



John 19:16-24
The Crucified King

16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.

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.

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."

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.

Pilate had on many occasions defied the Jews and angered them, he had done what he wanted sometimes on a whim, but this time with the threat that they would tell Caesar he had freed a rebel he gives in to them and sentences a man he knows to be totally innocent to death – As Matthew *Henry* “***A mighty struggle Pilate had had within him between his convictions and his corruptions; but at length his convictions yielded, and his corruptions prevailed, the fear of man having a greater power over him than the fear of God.***”

But this too we must remember was for our benefit. If we were to be saved, then Christ HAD to go to the cross, that we might not go to Hell. “***We deserved to have been condemned, but Christ was condemned for us, that to us there might be no condemnation. God was now entering into judgment with his Son, that he might not enter into judgment with his servants.***” – *Matthew Henry*

So as we go through this, please note how many times we read that all of these things happened just as the scriptures had said they would!

Pilate therefore delivers Jesus into the hands of the execution detail, we know from Matthew and Mark that it was at this point that Jesus received his second scourging, ***Mark 15:15 So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.***

This scourging was the brutal *verberatio* where the prisoner was stripped naked and beaten by several soldiers with cat o'nine tails whips containing metal or bone. Often the prisoner died from this beating alone, and this scourging undoubtedly hastened Christ's death on the cross.

Then having opened up his back they put the Patibulum the cross-bar on it – it was part of every prisoner's punishment to carry his own cross. Now we know that while Jesus set out carrying the cross-bar of his cross, somewhere near the city gate, he collapsed and the Roman soldiers realizing He could never get it to Golgotha, forced Simon a man from Cyrene in town for the Passover to carry the bar. ***Mark 15:21 Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.***

History tells us that Simon became a Christian, and his son, Rufus and his wife are mentioned in ***Romans 16:13 – “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.”*** How appropriate that the man who providentially carried the cross for Christ should be saved by Him. He is one of the few men on earth who could say that on that day he was both literally and spiritually covered by the blood of Jesus.

Jesus was crucified outside the city, it was the Jewish custom that executions would take place outside the city, but it happened that way also because the sin offering was always burned outside the camp.

Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.

12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Now don't get it backwards, it is not that Jesus being crucified outside the city pointed back to the offerings, rather the offerings pointed forward to the crucifixion of Christ!

The crucifixion took place on a hill reserved for executions: the “Place of the Skull” or Golgotha (Aramaic) Calvaria in Latin hence “Calvary”

There Jesus was crucified between two criminals, literally *lestai* probably bandits or possibly even “guerilla fighters” since the same word is applied to Barabbas. Certainly these were men who had robbed and killed.

Crucifixion was obviously a terrible punishment, the Romans had probably picked it up from the Persians, it was a death that maximized agony and public shame. It took days for the prisoner to die, exposed to the hot sun, (sedecula – seat) The position with arms raised and the weight of your body pressing down forced the victim to push up with his legs just to breathe, and that would have been agonizing as there was nail piercing your ankles. Eventually, most prisoners Asphyxiated – died from lack of oxygen. In fact, we will see that in order to kill the two thieves on either side of Jesus, what the detail does is break their legs so they can no longer push themselves up.

Pilate had had a notice prepared. It was the custom to hang this notice called the “titullus” or title detailing what crime the prisoner had committed around his neck as he was led to the place of crucifixion, and then to fasten it to the cross afterwards so that all who passed by could read what the

prisoner had done to deserve such a fate and be deterred from like action. A similar thing was usually done to prisoners placed in the stocks here in the colonial USA.

Pilate wants to make sure this sign in particular is read so he writes it in three languages – Aramaic, the language that most of the Jews in Palestine spoke, Koine Greek which was the Lingua Franca or common language of the Mediterranean world, and Latin, the language of the Roman occupiers. This made certain that everyone in Jerusalem for the Passover who was literate would be able to read it. Why did Pilate want this sign in particular to be clearly legible? Because this was his petty revenge. What he writes as the charge, INFURIATES the Jews **“JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”**. Now the reason he did this was to get his own petty revenge on them – *“you humiliated me by insisting that this man be crucified even after I declared him to be innocent THREE TIMES. You were so determined you even threatened me that you would send an evil report to Caesar, now I will humiliate you. You said this man was guilty of rebellion, that he made himself out to be your king? Well then this is what Roman power thinks of your claims to kingship. This is as much authority as you have.”* Send a notice to Tiberius that you don’t like my placard if you want, but it’s not changing.

But in doing this, once again, Pilate spoke better than he knew for Jesus *is* the King of the Jews, and it is appropriate that this message be confessed in every tongue of the Mediterranean world. Here we see not just an innocent man, but Jesus the King of Kings about to be lifted up on a cross.

What a contrast with worldly kings! While earthly kings rode forth to battle clad in armor and surrounded by their armies, Jesus goes out to battle the most terrible of enemies, in humble clothing and alone. And while most kings won their victories over enemies on the battlefield, it was upon the cross that Jesus was to win the victory for His Sheep over sin, and death and hell. For He, *“The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*

Reaching the place of crucifixion, the soldiers take Christ’s clothes, an additional part of the humiliation was that prisoners were generally stripped naked, and their clothes divided as spoils amongst the crucifixion detail. The four soldiers tasked with nailing Jesus to the cross therefore divvy up Christ’s clothes. They decided however not to divide his undergarment as it was seamless, a one-piece woven piece of cloth and would have had to have been torn in order to divide it. So they do what soldiers in every age have done, they gamble for it by doing the Roman equivalent of throwing dice.

This too was done in order to fulfill the scripture –

Psalm 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

What God is reminding us is that NONE of this, even down to the detail of the soldiers gambling over clothes, was an accident, every part of it was recorded hundreds of years in advance, that we might know that this was God’s preordained purpose.

It also teaches us the lesson that as Calvin puts it: “Let us also learn that. Christ was stripped of his garments, that he might clothe us with righteousness; that his naked body was exposed to the insults of men, that we may appear in glory before the judgment-seat of God.”

APPLICATIONS –

1) The Soldiers Diced in the dust for Christ's humble clothing, for that was the only thing of value they felt he could give them. So many still come to Christ and His church not seeking the true riches but only the things of this life. I can't tell you how many people go the church to this day seeking only money, or a few tips when the greatest gift is to be found at the cross, they are like the fool who finding an old chest sells it for the value of the chest itself instead of opening it and finding the treasure with. Others become enamored with things like doctrine, ritual, discipline, music, socializing, the externals of the church.

2) So don't do that, don't be content with some worldly scraps and stop short of obtaining eternal life. ***Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.***

12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Therefore do not stop short!

2 Cor. 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

3) Jesus said "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." – Following Christ is not easy, bearing our cross and bearing his reproach may include death. Those two Pakistani boys learned that. Our Master hereby taught all his disciples to take up their cross, and follow him. Whatever cross he calls us out to bear at any time, we must remember that he bore the cross first, and, by bearing it for us, bears it off from us in great measure, for thus he hath made his yoke easy, and his burden light. He bore that end of the cross that had the curse upon it; this was the heavy end; and hence all that are his are enabled to call their afflictions for him light, and but for a moment.