

**Rob Mathis
John 19:1-16
Rose Hill Church
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For the past few months we have been taking a deep dive into the Gospel according to John.

Before I give you a little background, just in case you are joining us for the first time or perhaps you may have forgotten some things; I wanted to forewarn you that when we get into the text today, from John Chapter 19:verses 1-16, it will be tough. I will be talking about the preparatory verses before Jesus is handed over for execution by crucifixion. This is not the “easy part” of the Gospel, if there is such a thing. Just to let you know. It is historically accurate but not pretty.

With that; John's Gospel was the last one written, probably from Ephesus.

Though we do not know the exact date John wrote it, it was likely late in the first century, and towards the end of the Apostle's life (history says he died around 100 AD.)

By way of a brief review;

John points to Jesus as the Creator and the Word of God made flesh.

He is Life and Light, and yet the world did not and does not recognize Jesus for who He is.

John's Gospel outlines Seven Signs of Jesus that show Him to be The One foretold as the Messiah:

These seven signs of John are as follows:

- **Changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11);**
- **Healing the royal official's son (Jn 4:46-54);**
- **Healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (Jn 5:1-15);**
- **Feeding the 5,000 (Jn 6:5-14);**
- **Walking on water (Jn 6:16-21);**
- **Healing the man born blind (Jn 9:1-7); and**
- **Raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-45)**

These all are recorded in the first 12 chapters of the Gospel.

In Chapter 18 John's narrative moves from Jesus' last hours with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas betrays Jesus and Jesus is taken into custody by a massive number of soldiers and officials. It would seem no one wanted to miss this spectacle, nor did they want to be alone when confronting this man Jesus.

Jesus is taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest. He is grilled and questioned extensively, and at some point, Jesus is slapped by an official, but the real abuse is still to come.

Jesus is taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor at the time, for questioning. After Pilate has a discussion with Jesus, he tells the Jews that he finds no grounds for charging Jesus and offers to let Jesus go.

In our text this morning, John 19:1-16,

When the Jews refuse this response, demanding instead a violent offender named Barabbas, be released,

we see Pilate order Jesus to be scourged. According to Roman practice this treatment was very cruel and barbaric;

The prisoner subjected to this torture was bound to a low column in a stooping position, so that each stroke caused maximum damage.

- The blows came from a multi-strand leather whip, called a “cat of nine tails.”**
- Each strand had sharp pieces of bone or metal at the ends.**
- This ripped the skin off the back and could kill a man even before crucifixion.**
- What is unusual is that when crucifixion was planned, there were beatings but not usually scourging of the kind done to Jesus.**
- By the way, the soldier scourging Jesus was trained to mete out punishment that brought the person near death; he had to know exactly where to strike the back so as not to break through the lungs and cause near instant death, because the desire of the Romans was to torture and prolong the agony of those in their custody.**

It is surmised by at least some historians that Pilate used this brutal punishment up front with the hope that this might satisfy and appease the Jewish leaders, and thus Pilate could avoid killing Jesus.

The torture of Jesus prior to His crucifixion is described, by the way, in all four Gospels.

It includes that the Roman soldiers fashioned a crown of thorns and pressed it into his scalp; This so-called crown, which Jesus wore even onto the cross, was made from a thorny shrub common in the Middle East at that time. The thorns on this crown were very long and extremely sharp; As Jesus was beaten with the soldier's fists, as well as with a wooden scepter, these thorns were pressed further into his skin. The beating of Jesus would have left Him unrecognizable, with His face and body bloodied.

These soldiers seemed to delight in Jesus' suffering and at the extreme degradation and humiliation they were inflicting upon Him;

They wrapped Jesus in a purple robe, representative at the time of royalty;

They mocked Jesus, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

They spat on Him and ridiculed Him ferociously;

As Pilate goes from his inner courtyards and then outside to where the Jewish leaders were waiting, we see a back-and-forth drama play out between the Jews and Pilate;

In verse 4, Jesus is taken back outside, where Pilate says, “Behold the Man”; it is as if Pilate is speaking to not only those Jews and Romans, but all people everywhere; Here is the Perfect Man; the Son of Man, the Son of God.

And during this unfolding scene;

Two more times Pilate will tell the Jewish leaders that he finds no fault in Jesus.

And, interestingly, the more Pilate talks with Jesus the more he seems to realize the gravity of his actions against Jesus. The fear

Pilate seems to be experiencing shows he is feeling trapped. And yet he does not seem to know what is right to do;

And Pilate is amazed that this man will not beg for His life; you see, Pilate seems to think he has all the power; yet it is Jesus Who holds all the power; and willingly gives up His Life for the salvation of the very world that hates Him;

Remember, Isaiah prophesied much about the Coming Messiah; Isaiah 53:7 says, “and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” In fact, I encourage you to go to the ancient book of Isaiah, written many hundreds of years before Jesus’ time; and look at Isaiah 53. Read it. You could not find a more graphic description, prophetically speaking, of Jesus torture, crucifixion, and death. A note here to those who doubt the veracity of the Scriptures concerning the foretelling of Jesus’ death; several years ago my wife Jan and I had the opportunity to view several of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the Book of Isaiah. These scrolls were discovered in caves around the Dead Sea in the 1940’s. They are dated to hundreds of years before Christ’s day, and they are pretty

much verbatim to Scriptures that were used from before Jesus to today.

Going back to our text; In verse 8 Pilate tells Jesus he has power to either free or kill Jesus, asking Jesus if he does not realize this.

Here is the most profound statement in this part of the Passion of the Christ;

“You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from Above.” Pilate must have been awestruck that this man, who has already been beaten beyond what most could endure, who will not beg for His life.

In verse 11 Jesus tells Pilate that the greater sin is done by those who handed Jesus over; Annas, Caiaphas, and of course Judas Iscariot, the ultimate betrayer.

In verses 12-13 Pilate seeks to release Jesus but the extreme hatred of the Jewish leaders, and their accusation that Pilate is no friend of Caesar if he lets Jesus go, seem to tighten the noose;

So Pilate brings Jesus out one last time; Pilate climbs up the stairs and sits on a high judgement seat at a place called the Stone Pavement; likely called this because of how it was constructed; Pilate at this point has been forewarned by his wife (who had a dream about this man Jesus, as described in Matthew's Gospel); he had spoken directly to Jesus, and he even declared three times that he found no fault with Jesus; he knew Jesus was innocent;

You see, Pontius Pilate received his power in a tenuous way; for he had reportedly married the emperor's granddaughter; he so desperately wanted to be an "insider", but he was not. And deep down inside he feared the Jews, he feared losing power, he feared rather than sought the truth.

Even though Pilate thought he was powerful, he was a weak, fearful man who sinned magnificently and is forever known for putting the Son of God to death.

The last ironic twist is that the Son of God, the Sinless Lamb of God, was to be sacrificed at the same time that so many unblemished lambs were being prepared and slaughtered for the forgiveness of sins.

As I warned at the beginning of this sermon this morning, what we are talking about is very tough to hear, tougher to imagine. But it is the truth; the truth that the darkness of human sin is so deep, so dark, so wicked, that it took a New Adam, a sinless Adam, to wipe the slate clean. We can whitewash Easter; we can make it about bunnies and chocolates and commercialize it into oblivion.

But the truth that is today as poignant as it was 2,000 years ago, is that we must each come to a decision about Jesus Christ. We, like Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and the madding crowd, must decide which direction we will go. We must look directly into the face of overwhelming truth and, like Joshua in the Old Testament, choose this day whom we will follow. One day it will be too late. One day each man, woman and child will face a day of no more days on

this earth. And what we have or have not done with Jesus Christ will be the one and only deciding factor of where we spend eternity.

Will we be more comfortable with pleasing the crowd? With going along with the flow of power and prosperity and possessions? Or will we, like many before us, turn once again to Jesus Christ and allow Him to have His way in our life?

Let us pray: