

## John 19:4-22

*<sup>4</sup> Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." <sup>5</sup> So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"*

4,5 Pilate tries for the second time to release Jesus. He would rather see Him as a thorn in the side of the religious leaders. Perhaps he thought the battering and scourging would satisfy the leaders or provoke sympathy in the people. Maybe the humiliation would be enough for them? "Look at Him!" Pilate said. And we should see Him there, surrendered to the will of the Father, taking the abuse of man, ready to take up our sins. Go ahead, look at Him – His battered face and bloody back.

*<sup>6</sup> When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." <sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." <sup>8</sup> When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.*

6-8 This is Pilate's second declaration of Jesus' innocence. Then it leaked out. "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." (ESV) Now Pilate knows the real charge against Jesus. This man is not a mere insurrectionist; He is claiming to be a god! Romans had myths about gods who came to earth and judged men by how they were treated. Now Pilate's discernment about Jesus' calm assurance and lack of fear is combined with a big red flag of the claim that He is a god. (Matthew 27:14).

*<sup>9</sup> He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.*

9 Jesus already said He came into the world for a reason. Now Pilate is fearful of what that reason is.

*<sup>10</sup> So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*

10,11 In essence, Jesus said it was all predetermined. Pilate is playing the role laid out for him. He cannot release Jesus even if he wants to. But it was Caiaphas who was accountable to God. He was the one who knew better (James 4:17). He is the one who is about to blackmail Pilate into having Jesus crucified.

*<sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." <sup>13</sup> So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic*

*Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"*

12-14 Pilate had a nickname, “the Friend of Caesar”, but Caesar was a paranoid recluse on the island of Capri. He could dump Pilate in a heartbeat. But what if Jesus is a god? On top of that dilemma, Pilate’s wife warned him of a dream to not get involved in Jesus’ sentence (Matthew 27:19). What could he do? Sejanus was dead. The priests would cause a riot if he refused to cooperate. He did not believe the charges, but that did not really matter. To free a person claiming to be a king would probably end his career and get him exiled. He did end up exiled in a few years anyway.

*He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”* (ESV) It was Pilate’s last appeal to the crowd. Could they see what their leaders were doing? Would they get him off the hook?

*<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus,*

15,16 Caiaphas made his choice to extinguish this threat to his power and wealth. The people decided to side with their leaders. Pilate made his choice to stay in power. The chief priests chose their king, the current Caesar, over the King of kings (Joshua 24:15).

Jesus then received the severe scourging and then carried His cross to the destination that was determined before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Now we must make our choice. Which king will we choose? For whom will we raise our voice (Matthew 25:34)? What will motivate our life’s decisions today? Here is the man, beaten, horribly scourged, deserted by His followers, but free and in command (John 10:18). The real prisoners were Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, prisoners of greed and pride. Jesus is the only One who could do whatever He chose, and He chose to take up the cross for you and me. Behold our King!

The beam would then be laid across His shredded shoulders, with arms tied to opposite ends. Sometimes rope would be placed around the waist for a soldier to lead them like a dog to their execution. If one delayed, a yank on the rope could bring them stumbling forward onto their face with that heavy beam pounding them into the limestone street. The soldiers had done these kinds of executions many times. They were methodically efficient.

*<sup>17</sup> and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.*

17 As Jesus carried the cross bar through the streets, there would be those who saw it as justice for a false prophet. They thought that since He would be hung on a tree, God had therefore cursed him (Deuteronomy 21:23). They would be jeering and mocking Him as He went by. Keep in mind that this is Passover season and Jerusalem is crowded. Many had never seen or heard Jesus. Others looked on with sympathy, having seen a miracle or heard His teaching. Some mocked while others wept.

The phrase “he went out” means out of the city. According to the Levitical law (Leviticus 24:14), blasphemers are to be taken outside the camp to be executed. Another Gospel writer tells us that on the way, Jesus, having lost so much blood and being physically exhausted, fell. The beam would have most likely bruised His heart as He smashed into the paving stones. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way (Matthew 27:32). The soldiers recognized that Jesus was physically unable to carry it any further.

The place of the skull was probably named because the limestone quarry looked like a skull. The Latin equivalent is Calvary. There is an ongoing debate about whether it is at what is now the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or The Garden Tomb site. One archeologist even argues for a site on the Mount of Olives. It was on a heavily traveled main road into the city so that all would be warned not to offend Rome.

Jesus would have been thrown down on the cross beam, His wrists were then nailed to the beam. The burial remains of a young man who was executed in this manner were found in Jerusalem in 1968. The bones tell us that the nails went through the forearm bones that meet at the wrist. The Jews did consider this to be a part of the hand. Sometimes a small piece of wood on the nail was added to keep the nail from pulling through the flesh. He was then raised and lifted up onto what was usually a nine-foot-tall post, the cross beam fitting into a notch on top forming a T. Amazingly, 700 years earlier, Isaiah describes the suffering servant Messiah being raised and lifted up, but then highly exalted (Isaiah 52:11). The feet were then nailed, often through the heel or ankle as was the case with the recently discovered crucified remains.

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote that Jesus was “executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate” (Ann. 44.3). Josephus also confirms that “Pilate...condemned [Jesus] to the cross” (Ant 18.63-64).

People would gather round to watch the spectacle. For the victim to fill their lungs with air, one had to push either against the nails in the feet or wrists or both, causing intense pain. Some would last for days in the hot Judean sun before succumbing, usually to asphyxiation after the muscles gave out. As Jesus hung there gasping for breath, the religious leaders mocked Jesus. <sup>42</sup> *“He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.”* Matthew 27:42 (ESV) He certainly could have, but God had a much greater plan.

*<sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.*

18 Crucifixion was reserved for only the worst of criminals. A Roman citizen could not be crucified without the Caesar’s approval. The ones crucified on each side of Jesus are described in Scripture as thieves (Mark 15:27), but crucifixion was much too severe for the common thief. They may have tried to rob a tax collector or paymaster working for Rome. It fulfilled another passage in the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53:12b: *“He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors”.* (ESV)

*19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

19 -22 The sign made the tau T cross appear as a t. It was carried in front of them or hung around their neck, but for Jesus it was tacked to the top of the T. The charge was a warning to those who would consider doing the same type of crime. The charge in Aramaic would read The Salvation of God of the Branch (of David). It implies that their Messiah was crucified.

Our modern Bibles provide us with an English translation of the Greek version of an inscription originally written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin! (To compound the translational issue, Pilate probably issued his command to those soldiers in Latin!). Our English Bibles read, "Jesus of Nazareth; King of the Jews." This sentence may have been written two different ways in Hebrew. One of them would have used the first letter of each word in this sentence as an acrostic, thereby forming the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) acrostic.

Here is the sentence "Jesus of Nazareth and the King of the Jews" in Hebrew/Aramaic: (ישוע הנצרי נמלך היהודים)

If this reconstruction is correct, then Pilate was "sticking it" to Jerusalem's politico-religious swamp by proclaiming that Jesus was Israel's God in the flesh crucified (a fact Pilate clearly did not affirm himself).

Questions:

- 1 What was Pilate trying to do when he said, "Behold the man"?
- 2 What do you see in Him?
- 3 Why was Pilate afraid?
- 4 What was the Jewish leaders' final trump card?
- 5 What would the route to the Golgotha have been like?
- 6 What historical documents confirm this event?
- 7 Why were the Jews upset about the Pilate's sign?