

Conviction, Death & Burial

How would you describe Pilate's attitude toward Jesus? He has no real concern for Jesus. It was out of self-interest, pure and simple, that he sought to release Jesus. Pilate was not a tender-hearted man nor concerned with spiritual truth.

What was Pilate's attitude toward the Jews? Pilate was a cruel and harsh governor. He does not care for the Jews. He is annoyed and frustrated with them. They brought Jesus to him for a decision, he has given it, and now they refuse to accept it.

Note: Pilate looked upon his Jewish subjects with disdain—leading by intimidation and motivating people by fear. Servant leadership is a foreign concept to Pilate. He declares Jesus innocent but lacks the moral courage to let Him go because he fears the Jews.

Why does Pilate have Jesus flogged after having found no basis for a charge against Him? He was trying to satisfy the Jews and quell any possible uprising.

Why is Pilate concerned about an uprising? His position and power are on thin ice with Rome due to past indiscretions against the Jews. Pilate's career in the Roman Empire depends on him keeping peace in the province. To release Jesus would have been likely to cause a riot. Pilate could have lost control of the city, and possibly the province. Pilate sacrifices Jesus to preserve his career.

What is the significance of the crown of thorns and the robe being colored purple? They are signs of royalty (king). They are mocking Jesus and His claim to be a king.

Application: God can—and often does—use wicked people to bring about His plans. There are examples throughout Scripture. God is in control in our lives even when it appears that evil people have the upper hand. How have you seen this in your life?

Why does Pilate become even more afraid in verse 8? He learned that Jesus is not merely claiming to be the “king of the Jews.” He is claiming to be the Son of God. It is one thing to condemn an innocent man. It is worse to condemn the Jewish Messiah. But to crucify the Son of God—that would make anyone afraid!

Pilate let Jesus know that His life is in his hands. He has the power to release Jesus, or to crucify Him. Pilate thought this would strike terror into Jesus' heart. But it doesn't. **Why not?** Pilate's power and authority are both limited and delegated. It is Jesus who is “Lord” here—as elsewhere throughout history. Pilate may have been a powerful man, but he was never sovereign.

Who is “the one who handed me over to you” that Jesus mentions in verse 11? Judas—or possibly Caiaphas

What was the tipping point that caused Pilate to hand over Jesus to be crucified? The “friend of Caesar” threat. The Jewish leaders presented themselves as loyal subjects of Caesar, which was far from the truth. They appeared to be a greater threat to Pilate and to Rome than Jesus was. Again, self-interest rather than commitment to justice, influenced his decision.

Note: From the human standpoint, the trial of Jesus was the greatest crime and tragedy in history. From the divine viewpoint, it was the fulfillment of prophecy and the accomplishment of the will of God. The fact that God had planned all of this did not absolve the participants of their responsibility.

Why does John not describe the torture, humiliation and disfigurement that Jesus received before being crucified? John's original readers would have been only too familiar with the long and painful form of death designed to discourage others from rebelling against Rome which probably accounts for his lack of elaboration. Historically both Protestant and Catholic churches, have often emphasized the sufferings of Jesus; they have reflected on what happened and have dwelt on the anguish the Savior suffered. None of the Gospels does this. The Gospel writers record the facts and let it go at that. The death of Jesus for sinners was their concern. They make no attempt to play on the heartstrings of their readers.

What is the effect/significance of the written notice that Pilate had attached to the cross above the head of our Lord? Keep in mind what's going on in Jerusalem at this time—Passover, the biggest Jewish festival. Jewish males are required to make the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Scholars estimate that around two and half million Jews would have been in Jerusalem to take part. Many Jews—a number of whom were pilgrims on their way to or from Jerusalem—passed by the cross of our Lord. The words written above the head of Jesus remind the Jews that Rome is in charge and there is no place for dissension.

What is the significance of these three languages? The words are written in Aramaic, the language of the Jews of Palestine; Latin, the language of the Romans; and Greek, the common language of the day in that part of the world. Everyone would be able to read it.

Several times in this chapter, John specifically informs his readers that prophecy has been fulfilled in the events surrounding our Lord's death. What and where are they?

- Verse 24: division of garments by casting lots (Psalm 22:18)
- Verses 28 & 29: vinegar for His thirst (Psalm 69:21)
- Verse 36: His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20)
- Verse 37: Jesus would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10)
- Bonus: Not mentioned here, but fulfilled—Jesus was buried in rich man’s tomb. (Isaiah 53:9)

Jesus’ death (and life) fulfilled many prophecies. What is the value of fulfilled prophecy? It validates that Jesus was who He said He was and He came from God just like He said He did.

Fulfilled prophecy built the faith of the disciples. Why was that important? They needed to be prepared for suffering, adversity, and eventual martyrdom.

What are the messages of the cross?

- The cross is a picture of victory over sin
- The cross marks the defeat of Satan.
- It’s a picture of God’s grace and love for mankind.
- A picture of Jesus’ submission to the Father.
- God is saying, “I love you but I hate sin—not only because it’s my nature to hate sin, but because it cost the life of my Son.”

What does it say about John that Jesus gave Mary to him in verses 26-27? Placing Mary under the care of the beloved disciple is an expression of Jesus’ love and care for His mother. It was a thoughtful provision for her needs at the hour of supreme devastation.

Where are the other disciples during the crucifixion? They scattered out of fear. John may have been the only Gospel writer to have been an eye-witness of the crucifixion.

In verse 30, what does “It is finished” mean? It’s the single Greek word, “tetelestai.” This word had a legal meaning familiar to all Jews. When they had to pay a tax, they would have to take the money to the authorities, and upon completion of the transaction the word “tetelestai” would be written across it, stating that it was finished, done, complete. A modern equivalent would be “paid in full.”

Application: Reflect on the fact that the ransom to set you free has been paid! Your sin debt has been paid in full. God’s requirement for justice has been satisfied by the blood of Christ!

Note: Who killed Jesus? No one! He’s no helpless victim subject to the whims of those who had arrested Him. He lays down His life (John 10:14-18). Jesus gives up His spirit. It is not taken from Him. He is in control. He determines exactly when he will die. In fact, Pilate is surprised to hear that Jesus has died so soon. (See Mark 15:44.) The soldiers have to hasten the death of the two thieves, but not that of our Lord. Even the timing of His death is indicative of His sovereign control over all things. Because Jesus dies when He did, His legs will not be broken, thus fulfilling more prophecy.

Why was there a big rush to get Jesus off the cross and buried?

- The Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross until the next day which was the Sabbath—a very special Sabbath.
- The Old Testament law said: “If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

Together Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus go to prepare Jesus’ body and bury Him in verses 28-42.

What do we know about Joseph of Arimathea? He’s a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, a secret disciple, and wealthy. All the Gospels identify him as the one who went to Pilate, requesting the body of Jesus.

What do we know about Nicodemus? He’s also a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, and a secret disciple. He did not openly defend Jesus and His teachings, but he did question his fellow Pharisees in John 7:50-52.

What are Joseph and Nicodemus risking by asking for Jesus’ body and burying Him? They are risking their status in the Sanhedrin, humiliation, reputation, and possibly their lives.

Application: What risks are you willing to take to identify with Jesus?

MEMORIZE: John 19:5

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