

## John 19

Once again good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to John 19?

Just a reminder we're now in the book Acts on Wednesdays, and once we finish studying John's gospel on Sundays, we'll then move to the next book in the OT since we just finished Numbers, which is the book of Deuteronomy.

This morning we're only going to study verses 1-18 as we continue to see a frustrated Pontius Pilate strategize to set innocent Jesus free. Yet he'll eventually cave to public opinion, and crucify the Son of God.

The title of this morning's message is THE TESTIMONY OF GOD  
Let's read verses 1-4 and then we'll pray.

1 So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. 2 And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. 3 Then they said,<sup>[fn]</sup> "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands.

4 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."

### LETS PRAY

It's been a few weeks since we've explored the events after the last supper, and the upper room discourse, so lets take a moment and remind ourselves of what's occurred.

In John 18, Jesus is betrayed by Judas.

As the soldiers descended upon Jesus in the darkness of night, they arrested our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. At the sight of Jesus' arrest, Peter drew his sword and lopped off the ear of an

officer named Malchus. Jesus rebuked Peter, and then reattached the ear.

Jesus was then taken to the house of Annas, then Caiaphas the High Priest.

The Jews then shuffle Jesus across town to Rome's governor, Pontius Pilate. Remember, only the Romans could perform official executions, so the Jews needed Pilate to approve of their evil intentions.

Yet Pilate clearly sees that Jesus is innocent, so he tries to gain a pardon for Jesus. Pilate offers to release a prisoner, named Barabbas, and he gives the Jews a choice between Jesus and the terrorist – thinking the Jews would condemn Barabbas and set Jesus free.

But that's not what happened. Look at the last 2 verses in your bible of **chapter 18 39** “But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

**40** Then they all cried again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

John's gospel only gives a passing glance to Barabbas. But to grasp the drama of this scene look at...

**Luke 23:25** And he released to them<sup>[fn]</sup> the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will. I want you to imagine this prisoner, the murderer Barabbas, in a dark prison cell with a small window, waiting to be crucified.

Through the small window Barabbas could likely hear the crowd gathered before Pilate.

Barabbas probably couldn't hear all of Pilate's words, but Barabbas very likely heard the boisterous cries of the crowd saying CRUCIFY HIM when speaking of Jesus!

Imagine as moments later, the footsteps of the soldiers approach his cell. Barabbas' heart hurries, his pulse pounds.

The soldiers come to his cold, dark cell and say to Barabbas, "you are a guilty man – but you will be set free because Jesus will die in your place"

Barabbas knew the meaning of Jesus' substitution on the cross better than most. I wonder if he ever took it to heart.

So on the heels of Barabbas' release, verse 1 tells us...

**1 So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.** In a few simple and undramatic words, the bible declares in verse 1 that Jesus was scourged.

A scourging was a horrific ordeal. **SHOW PIC 1**

A flagrum was used, which is a whip with little bits of bone, glass and lead imbedded into the leather. Its sole purpose was to rip and tear apart the flesh.

The victim of scourging would be tied to a post by the front of their body so their back was fully exposed. As the soldier's strikes would crash down, the leather bands of the flagrum sunk into the flesh, gripped it tight, and tore chunks away of the victims back with each strike.

Now the typical sentence for scourging was 40 lashes, but they would usually only give 39 stripes as a sign of mercy. 39 lashes of this brutal torture device. **CLOSE PIC 1**

History tells us many men died during the scourging because of the blood loss that occurred.

And just as **Isaiah 53:5** prophesied, **But He was wounded for our transgressions,**

**He was bruised for our iniquities;**

**The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,**

**And by His stripes we are healed.**

Remember this beating was carried out by professional executioners, accustomed to the sight of blood and the screams of pain.

No emotion would interfere with their orders, no matter how inhumane the scene.

The first couple of blows during a scourging caused welts to form on the shoulders and back.

But by the seventh or eighth strike, the glass shards had sliced through the skin layers and were penetrating muscle.

30 more strikes to go.

The victim's back eventually ended up the texture of hamburger meat. **SHOW PIC 2** The next time you go shopping in the meat section at the grocery store, pause for a moment, and remember these words. **CLOSE PIC 2**. Suddenly the long line at the checkout won't seem like such a hassle.

At the conclusion of the scourging, the victim was cut down, and their decimated bodies would collapse in a lifeless heap to the pavement.

There the victim would lie motionless in a puddle of his own sweat, urine, and blood.

The ancient historian, Eusebius, writes of the martyrs who endured such beatings,

“(They were) torn by scourges down to deep seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed.”

Medical Doctor, William Edwards, gives this description of a scourging victim, “the iron balls would cause deep contusions... the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous muscles, and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.”

The soldiers now gruffly grab Jesus, and their cruelty is on full display...

2 And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. 3 Then they said,[fn] “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands. After the horrors of the scourging, the soldiers decide to adorn Jesus with a mocking royal robe and a crown of thorns.

Shockingly, the only crown King Jesus ever wore on earth was the crown of thorns!

The Greek word translated “thorns” mean “briars.” They were thick and sharp, and penetrated Jesus’ forehead like little daggers.

And the soldiers wouldn’t just set this crown on His head, they would force it, and push it in place.

Look at Matthews description.

Matthew 27:27 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and

mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.

I want to call your attention to the often-overlooked fact that as Jesus has been impaled with the crown of thorns, these soldiers hit His head with a reed, driving the thorns deeper into Jesus' head.

There is a prophecy that describes the suffering Messiah in **Isaiah 50:6**, "I gave My back to the those who struck Me, and My cheeks to the those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting."

Jesus' appearance is also prophesied in **Isaiah 52:14** **Just as many were astonished at you,**

**So His visage was marred more than any man,**

**And His form more than the sons of men;**

Jesus was beaten so horrifically that literally; He no longer resembled a human.

Before we move to verse 4, I would like you to think of the significance of the crown of thorns one more time.

What was it that brought thorns into the world? It was sin.

**Genesis 3:17** 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

**"Cursed is the ground for your sake;**

**In toil you shall eat of it**

**All the days of your life.**

**18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,  
And you shall eat the herb of the field.**

It was sin that brought thorns and thistles into an originally perfect world.

Jesus is about to bear the sin of the world. It's fitting for Jesus to be crowned with the very symbol of the sin in the garden of Eden.

4-5

4 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."

5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!" Pilate was hoping the shocking sight of Jesus' suffering would pacify these bloodthirsty Jews. But look at their reaction...

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." For the third time, Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent of all charges.

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." We ought not forget that Jesus was sentenced to death because He told the truth.

8 Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, Pilate had a wife – history knows her as Claudia Procula. Matthew's gospel tells us that Pilate's wife sent a warning to Pilate concerning Jesus. **Matthew 27:19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."** What was it that Pilate's wife saw, and suffered? We don't know.

All of these circumstances, his wife's dream, the power of Jesus' presence, Jesus' declaration of being God's Son - all combined to shake Pilate up. Verse 8 says 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. At this point, Jesus isn't going to release any new information to Pilate, until Pilate is willing to obey what he's already been told.

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?" A lot of folks are familiar with Jesus' 7 statements on the cross. Yet if you look at the last 2 chapters, you'll see the Pilate asks Jesus 7 questions. This was Pilate's last question, and it's filled with ignorance.

Here Pilate pulls out his business card on Jesus. He wants Jesus to know he's the decision maker, the one with authority to issue the order to kill or release. Clearly Pilate doesn't realize who he's threatening!

And how does Jesus react to Pilate's declaration of authority?

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 that there was a higher authority than him, and Pilate only had authority because God had given it to him. This reminds us of **Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.**

Who did Jesus have in mind when He spoke of the one who had handed Him over to Pilate having the greater sin? Some scholars believe that Jesus meant Caiaphas, others believe Judas Iscariot.



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.” There’s a distinct sense of panic and desperation within Pilate. He wants to do what’s right, yet his flesh is trying to figure out a way to remain loyal to Rome.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us the Jews had already complained to Rome about Pilate's heavy-handed tactics and insensitivity toward their religion. Pilate was known to be an instigator against the Jews.

In our modern times, you could say Pilate was already written up and on a PIP. So when the Jews accuse him of not being Caesar’s friend, Pilate renders his decision.

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. **SHOW PIC 3** What is being described here is what’s called the Lithostratos. It was part of the Antonio Fortress.

These types of pavements existed all over the empire. They were traditional sites of Roman justice. History tells us that when Julius Caesar traveled into battle, he would carry a portable mosaic pavement that he would set up to judge his conquered opponent. **CLOSE PIC 3** What Pilate does here is roman custom.

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

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!”**

Throughout its history, the nation of Israel has experienced unparalleled pain and calamity because of their rejection of God.

In 1 Samuel 8, we see the Jews rejecting God the Father as they begged the prophet Samuel for a king to rule over them, just like their gentile neighbors had. Yet God wanted Israel to be a theocracy—where He ruled over them. But the people refused.

Here in John 19, we see the nation refusing the Son of God as they shockingly cry out, “We have no king but Caesar.”

In Acts 7, we see them resisting the HS, and stoning Stephen as a result.

Rejecting the Father in the Old Testament, refusing the Son in the Gospels, and resisting the Spirit in the Book of Acts guaranteed calamity for the people of Israel.

But God is faithful. The message of Romans 9–11 is that even though Israel has refused the Son, rejected the Father, and resisted the Spirit—God will keep His promises to her.

**16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.**<sup>[fn]</sup>

**17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha,** The Greek word is “Calvaria” or “Calvary.” It’s a derivative of our English term “cranium.”

In Jerusalem, north of the Old City, just outside the Damascus Gate is a former quarry. (We visit it on our tours.)

Solomon harvested granite from this site to use in the construction of the Temple. And there is a rock cliff which years ago looked eerily like a skull. **SHOW PIC 4**

Today, the site is in front of a bus terminal, and the fumes from the buses are eroding the skull-shape - but you can still see it...

#### CLOSE PIC 4

18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Crucifixion victims were forced to carry their own cross. The “patibulum,” or crossbeam, was strapped to the victim’s shoulders. It usually tipped the scales at around 100 pounds.

While the victim was paraded through the streets, he would be accompanied by four soldiers - two in front, two behind.

And the soldiers always took the long way around to the crucifixion site. They paraded the victim because they wanted as many people as possible to see the consequences of Roman justice. SHOW PIC 5

Today, when you walk the Via Dolorosa, this street that Jesus is on, the street is always congested. Pedestrians, shop owners, street vendors hurry and scurry - the way it was in Jesus’ day.

#### CLOSE PIC 5

By this point Jesus has very little left physically. Remember He was coming off a sleepless night in Gethsemane. More than being exhausted, hungry and dehydrated, He had just been brutally tortured multiple times. Death is not far from Him.

As He begins to carry the cross beam, Jesus’ body buckles, and collapses under the weight of the wood.

So picture the scene. Jesus, a mangled mess of human flesh and blood, struggling to carry the crossbeam. He’s surrounded by shouts and taunts of heartless Jews and curious onlookers.

And Luke's gospel gives us this detail.

**Luke 23:26 Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus.**

It seems this man named Simon the Cyrenian is just passing through Jerusalem when he's now commanded to carry Jesus' cross.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes the most important moments in our lives are not always the one's we see coming, or the ones that we plan for in advance?

Folks, sometimes we don't get to choose, rather we get chosen. And we don't like that because it means we're not in control, we're not the ones calling the shots.

This is what happened to Simon-he didn't choose to carry the cross, rather he was chosen.

Simon was from Cyrene in North Africa - an original Libyan - probably a Jew on a Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Simon must've been a man with a large build and a strong frame. That's why he was picked. He's walking down the narrow street, minding his own business when suddenly, Simon feels the sharp end of a spear poking into his shoulder. A soldier pulls Simon from the crowd and places the beam on his back.

Simon was just minding his own business, and now He's bearing the cross for God's Son, Who is bearing this cross for the sins of the whole world!

We're going to stop in our study at verse 18, let's read it one more time and we'll then talk about the crucifixion.

18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.

Josephus, the first century historian, who saw firsthand his share of crucifixions, called the cross, "the most wretched of deaths."

The Roman historian, Cicero, wrote, "And what shall I call crucifixion? So abominable a deed, can find no word adequate enough to describe it."

In 1968 the ancient bones of a 26 year old victim of crucifixion were discovered at a Jewish settlement north of Jerusalem. This rare archeological find shed light on how crucifixions were performed, and it confirmed the details we read about in the Bible.

The crucifixion victim was laid on the ground and 7" iron spikes were driven through his wrists into the crossbeam. The beam was then lifted, and attached to a standing post. A single spike was then driven through both feet.

Medical Doctor Truman Davis, gives a description of the agonizing pain the victim endured once He was nailed to the cross.

I ask you to listen carefully, perhaps close your eyes, and picture Jesus on the cross with these words.

"As his body slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves... As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe.

Air can be drawn into the lungs, but not exhaled. He fights to raise himself up in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside.

Spasmodically he's able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen. The victim endures hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against the rough timber.

Then another agony begins.

He experiences a crushing pain deep within the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. It is now almost over - the loss of tissue fluids reach a critical level - the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues - the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air.

He can feel the chill of death.

Finally, he can allow his body to die." END QUOTE

I've often wondered, why the crucifixion? It's one thing for God to die, but why did God's Son die the most hideous form of death ever invented? Why didn't God send His Son at a time when lethal injections were the mode of execution? Or even the electric chair? Or even the guillotine!

Why didn't Jesus die in a way that's quick, easy and relatively painless?

The answer, is that our sin is not quick... or easy... or painless to God.

Our sin grieves the heart of God. Sin not only breaks God's law - but far worse, sin breaks His heart.

Jesus died on the cross because our sin demands such a death.

The cross teaches us two truths: the severity of our sin, and the depth of God's love. Though our sin demanded a steep price - Jesus paid it in full. **Romans 5:8 tells us, "God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Wed of every month as part of service we have testimony time, a time to celebrate together how the Lord continues to work in our lives. I really encourage you to come, it's always a blessing.

I bring that up because look at Paul's words **2 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony[fn] of God.**

We're always blessed when we hear the testimony of others, but how much greater is this, the testimony of God!

As we close, I want you to think about God's testimony for a moment.

What would you do if you witnessed your son being spit upon, and beaten, and scourged, and crucified, and it was within your power to stop it! What would you do? I would unleash unholy rage and violence to anyone who harmed my son like this.

But as Jesus was beaten, heaven was silent.

As He was scourged, heaven was mute

As He was nailed to the cross, heaven was silent!

It was not the nails that affixed Jesus to the cross, it was Gods love for you and I!

I know many of you are going through some brutal trials in your lives right now. I know when you leave here your difficulties and hardships will likely continue to be there.

As you determine to walk by faith, remember the testimony of God because it demonstrates His love for you.

May none of us ever forget the testimony of God-for it is stained all over the cross.