

Notes on John 19

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The Scourging and Further Hearing before Pilate – 19:1-15

Verse 1

1. Define “scourging.” (Think: Describe what it was like — check dictionaries).

Pilate has Jesus scourged.

Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says scourging meant: “to whip, flog, scourge ... as a public punishment of the condemned cf. Deut. 25:3; 1 Kings 12:11,14; 2 Cor. 11:24,25; Acts 16:22; 22:24,25. Among Romans, rods were used or whips the thongs of which were weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal. It was used to wrest confessions from victims ... Its victims tied to a stake with back bared to the tormentors generally fainted from the resulting lacerations or even died. It was forbidden to Roman citizens (Acts 22:25) being generally reserved for slaves or those condemned to death.”

Barnes adds that scourging prior to crucifixion was common in order to increase the horror of the act.

Pilate probably had several purposes in mind for this. It was the beginning preparation for crucifixion (Mark 15:15 Matt. 27:26; Luke 23:25). But he may also have hoped that scourging Jesus might bring a confession from Him so Pilate would feel justified in killing Him. Or perhaps the scourging alone would fill the need and satisfy the Jews so crucifixion itself would not be necessary (see v4; cf. Luke 23:14-16).

Many men died or fainted from the scourging, yet Jesus remained calm enough to later have a further discussion with Pilate afterward.

Verses 2,3

2. Describe the mockery Jesus received from the soldiers. (Think: What was the purpose of this treatment?)

Mockery by the soldiers

All the accounts together show that, in addition to the scourging, the soldiers made a great mockery of Jesus' claim to be “King of the Jews.” Commentators remind us how cruel Roman soldiers often were. These were the kind of men who could enjoy watching gladiators attempting to kill one another or wild animals attacking prisoners in the Roman amphitheaters. Such cruelty was common among the kind of men who now began to mock and ridicule the Son of God.

Jesus' own clothes were removed, and He was given various symbols of royalty as a king. He was given a purple or scarlet robe, a color commonly worn by royalty. He was given a crown, but they made one of thorns so it would hurt instead of being an honor. They gave Him a reed to use as a scepter.

Then they mockingly bowed to Him and called Him “King of the Jews.” They spit on Him, and took the reed and hit Him over the head. This of course would cause the thorns to dig into his scalp at the same time that it belittled his claim to authority.

Probably the Romans all thought of this first as mockery of Jesus Himself. That He would claim to be King of the Jews but have, to their mind, so little proof of it, would seem hilarious to them. Further, this was no doubt a form of mockery of the Jews themselves. The Romans had little respect for the Jews. They would consider it difficult and even insulting to be required to police a people who were so stubborn, rebellious, and otherwise strange. To have an opportunity to insult one who claimed to be the King of the Jews would be an opportunity to mock the nation as well as the pretender.

From Jesus' standpoint, of course, this would all be extremely difficult. These people were powerless before Him and He knew it. He absolutely deserved by inheritance to be king of the Jews (see Matt. 1). But more importantly, as the Son of God He deserved to rule over all these miserable creatures. They had no right to refuse to honor Him, let alone to mock and spit on Him. He could have destroyed them in an instant. He had the power, if He chose, to compel them to immediately apologize for their egotistical insults and then to truly honor Him as king. Yet instead, He knew He had to endure such insults and die, so He said nothing and let them continue in their evil.

Verses 4,5

3. What verdict did Pilate repeat regarding Jesus in v4? List other places where Pilate said this about Jesus.

Pilate again brings Jesus before the Jews.

John's account adds some details not found in the others. Even after the scourging, Pilate attempted to reason with the Jews or to avoid the responsibility for killing Him. He brought Jesus before the people wearing the robe and crown of thorns. They could see for themselves the suffering He had endured. Pilate affirmed again that he found no reason for Jesus to be killed (cf. 18:38). Surely he hoped this would convince them Jesus had suffered enough, so they would agree to let Him go. But it was not to be.

In declaring Jesus to be innocent, Pilate necessarily implied his own duty to release Him without punishment. As a ruler whose duty it was to administer justice, Pilate had no right to punish an innocent man, let alone crucify Him. When Pilate acknowledged Jesus' innocence, he simultaneously declared himself to be guilty of murder when He then proceeded to kill Him.

Verse 6

4. What did the people say when they saw Jesus, and what did Pilate tell them to do (vv 5,6)?

The Jewish leaders continue to demand Jesus' death.

Despite Pilate's efforts to release Jesus, the leaders called out to crucify Him. Perhaps the robe and crown just reminded them of His claim to be king and further infuriated them. In any case, they were surely not willing to release Him.

Pilate responded that they should crucify Him, because Pilate himself had found no fault in Him (18:38; 19:4). He did not really mean to give approval for them to do such, else he would not have proceeded to say that Jesus was innocent. And he surely knew they could not execute a man; and if they did so, it would not be by crucifixion. Perhaps the implication is that Pilate had found nothing wrong with Jesus, so he did not want to be responsible for His death. If the **Jews** killed Him, that would be their responsibility, but it would be without Pilate's approval.

As already discussed, it is probable that the Jews also did not want the responsibility of actually killing Jesus, because they feared the people. They wanted Him killed, but wanted the Romans to do it so the people would not blame the rulers for it.

Verses 7-9

5. What did the Jews say then that made Pilate afraid (vv 7,8)? (Think: Why would this statement bother Pilate?)

The Jews affirm that Jesus should die for claiming to be the Son of God.

The Jews finally leveled with Pilate enough to make clear that their real problem with Jesus was a religious issue. It was not a matter that He had claimed to be a king or was causing rebellion against Rome.

They said He ought to die according to their law because He made Himself out to be the Son of God (obviously they are not accepting His claim as true). They were saying, in effect, that maybe Jesus had not violated Roman law, but by their law He was guilty of blasphemy. While

this did not make Jesus worthy of death in Pilate's view, yet it would explain why they wanted Him dead for reasons of their own law. Perhaps they hoped Pilate would honor their law in this. In any case, their statement constitutes an admission that they had been misleading Pilate about their real concerns up to this point.

Pilate questions Jesus further about His origin.

Pilate was even more distressed by this accusation against Jesus. Romans were very superstitious about gods in the form of men. He decided to question Jesus about where he was from. Presumably, he hoped to see if Jesus would claim Deity or would admit otherwise.

The passage expressly says the Jew's statement made Pilate even more afraid. It is interesting that Jesus was the one being threatened with death, but Pilate is the one who is said to be afraid. In any case, he was caught in the middle. He knew what was right, but did not want to anger the people.

But Jesus did not answer. The question was irrelevant. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and therefore should have released Him. What would Jesus' place or circumstances of origin have to do with it? He was either guilty of a crime or He was not. If He was guilty, proof should be given. If not, He should be released. Guilt or innocence had nothing to do with where He came from. If Pilate was seeking to do justice, he would have released Jesus already. He was proving himself unjust, so why answer questions that are not relevant anyway?

Verses 10,11

6. What power did Pilate claim to have over Jesus?

7. What did Jesus say about Pilate's power over Him? (Think: What did Jesus mean by this and by His statement about who had "greater sin"?)

Pilate claims power to crucify Jesus.

Pilate then reminded Jesus of his authority. He had power of life or death over Jesus. He apparently thought this should motivate Jesus to answer his questions.

Jesus answered, but did so by appealing to a higher authority. He said Pilate would have no power against Jesus unless it had been given from above (higher power). Perhaps Pilate thought Jesus was referring to higher Roman authority. It appears from v12 that this reminded him of his responsibility, so he made further attempts to release Jesus. Perhaps he thought Jesus had some influence with Roman authorities.

The power Jesus referred to, however, almost surely was that of Deity: God, even including Jesus Himself. God could have stopped this at any moment, and Jesus had earlier said He Himself had power to stop it (Matt. 26:53). Pilate was being allowed to decide Jesus' fate, but Pilate could have done nothing had God decided to stop it.

Further, all civil authority is from God (Rom. 13:1ff). Any ruler has power to punish evildoers only because God has so ordained it. In any case, the point is that Pilate had a duty to fulfill. He was responsible to higher powers and would be held accountable for his verdict. It appears that Jesus is here granting that civil rulers had the power of capital punishment (but remember that this was still under the Old Testament).

"Greater sin" appears to mean that, though Pilate had responsibility in the matter, the Jews were more responsible, since they had initiated this matter and were trying to force it through. Pilate was responsible in that he had authority to release Jesus, and justice demanded that he do so. However, he at least **wanted** to do right. The Jews sought to kill Jesus because of their envy, and were using every evil and devious trick at their disposal to carry out the evil. Note that both Jews and Romans were responsible for Jesus' death.

Verse 12

8. What did the Jews say about Pilate's duty to Caesar, and what was their point?

The Jews accuse Pilate of unfaithfulness to Caesar if he releases Jesus.

Apparently Jesus' statement concerned Pilate, for he went back to the Jews and again tried to obtain Jesus' release. He may have been influenced by Jesus' reference to power higher than Pilate's or by Jesus' acknowledgment that Pilate did not bear the greatest responsibility for Jesus' mistreatment. But the Jews proved they were the instigators of the opposition to Jesus by continuing to press for His conviction. They claimed that anyone who made himself a king would be speaking against Caesar, and if Pilate released Jesus he would not be standing with Caesar.

Pilate knew Jesus was not opposing Caesar, and he probably knew the Jews did not care about Caesar anyway. He perhaps also knew, however, that he could be made to look bad before the Roman authorities if this information got back to them. He could be in bad trouble if He failed to kill Jesus and a riot occurred, and if Caesar and others heard that Pilate had released one who was accused of being a king guilty of treason against Caesar. He chose to sacrifice Jesus, rather than risk suffering himself at the hand of Caesar.

The hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders is incredible. They cared nothing for Caesar. They would have dearly loved for Caesar and all his henchmen to be overthrown. Had Jesus Himself fomented treason against Caesar, they would not have cared, provided He had left them alone and not disturbed their own position and security. But they pretend to care about Caesar's good, as a means of gaining leverage against Pilate.

Verses 13-15

9. Where did Pilate bring Jesus next, and when did this happen?

10. What commitment did the Jews make that finally led Pilate to crucify Jesus (v15)?

(Think: In what way was this statement hypocritical?)

Pilate brings Jesus before the people for a final verdict.

Pilate was moved to action by the Jew's accusation that Caesar would be displeased if he released Jesus. Pilate brought Jesus out again, this time into an area called the pavement (Hebrew Gabbatha). There Pilate placed a judgment seat and sat on it. This apparently gave him access to the Jews, who would not come into the building. And it probably indicated that he was about to reach a verdict. The end was near.

Pilate brings Jesus before them, calling Him their King. But the Jews call for His crucifixion.

This was the preparation day of the Passover (cf. v31), about the sixth hour (see notes on Matt. 27 regarding the time element).

Pilate showed Jesus to the people and said, "Behold, your king!" He was perhaps taunting them, or maybe milking the matter for all he could get. If he was going to condemn an innocent man, he wanted some concessions from them in return or at least an opportunity to taunt them for their injustice.

They called out to crucify Jesus. Pilate asked if he should crucify their king. They then claimed to have no king but Caesar. The implication was that they had no allegiance to any ruler but Caesar. This was perhaps the kind of concession Pilate wanted, and perhaps more than even he had hoped for. Instead of himself being accused of unfaithfulness before Caesar, by agreeing to crucify Jesus he had led these recalcitrant Jews to profess allegiance to Caesar.

But the Jews' statement was pure hypocrisy. They hated Caesar. In their hearts and in private they likely denied any allegiance to him whatever. Above all, they surely knew that God was their king (1 Sam. 8). But they played the hypocrite, put on the false front, and pretended to care about Caesar — anything to get the Romans to kill Jesus for them!

The Crucifixion – 19:16-42

Verses 16-18

11. How did Pilate's verdict (v4) compare to the sentence he gave (v16)?
12. Describe crucifixion (study cross-references, dictionaries, etc.)
13. Where was Jesus crucified and who was crucified with Him? (Think: What kind of men were these and what does that tell you about crucifixion — see other accounts?)

Jesus is delivered for crucifixion.

Apparently Pilate had made His final effort to save Jesus. He decided to proceed with the crucifixion. Perhaps he thought that, if this act could get favor toward Caesar from these rebellious Jews, then it might be worth it. In any case, he had gotten something from them in exchange, and he was protecting himself from trouble he might have with higher authorities if they found out he had released someone who claimed to be a king. Nevertheless, his wickedness in murdering a man he knew to be innocent has rightly gained him the reputation throughout history of a self-seeking, unjust coward.

The place of the crucifixion was called Golgotha. This was the Hebrew word. The Latin word was Calvary. It meant “the place of a skull.” It was located outside the city walls (John 19:20; Num. 15:35,36; 1 Kings 21:13; Heb. 13:11,12). It is said by some that there is still a hill near Jerusalem called “skull hill” and some believe this is the place here referred to, though the New Testament does not exactly identify the place nor even specify that it was a hill.

John says that Jesus went out bearing His cross, but other accounts say it was born by Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26; Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21). The usual explanation is that Jesus started out bearing the cross, but was unable to continue because of the pain of the scourging. Other possibilities might be considered, but that is as good an explanation as any.

A Note on Crucifixion:

The pattern followed in Jesus' case was historically typical of Roman crucifixions. The victim was often scourged, then compelled to carry his cross. He was then nailed or lashed to the cross: Jesus was **nailed** (John 20:25ff). This inflicted great pain, especially when the victim moved.

The extremely unnatural position of the body led to cramps. This in turn led to the desire to move, which in turn caused more pain. Blood would drain to the legs. Fever from the wounds, exposure, thirst, and pain was one of the greatest horrors. Nevertheless, victims often survived for 2 to 7 days. In Jesus' case, men were sent to break the legs of the victims to hasten death, but Jesus was already dead. Generally the cause of death was heart failure.

For all these reasons, crucifixion was one of the most feared means of death. It came to stand for the concept of great troubles and suffering. But in Jesus' case, on top of all else, His Father forsook Him. Further, there was the knowledge that He was innocent and deserved none of this, and that He was the Son of God and could stop it all in a moment.

And He did it all to save us from the punishment of our own sins. This is why the cross in the Bible is the symbol of Jesus' death and the redemption of mankind: 1 Cor. 1:17; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20.

Just as Jesus completely denied His own will to save us, He now requires us to completely give up our own will to please Him: Rom. 12:1,2; Matt. 16:24ff; Gal. 1:20; Rom. 6:6; etc.

Jesus was crucified between two other convicts.

Jesus was crucified between two other men. Luke says they were “malefactors” or evildoers. Matthew says they were robbers (27:38). This proves the kind of people that this treatment was reserved for. Jesus was treated as a common criminal!

During the crucifixion, Jesus said several things not recorded in John's account. See notes on the other accounts regarding those events. We will concentrate on what John records.

History indicates that crosses could have various shapes, an X or a T or the traditional cross. That fact a title was written above Jesus' head is generally given as confirming the traditional shape. Some claim it was simply an upright post. The Bible does not specify.

Verses 19-22

14. What title did Pilate write above Jesus on the cross, and in what languages?
15. What did the Jews think of this and how did Pilate respond? (Think: Why would the Jews be bothered by this?)

The title with Jesus' accusation

Pilate placed a title, presumably over Jesus' head, stating the accusation made against Him by the Jews that He was "King of the Jews." This was written in the three common languages of the people who would see Him: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. It was placed where all who passed by could see. We are told that the place was near the city, so many saw it.

The reaction of the Jews implies that Pilate put the sign, not to belittle Jesus as much as to belittle the Jews. They were the ones who were bothered by it. Pilate knew they were envious of Jesus. To state publicly that their King was being so ignominiously slain would be a wound to their vanity.

In any case, the Jews were humiliated by it and asked Pilate to remove it. He refused saying, "What I have written, I have written." It said what He wanted it to say and He would not change. He was doing their killing for them. What could they do about the sign?

Verses 23,24

16. Describe what happened to Jesus' clothing, and what Scripture did this fulfill?

The soldiers part Jesus' garments.

They crucified Him and divided His garments. This was customary for the soldiers to do with the clothing of the one who was crucified. They divided His clothes among them, but He had a tunic that was woven in one piece. So rather than tear it, they cast lots for it. This fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. The garments were parted (divided), but the vesture was taken by lot. Note the detail in which the prophecy described the event yet hundreds of years before it happened.

Verses 25-27

17. Who was present at the cross, and what did Jesus say to them (vv 25-27)?
18. What happened as a result and what lessons can we learn?
19. Give and explain other Scriptures about care for elderly parents.

Jesus arranged for His mother's care.

As Jesus was dying, His mother stood nearby, along with other women: Mary who was wife of Clopas and also Mary Magdalene. The reference to the sister of Jesus' mother may simply be another description of Mary the wife of Clopas. However, that would make two sisters named Mary in the same family. It could be that, instead, the sister was another unnamed woman. Also present was the apostle John who wrote this account (he is here called the disciple whom Jesus loved). Jesus told Mary that John was her son and He told John that Mary was his mother. As a result, John took her into his home from then on.

Although John and Mary were not physically son and mother, yet Jesus expected John to take her into his home. The Catholic church claims that this passage proves Mary was to have authority over John as a mother over a son. Then they say John represents all Christians, so Mary has authority over all the church and should be honored as our spiritual mother. Such nonsense! Nothing in the verse says any of this, nor does any other passage. It is a figment of the imagination. The passage explains what Jesus meant: John was to be responsible to provide for Mary.

This shows that Jesus was concerned about how his mother would be cared for after He was dead. When he called John and Mary “mother” and “son,” John understood this meant he should take care of her. Jesus had clearly taught that a “son” is to care for his elderly “mother.”

There is some question as to why John was expected to care for Mary. There is some evidence that John may have been Mary’s nephew. But other passages show that Jesus had brothers and sisters, and they should have had the first responsibility to care for her (see on John 7:1-10). No explanation is given for Jesus’ choice; however, the John 7 passage does explain that Jesus’ brothers at this time did not believe in Him (though they later came to do so). Perhaps Jesus thought she would be better off with one who shared the true faith. Or perhaps John was simply handy. Or perhaps Jesus knew of other reasons why John was more reasonably equipped to care for Mary (such as financial ability).

Notes on the care of elderly parents

1 Timothy 5:3,4,8,16 — Our parents cared for us when we were young. Now if they are elderly and unable to provide for themselves, we are obligated before God to “repay” them for the care they gave for us. To do this is to show “piety” and please God. To fail to do it is to deny the faith and be worse than an unbeliever. See Matt. 15:3-6; Eph. 6:2,3.

Many modern people put elderly parents in an institution (“nursing home,” “old-folks home”). Sometimes these institutions are financed by churches who pool their donations under oversight of a board of directors, which in turn oversees the care of various widows and elderly people.

Acts 6:1-6 — When widows are the responsibility of a local church to care for, then the local church itself is capable and responsible to set up the necessary supervision to oversee this work, as was done in the church in Jerusalem. Church-sponsored homes for widows and elderly people are part of the whole structure of centralized church organization which characterizes many denominations. It has been adopted by many “churches of Christ,” but it is a violation of the New Testament plan for local church work.

1 Timothy 5:16 — Furthermore, the widows and elderly people in these homes, being cared for at church expense, are often relatives of members who ought themselves to provide the care and “let not the church be charged.” The whole scenario is one of shifted responsibility. People refuse to care for their own needy relatives, so they shift the responsibility to the church. The church pays for it, but then shifts the responsibility for overseeing the work to a different, man-made institution.

The example of Jesus, John, and Mary shows the ideal way for caring for elderly parents. Mary was taken into a home: a God-ordained family, not a man-made institution. This is the solution which is both Scriptural and sensible. For many years it was accepted and practiced by most people in society.

This approach works. It worked well for years in our society, and it still works well if people work it. The elderly people are given better personal care, love, and attention by their children who are “requiting” their parents for the love and care given to them when they were young.

But it takes time, effort, and sacrifice on the part of the children to care for their relatives. And many children don’t want to be burdened. It is too much trouble to work and sacrifice for their parents, like their parents worked and sacrificed for them when they were young. So they want to institutionalize them, and even try to get other people to pay for it.

Granted that some elderly people need medical care that simply **cannot** be given by children at home, just like younger people sometimes need to be hospitalized. Sometimes the children honestly cannot take care of their parents due to some difficulty that is honestly beyond their control.

But if children **could** care for their elderly parents, but are just not willing to make that sacrifice, then God says, they are worse than unbelievers. They have denied the faith, transgressed

the commandment of God, and are refusing to honor their parents. And they surely are not following the pattern given by Jesus even as He was dying on the cross.

For further discussion of church organization and work, see our Bible Instruction web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct/.

Verses 28,29

20. What did Jesus say next, and what happened as a result? (Think: What does this tell us about Jesus' nature?)

Jesus is given sour wine for His thirst.

Jesus said "I thirst," and was given sour wine or vinegar to drink. Matt. 27:34,48 shows wine mixed with gall was offered him, then later vinegar was offered. [cf. Mark 15:23,36; Luke 23:36]

This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Psalms 69:21 — They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. [cf. Ps. 22:15] The sour wine was extended to Jesus by means of hyssop, which was also used in the Passover — Exodus 12:22.

When Jesus was thirsty, He demonstrated a human characteristic. He had a physical body with a physical need to drink, just like you and me. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to earth as a human with all the human characteristics.

Jesus is, was, and always has been God (John 1:1-3; 20:28ff; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:8; etc.) As God, He could not lose the characteristics of Deity. But Jesus also took on, when He came to earth, the form of a man with fully human characteristics. He was fully man and yet fully God.

Philippians 2:5-8 — Jesus existed in the form of God, but gave up that honor and glory ("reputation" — KJV), humbled himself, and came to earth in likeness and fashion as a man.

John 1:1,14 — In the beginning, the Word was with God (the Father) and was God. But He became ***flesh*** and dwelt among men.

Hebrews 2:9-11,14f,17f — Jesus was made lower than the angels (like all men are — vv 6,7), so He could suffer death, overcome death in resurrection, and thereby defeat Satan who has the power of death. He partook of flesh and blood and was made like us in all things. This is why the gospels often call Him the "Son of Man."

Jesus' thirst on the cross is just part of all the agony He endured. The thirst was not a normal thirst as we may have after an hour or two without drinking. This was the thirst of a man at the hands of His tormentors.

If we have ever been ***really*** thirsty, then we have just a small idea of one little part of all the suffering Jesus endured for us. He could have stopped it at any moment because He was God. But because He loved us, He endured the suffering without exercising His Divine powers, suffered the death, so we could be saved.

Verse 30

21. What was Jesus' last statement before He died? (Think: What did He mean by this?)

Jesus' death

When Jesus had suffered on the cross, He said, "It is finished," then He died. What was finished? When Jesus died, many things had been accomplished. Probably the direct reference was to the suffering and agony He had endured, but in a deeper sense and at least in a symbolic sense, Jesus' death was the completion of many other things too.

His earthly ministry was finished (John 17:4-8). He had come, not just to die, but to reveal and teach the gospel of the New Testament. He had labored for over three years in this work. Now it was completed.

He finished or removed the Old Testament and replaced it with His gospel: Heb. 8:8,9; Heb. 10:9,10; Col. 2:14,16 [Eph. 2:13-16; Gal. 3:13; Rom 7:2-6]. His purpose here included removing the Old Testament, because it could not provide justification, and replacing it with His New

Testament that could save us from sin. This too was accomplished when He nailed the law to His cross.

Above all, Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of all mankind was finished. Though He was sinless, He died in our place as if He were a sinner, so we who are guilty could avoid the punishment of our sins. Matthew 20:28; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:6-10; Heb. 9:22,26; 9:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6.

The sacrifice of Jesus was the greatest sacrifice ever known. It offers the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. But it also required Jesus to pay a great price. Jesus had died for you and me.

Verses 31-33

22. What did the Jews want done to the men being crucified and why?

23. Why was this not done to Jesus?

The legs of the thieves are broken, but not Jesus' legs.

The Jews wanted Pilate to break the legs of those who had been crucified to hasten their deaths. This was the day of preparation for the high or holy day. Bodies could not remain on the cross that day. The law commanded not to leave a dead body hanging (Deut. 21:22,23). But if the men died on the high day, they would have to be taken down, and those who touched their bodies would be unclean and could participate in the Passover activities. So, they wanted the deaths hastened, so they could take care of the bodies before sundown.

Note the repeated hypocrisy. The Jews did not mind murdering an innocent man, but they dared not touch the murdered man's body and become so unclean that they could not observe a holy day!

The soldiers came and broke the legs of the thieves who had been crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they did not break His legs because He had already died.

Here is the clear testimony of the soldiers that Jesus was dead. This, along with other evidence, proves that he had not just swooned or fainted (as some claim) and later revived in the tomb. These men were expert at their jobs. They would know the difference between fainting and death. The fact they did not break Jesus' legs is their testimony that Jesus was really dead.

Verses 34-37

24. What was done to Him instead?

25. What prophecies did this fulfill, and where are they found?

26. What assurance does John give of the accuracy of his account?

27. **Case Study:** Some people "explain" the resurrection by claiming Jesus never really died but just fainted on the cross then awoke in the tomb. How is that claim disproved by this account?

Jesus' side pierced by a spear

Instead of breaking Jesus' legs, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear. Blood and water flowed out. This also constitutes medical evidence that Jesus was really dead. The spear must have reached the membrane surrounding the heart and released the fluid that collected there after death. This fluid flowed out along with blood.

Further, this action caused a wound in Jesus' side so large a man's hand could fit into it (John 20:27). If Jesus had not already died, this would surely have finished the job.

John makes it clear that he personally witnessed this. He wrote to give his testimony. All the skeptics of all time may quibble, but they were not there. One who **was** there records this evidence, which he personally witnessed, so we may know that Jesus really was **dead**. It appears that John is especially making clear that he was an eyewitness, so none could deny that Jesus really died.

That Jesus' bones were not broken fulfills another prophecy.

That Jesus' bones were not broken, but He was pierced, also fulfills Old Testament Scripture.

That none of His bones would be broken fulfills Num. 9:12; Ex. 12:46; Psalm 34:20.

That He would be pierced fulfills Zech. 12:10.

John makes this clear so we understand, not just that Jesus really did die, but that many details of His death expressly fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. How could all this be if Jesus were not from God? Would God allow an impostor to so fulfill Scripture?

Verse 38

28. What request was made of Pilate in v30 and who made it?

29. What do we know about this man (see also cross-references)?

Joseph of Arimathea secretly took possession of Jesus' body.

After Jesus had clearly died, a man named Joseph of Arimathea came and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate granted him to take it.

Several things are told in the various accounts about Joseph. He was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews (John 19:38). One wonders at the legitimacy of being a secret disciple at a time when people needed to speak out for Jesus. On the other hand, he apparently had much more courage than many or most other disciples for he boldly asked for Jesus' body.

He was a rich man (Matt. 27:57). This also helps explain why he asked for Jesus' body. He had the means to provide a good tomb for it. This fulfills Isaiah 53:9 which said the Messiah would have his grave with the wicked and be with a rich man in his death. Though He had died a criminal's death, yet He was buried in an honorable tomb.

Joseph was also a councilor of honorable estate (Mark 15:43), but had not consented to Jesus' death (Luke 23:51). So, he was not only wealthy but also powerful and influential. This could mean that he had been on the Sanhedrin council and had there opposed Jesus' death. Or perhaps he was not on that council but just had a high position and had no real say in the decision, yet he did not agree with it.

He was a good and righteous man who looked for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:50,51). He apparently believed the kingdom was coming soon, and since He was a disciple of Jesus it is apparent that he had expected Jesus to be the king.

Mark adds that, when Joseph asked for Jesus' body, Pilate was surprised that He was already dead. He sent for the centurion to determine from him whether Jesus really was dead. Here is further evidence Jesus really died on that cross. As professional executioners, it is highly unlikely that those in charge would make a mistake about such a fundamental point. So Pilate's appeal to the centurion constitutes further proof that Jesus really did die.

Verses 39,40

30. Who helped him prepare the body for burial, and what else do we know about this man?

31. Describe the preparation of the body.

Nicodemus joins Joseph in preparing Jesus' body for burial.

John tells briefly how the body of Jesus was prepared for burial. Nicodemus (cf. John 3:1ff) helped Joseph, and they used the spices that were customary in Jewish burials in that day: myrrh and aloes. About a hundred pounds of spices were placed with Jesus' body and it was then wrapped in strips of linen cloth. Also, when they buried him, Mary Magdalene and another Mary sat where they could see (Matt. 27:61).

Joseph was a good, honest man, the story says. And three other honest people were involved to some extent. If they had discovered that Jesus was not really dead, they would never have remained silent while the apostles preached that He had been raised from the dead. In addition to

the soldier's testimony and John's testimony, we have the implied testimony of these people that Jesus really was dead.

Verses 41,42

32. Describe the tomb (see also other passages). (Think: How does this information help confirm the resurrection?)

The body of Jesus is buried.

Next John gives a description of the tomb where Jesus was buried. It was a new tomb, hewn from rock (Matt. 27:60). After the body was placed inside, a large stone was rolled against the door (an exceeding great one — Mark 16:4). This tells us that it was a cave, which was a common form of burial in that day (remember that Abraham buried Sarah in a cave). This was the kind of tomb in which Lazarus was buried (11:38).

John adds that the tomb was in a garden near the place of crucifixion, and that no man had yet been laid in it. It was not uncommon to use the same cave to bury several people, but no one else was in this tomb.

This is all useful information. First, if it was a new tomb in which there was no other body, then there could be no mistake about which body left the tomb. There could have been no switching of bodies or any such sleight of hand. The body of Jesus was definitely placed in the tomb, as at least four people can testify from this record. And there was no other body there.

Furthermore, the walls were solid rock and a huge rock rolled over the door. Therefore, there was no way to sneak the body out or dig it out a back way. Nor could Jesus have awakened from a swoon after all the suffering He had endured and simply walked out or dug His way out. He would have been in no condition to move the stone and no other exit was possible.

Note that Jesus' burial was symbolic of our baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). As He was completely surrounded in the element, so we must be in baptism: a complete immersion.

Matt. 27:62-66 adds that the Jews provided a security guard around the tomb for the express purpose of making sure the disciples did not remove the body.

Jesus' burial is part of the fundamental truths of the gospel — 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. His death was necessary for the burial, and the burial helps confirm the resurrection. The scene was set for the most fundamental miracle of the gospel.

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