, the priests knew that if they stoned Jesus, the masses of Passover pilgrims packed into Jerusalem would turn on them.

They considered Jesus a prophet, & possibly the Messiah.

They'd been trying for the last 3 years to discredit Him and get the public to turn against Him.

Every attempt had only resulted in Him coming out looking better while they looked ever more nasty and jealous of His growing influence.

They didn't really have any solid grounds to condemn Him as a heretic.

His mere *claim* to being the Messiah & the Son of God wasn't enough; they needed to prove somehow that His claim was bogus – and all their attempts had done was affirm that it was valid.

If they just took Jesus out & stoned Him, public opinion would likely rise in an angry reaction against them.

So they took Jesus to Pilate and accused Him of sedition – of being a threat to Rome.

**Therefore the Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,”**

What they mean is – anyone accused of sedition.

They didn't want Jesus stoned as a *heretic*; they wanted Him crucified by the Romans as a *political rebel*.

That way they could be rid of Him & duck the anger of the people.

**32** that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.

Jesus had made it clear that He was going to be crucified, not stoned.

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## II. THE END Chs. 12-21

### H. Before Pilate 18:28-19:16

#### 1. First appearance 18:28-38

#### 2. Barabbas released 18:39-40

#### 3. Scourging 19:1-3

**1** So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

As we saw at the end of Ch. 18, knowing Jesus was an innocent man, Pilate attempted to release Him by suggesting to the crowd that had gathered that they pick Jesus as the One he ought to release for the special Passover pardon. That's why a crowd had gathered so early that morning – because each year at Passover the governor would release one of those they held in prison. This was a way to show the good will of Rome and to pacify the often agitated Passover crowds.

But the priests had circulated a warning that they were to ask for the criminal Barabbas. Anyone asking for Jesus would be in serious trouble.

With this failure to get Jesus off the hook, Pilate thought a good beating would be enough to mollify the priests' hostility. So he had Jesus scourged.

Luke 23:16,22 tells us that Pilate hoped the beating would be enough to get Jesus released.

The scourging would prove to all concerned that Jesus couldn't possibly be a king as the priests had charged.

Any king who was a *real danger* to Rome would never fall to the eventuality of being beaten like this. Scourging would **PROVE** the preposterous nature of the charge against Him.

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**Scourging:** Scourging was carried out with a whip composed of multiple thongs, each twined round pieces of bone or sharp metal.

We're not told how many lashes Jesus was given, but other historians tell us that the usual punishment was between 20 & 40, depending on the strength of the victim.

The goal was to rip the flesh of the back to ribbons.

Not a few of those scourged died of the beating when their ribs & internal organs were exposed.

The scene shown in the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* is an accurate idea of what scourging was.

Jesus' was particularly savage, leading to His quick demise on the cross.

He died after only 6 hours; some victims lasted for a couple days.

**2** And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head,

**and they put on Him a purple robe. <sup>3</sup>Then they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands.**

Emboldened by Jesus’ mute acceptance of the scourging, the soldiers decided to have some sport with Him before turning Him back over to Pilate.

They’d known endless abuse from the Jews & this was their chance to give some of it back – they thought.

So they dressed Jesus in a robe whose color spoke of royalty, & put a mock crown on His head – then they feigned their adulation of Him by slapping and striking Him.

The other Gospels tell us they spat in His face & plucked out His beard.

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It is right at this place that personally, I see the restraint of Christ most fully revealed.

He knew He was going to the Cross & that it was *there* He would atone for our sins. *That* was the climax of His mission.

But all of this was just the *lead up* - & to have to endure this merciless, undeserved, mocking & torture was just so very wrong!

I’ll bet every one of us, in the same place, would have put up with just so much, then we would have said, “Okay – that’s enough!” And ended it with a little fun of our own.

Think of the absolute insanity of the way Jesus was treated.

It is right here, with the scourging & the mocking by the soldiers that we see the full depravity of the human race.

Here is what man is really like! He takes the perfect holy God who has done nothing throughout His time on Earth but blessed people and shown incredibly love & compassion.

When we get our hands on Him, we rip off His robe, tie Him to a post and flay His backside till it’s left in strips of bleeding flesh.

They dress Him up so we can mock and further abuse Him.

So much for the vaunted ideal of secular humanism which say that man is noble & good & that he just needs to be *freed* of the superstitions of religion so that he can achieve his potential.

You want to see what humanity will lower itself to if you take God away – Here it is!

If we did this *to God* when He became man – what do you think we will do *to one another* if we finally come to the place of removing God from the picture?

Look to the gas ovens of Auschwitz, the gulags of Siberia, & the killing fields of Cambodia.

And yet Secular Humanism is the prevailing philosophy in our public schools & universities.

#### **4. Second appearance 19:4-16**

**<sup>4</sup>Pilate then went out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.” <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the Man!”**

Pilate thought for sure the pitiful spectacle of the beaten Jesus would mollify the crowd & for pity's sake they would agree to His release.  
He miscalculated.

**6** Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.”

The priests knew what Pilate was trying to do & saw the crowd's horror when presented with Jesus, so they quickly picked up the call for Jesus' crucifixion. Having already been warned by the priests what would happen if they consented to Jesus' release, the other gospels tell us the crowd added their voices to the priest call for His death.

Pilate knows he doesn't have any real grounds for condemning Jesus so in frustration he throws it back at the priests. But of course, they can't crucify anyone – only the Romans could do that.

**7** The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”

They admit that the real charge, the thing that has made them so intent of getting rid of Jesus is what they consider blasphemy – Jesus claimed to be God.

**8** Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, **9** and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

As governor, Pilate had certainly heard of Jesus before this.

The whole region was abuzz with talk of the miracle-working Rabbi from Galilee.

But the claim that He was the Son of God was new & troubling to Pilate.

Here's why – Many Romans were superstitious.

It was a frequent theme in their legends & religion that the gods would occasionally take human form.

Sometimes they would have sexual relations with human women & produce children. The story of Hercules was one of these.

Jesus' claim to being the Son of God troubled Pilate because of all this.

What made it worse is that as Matthew 27:19 tells us, Pilate's wife and sent a message to him while all of this was going on that she'd had a vivid dream about Jesus, and strongly urged him to not harm Him.

This confirmed Pilate's suspicions that Jesus was not only innocent, there was something much deeper at work in all this than just the priest's attempt to get rid of an opponent.

So he returned to another interrogation of the prisoner.

But Jesus refused to speak.

**10** Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”

Pilate was not used to being ignored & reminds Jesus of his authority.

He wants to compel Jesus to speak & uses the leverage of his position.

**11** Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless

**it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."**

Jesus reminded Pilate of something every ruler knows – he was only in his position because a higher authority had placed him there.

And authority given must be accounted for.

How Pilate uses his authority will determine not Jesus' fate, but Pilate's.

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With this answer, Jesus turns the tables on Pilate & lets him know, the governor is not judging Jesus.

Rather, what Pilate decides about Jesus determines Pilate's fate.

No one judges Christ. It's the other way around – what we decide about Jesus judges us!

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As Pilate felt himself being backed into a corner, Jesus told him that while he would have to answer for what he did with Jesus, the greater reckoning would be that of the high priest Caiaphus.

**12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."**

When Jesus told Pilate He knew the governor was being manipulated into a political trap, Pilate decided Jesus really was innocent & had to be released.

As soon as the priests knew this was the direction things were going, they played their ace in the hole.

They knew that because of 2 previous official reprimands from Rome, Pilate was on probation.

He'd been warned that if another official delegation of the Jewish leaders came to Rome with a complaint about him, he'd be removed and have to return in disgrace to the capital.

The only way out of such disgrace was to commit suicide.

So here the Jews threaten Pilate with their trump card; if he doesn't bend to their wishes and crucify Jesus, they will send a delegation to Rome with the charge that he let a dangerous insurrectionist go.

Imagine the head of the US forces in Afghanistan captures bin-Laden, interrogates him, then lets him go.

Reporters would bring that news back home here and the Pentagon would go ape!

Bush would bring him home to face a court-marshal for gross dereliction of duty.

That's the threat facing Pilate with v. 12.

**13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called *The Pavement*, but in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*.**

This refers to a stone floor, like a tile or mosaic.

The Romans *loved* mosaics. We find them in many Roman ruins of Israel.

Sepphoris, the new capital of Galilee Herod was building just north of Nazareth during the time of Christ appears to have had a trade school that trained people in the making of mosaics.

There are several rooms there with huge, gorgeous mosaics. The courtyard of the governor's palace in Jerusalem would certainly have a mosaic. It was there the governor's official judge's seat was set. Pilate has the guards bring Jesus out – he sits down in the seat to let all know he's ready to render his final verdict.

**14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"**

Since Mark tells us in 15:25 that Jesus was put on the cross at the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour – 9 AM. How do we reconcile John's saying Pilate didn't even render judgment until the 6<sup>th</sup> hour? Simple – Mark reckoned time from a Jewish perspective while John is speaking about a Roman trial so he uses the Romans way of reckoning time. The Jews numbered their hours with sunrise – about 6 AM, while the Romans began numbering the hours with midnight. So Pilate issued his verdict sometime between 6 & 7 AM.

**15 But 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 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.**

Pilate tries one last time to spark the compassion of the crowd toward the now pitiful appearance of Jesus, but the priests rule the day & sway them to demand His death.

In a complete betrayal of their role as the leaders of Israel who are to give allegiance to no one but God as their king, they claim Caesar. These men were *traitors*.

## **I. On the Cross 19:17-37**

### **1. The crucifixion 19:17-24**

**17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place of a Skull*, which is called in Hebrew, *Golgotha*, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.**

As we considered last Sunday, there's quite a bit of material describing the practice of Roman crucifixion that comes to us from history.

Crosses were placed alongside busy roads to maximize the warning they provide to anyone who was thinking about rebelling against Rome.

There was a major road that led out of the northern gate of Jerusalem that ran along the base of a white limestone cliff that had been a quarry.

The masons had dug holes in the face of the cliff that made it look like a skull leering over the road.

For this reason the locals called it Skull Hill and the Romans considered it a perfect spot to crucify people.

Jesus & the 2 thieves who were executed with him would have carried the cross

beams for their crosses.

Once they got there, the beam would be secured to a post; they'd position the condemned on top of this & drive spikes through the wrists & arches of the feet.

Then the bottom of the post would be dropped into a hole & secured with rocks, dirt & wedges of wood.

The feet of the condemned were no more than 3 feet off the ground, making the head of the crucified just a little more than a couple feet higher than those standing on the ground.

**19** Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** **20** 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. **21** 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.'"" **22** Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Attached to the cross of the condemned was a list of charges specifying why they were being put to death.

Jesus' simply said His name and His title.

The Jewish rulers were offended by this & saw it as Pilate's way to show his displeasure with having been backed into a political corner by them.

So they went running back to the Praetorium with the demand that he alter the charge from *Jesus' title* to *His claim*. Pilate said – "Buzz off!"

**23** 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. **24** 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.

The crucifixion detail was not one most soldiers looked forward to.

As compensation for the grizzly task, they were allowed to keep the clothing of the condemned.

There were 4 of them at Jesus' crucifixion and they split up His belongings 4 ways.

The one problem was His tunic, which had been specially made and was seamless.

Instead of tearing it and dividing the cloth into 4 pieces, they decided to cast lots for it. Thus fulfilling Psalm 22:18.

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Some have wondered if we're to find some kind of special meaning in the fact Jesus' tunic was woven in one piece & seamless.

This was not some kind of special technology for the time; it was a well known method of weaving.

But the only other reference we find to such a specific seamless garment was made by Josephus who said the high priest's tunic was also woven from the

top in one piece and seamless.

It may have been this garment Caiaphus tore when he declared Jesus' blasphemy.

The high priest was not supposed to tear his garments because they were holy.

By tearing them, he was defaming his position.

By going to the cross, Jesus was fulfilling His call as our great high priest in offering Himself as our sacrifice.

The Roman soldiers showed *more regard* for the humble tunic of Jesus than Caiaphus did for his.

## 2. John's new charge 19:25-27

**25** Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister [aunt], Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 4 ladies.

His aunt was Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and mother of James & John. <sup>[1]</sup>  
John never names himself, his brother, or his mother in His gospel.

**26** When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

**27** Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

This is entirely keeping with the social customs; a family was to take care of its own members.

Mary was John's aunt, the sister of his mother, Salome.

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Both the Gospels and Acts tell us Jesus had younger brothers; so why didn't they take care of their mother?

Following the Resurrection, the followers of Christ will bond together in a tight-knit community, and Jesus' brothers did not at first believe in Him.

It took a little while before they came to faith.

So Jesus asks John to keep an eye on His mother & make sure she's taken care of. He did.

## 3. The end 19:28-37

**28** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" **29** Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. **30** So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

We covered these vs. Sunday.

**31** Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should 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.

Because of Deut. 21:23, dead bodies were not allowed to remain on a tree



overnight, lest they defile the land.

If this was true for any old day, it applied even more to a special holy day, such as the one that was coming – the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened bread which comes right after Passover.

So the priests petitioned Pilate to have the crucifixion detail break the legs of the 3 men so they would suffocate and die.

**32** Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. **33** But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

Since the point was to hasten their death, since Jesus was already dead, they declined to break His legs.

**34** But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. **35** And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

One of the other 4 guards thought it was presumptuous to *not* break Jesus legs; what if He'd just passed out.

So he decided to see if Jesus was really dead or just unconscious; a good poke with his pilium would tell.

The head of the spear penetrated the skin between the ribs & sliced open the pericardium.

When he withdrew the spear, out of the wound came the both water & blood, a sign that Jesus had died of heart-rupture.

Jesus died, literally, of a broken heart.

John says – “I WAS THERE, and saw it with my own eyes.”

He says this because even back in those days there were skeptics who said Jesus hadn't really died on the cross, He only swooned, and was revived later by the cold stone bed of the tomb.

The blood and water that flowed from the wound in Jesus' side is proof He was dead!

**36** For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, *“Not one of His bones shall be broken.”*

Psalm 34:20

**37** And again another Scripture says, *“They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”*

Zech 12:10

#### **J. The Burial 19:38-42**

**38** After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. **39** And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. **40** Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in

strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.  
<sup>41</sup>Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup>So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

While the official disciples went into hiding after the crucifixion, 2 others who'd been secret supporters step up & show their devotion when it was even more dangerous than before.

Interesting – when Jesus was alive, they supported Jesus secretly for fear of what open support would cost them in terms of their social standing.

But now that aligning with Jesus will CERTAINLY cost them they step forward. Why?

Because Jesus' example in going to the cross has drawn them out of the closet.

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“Coming out of the closet” is a phrase used today to refer to homosexuals who finally admit their sexual orientation after trying to hide it for fear of what the admission will cost them.

Today – “coming out” has become the cause-celeb for many.

And it seems that the more homosexuality is accepted and endorsed in our culture, another group is being encouraged to climb INTO the closet, or if they are already there – to stay there: I'm referring to honest to goodness, God-fearing, Jesus-loving, Bible-believing, Holy-living, All-loving Christians.

There are far too many *closet-Christians* today.

Do the people you work with know you're a follower of Jesus?

How about your family? Neighbors?

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Matthew tells us Joseph was a rich man. [Matt. 27:57]

Nicodemus was one of the Jewish rulers & a highly respected teacher. [John 3]

Joseph went to Pilate and got permission to bury Jesus.

He had a brand new tomb not far from the cross where it would be easy to place the body.

When Joseph told Pilate his plan, Pilate complimented Joseph on his generosity, giving up his expensive family tomb to a virtual stranger.

Joseph told Pilate, “Oh, it's not big deal – it's only for the weekend.” ☺

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Nicodemus brought some embalming supplies & they took care of business.

But they weren't able to do a proper job of it as they were rushed – the sun was setting and they had to be done quickly.

This is why the women returned early Sunday morning;

They'd followed at a distance and seen the inadequate way the two men and tried to prep Jesus' body for burial.

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[1] Mark 15:40 Matthew 27:56