

LESSON 8

THE SUFFERING OF THE MESSIAH

John 18:1-19:42

Introduction

The climax to the ministry of Jesus came in His death and resurrection. The disciples failed to understand the meaning of these events before Jesus ascended to the Father. Both Jews and Romans, representing the entire world, participated in the rejection of the Son of God. These events were the results of the conflict between the power of evil which rules this world and the power of God expressed through His Kingdom. The power of evil seemed to gain the initial victory by putting the Messiah to death. The power of God overcame sin and death through God's raising His Son from death. The Son proved Himself worthy of victory by obeying perfectly God's will, which included death, and by refusing to succumb to sin.

The death and resurrection of Jesus meant that the hour of the Messiah had come. The confrontation with the ruler of this world reached a climax when Jesus was condemned to death. The glory of Jesus was manifested through His resurrection and exaltation. The Jews, even Jesus' disciples, had questioned previously who He was. He was unquestionably manifested as the divine heavenly Son of Man and the Son of God by His resurrection and His exaltation to God's right hand.

The Arrest of Jesus

18:1-12

There is indication in 14:31 that Jesus expressed the intention of departing from the upper room before the farewell discourse was given. Since John 18:1 describes the carrying out of that intention, questions have been raised concerning the placement of chapters 15 through 17. It is uncertain whether Jesus' intention to depart was delayed until the farewell discourse was given or whether the discourse was given during the journey from the upper room to the Mount of Olives. Some have suggested that the material is misplaced in the historical structure of John's Gospel. Perhaps Jesus completed the farewell discourse before He departed from the house with His disciples.

John related that Jesus went to a garden across the ravine Kidron. The brook in this ravine was always dry except after a heavy rain. John mentioned that Jesus stopped frequently in the garden across the Kidron with His disciples and that Judas knew the

[Empty box for notes]

"The hour of the Messiah" came with the _____ and _____ of Jesus.

(death, resurrection)

[Empty box for notes]

Jesus' intention to leave the upper room is recorded in John _____.

Jesus' actual departure from the upper room is described in John _____.

(14:31; 18:1)

[Empty box for notes]

place (v.2). The importance of Judas' role in pointing out the place where Jesus often met with His disciples is uncertain. He guided the temple police, the chief priests, the Pharisees, and members of the Roman cohort to the garden (v.3). A Roman cohort consisted of 600 men, but it is uncertain whether a full cohort came out of the city to arrest Jesus. Perhaps they came as an escort to prevent a revolt by Jesus and His disciples who might have been joined by some fanatical Galileans. The fact that Jesus was not taken to the Roman governor immediately indicates that the Roman soldiers permitted the temple officers and chief priests to be in control of the arrest of Jesus. John's reference to the arresting party's lanterns, torches, and weapons contrasts the feeble lights of those who came in the night to do deeds of darkness to the light of the world whom they came to arrest.

Since Jesus was from heaven, He knew the events which would come to pass (v.4). John portrayed Him as being in control of the events leading to His death. The soldiers had come prepared with lights and weapons to arrest one who would seek to escape them. Instead, Jesus presented Himself to them (v.5). His divine nature and control over the situation are emphasized by the drawing back and falling to the ground of the arresting party when Jesus identified Himself (v.6). Jesus had promised protection for those who followed Him. After the helplessness of the arresting party had been exposed, Jesus requested that His disciples be permitted to go free (v.8). The Good Shepherd was willing to lay down His life for His sheep. The Scripture had stated that not one of those given to Jesus would be lost.

Peter had asserted previously that he would follow his Master to death. He understood that the Messiah would establish His Kingdom by military efforts even as David extended his kingdom through military victories. When the enemy came to arrest the Messiah, Peter drew his sword and aimed at the head of Malchus, servant of the high priest (v.10). Apparently the servant ducked, and the blade of Peter's sword caught his right ear. Peter was utterly frustrated when his Master commanded him to put up his sword (v.11). He could not understand why Jesus volunteered to die, but Jesus had already committed His life to drink the cup which the Father had given Him. Peter and the other disciples had not understood that the victory of the Messianic Kingdom would come through the death of the Messiah rather than through His military conquests. John omitted the detail found in Luke's Gospel that Jesus restored the ear of the servant.

Jesus' failure to resist resulted in His immediate arrest (v.12). Although Jesus had made no attempt to escape, John pointed out that He was bound. He did not mention, as Mark did, that the disciples deserted Jesus and ran away.

Underline who seemed to be in control of Jesus' arrest:

*the Roman soldiers
the temple officers*

(the temple officers)

Peter's drawing his sword in battle in the garden indicates that he did not understand Jesus' m_____.

(messiahship)

The Jewish Trials and Peter's Denials

18:13-27

Only John's Gospel mentions that Jesus appeared before Annas for perhaps an informal examination previous to His going before the Sanhedrin for formal sentencing (v.13). Annas had served as high priest from A.D. 7 until his deposition by Valerius Gratus in A.D. 15. According to Josephus, Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas served as high priest from approximately A.D. 18 to his deposition in A.D. 36. The office of high priest was normally inherited and conferred for life (Num. 3:32; 25:11ff.; 35:25, 28). The Romans, however, did not respect these Jewish laws. Some of the stricter Jews may have concluded that Annas continued to be the legal high priest even though Caiaphas was recognized by the Romans.

Jewish law prohibited the sentencing of a man on the day of his trial. The preliminary trial before Annas and the more formal trial before Caiaphas may have been attempts to cover up their disregard of Jewish law in the condemnation of Jesus. Caiaphas is named as the high priest in that fateful year in which Jesus was condemned and crucified. John reminds us that Caiaphas had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people (v.14; see John 11:50).

Peter's denials are mentioned in all the Gospels. "Another disciple" who accompanied Peter in following Jesus is mentioned also in Mark, but his identity is not revealed (v.15). It is possible that he was the disciple "whom Jesus loved." The unidentified disciple was known to the high priest and was permitted to enter into the court of the high priest (v.15). The word "know" implies something more than mere acquaintance. "It means that the person so described was a member of the High Priest's circle, possibly a kinsman and himself of priestly birth, or at any rate one who stood in intimate relations with the governing high priestly family."¹ It has been argued that John who has been identified as the beloved disciple could not have occupied such a position as to make it possible for him to be a familiar acquaintance of the high priest. On the other hand, there is no positive proof that his mother was not of a priestly family.

Peter was not admitted to the courtyard but the other disciple was (v.16). The accompanying disciple was known well enough to have been able to speak to the door-keeper and to have gained Peter's admission. It is uncertain why the two followed Jesus. Perhaps Peter still had hope that the power of God would intervene and Jesus would be delivered from His captors. The author's purpose was to explain Peter's presence in the courtyard where he denied Christ.

¹C.H. Dodd, Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 86-87.

According to John's Gospel, Jesus was taken first to appear before A _____.

(Annas)

Some Jews may have regarded Annas as legal high priest even though the Romans recognized

C _____.

(Caiaphas)

By taking Jesus before both Annas and Caiaphas, was it possible that the temple officials were trying to keep from breaking a Jewish law? _____. If so, what law was it?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

As Peter entered the court, the servant girl who kept the door recognized him and inquired whether or not he was Jesus' disciple (v.17). The wording of the question indicates that the servant expected a negative answer. This wording made it easy for Peter to say that he was not a disciple of Jesus (v.17). Perhaps he felt guilty for his untruthful answer and moved away from the girl to mingle with the crowd standing around the fire in order to avoid further embarrassing questions (v.18). The author explained the reason for the fire by mentioning that the night was cold.

Jesus was questioned by Annas, the high priest (v.19). Because of political interest, Annas questioned Jesus concerning His followers and His teachings (v.19). Perhaps he wanted to know what Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom and whether or not He was planning a Messianic revolt which would jeopardize the political and economic advantages of the priestly family. Jesus responded that He had not initiated a secret movement against the Romans, but He had taught publicly in the synagogues and in the Temple (v.20). Since His teachings had been in public places where the Jews came together, it was obvious that Jesus had not tried to keep His teachings or His movement a secret (v.20).

C. K. Barrett states that John completely omitted the question regarding the messiahship of Jesus. Yet Jesus' denial that He had started a secret movement indicates that Annas implied that Jesus had been preparing for an armed uprising. Jesus was aware that the chief priest would give little heed to His answer; therefore, He invited Annas to question those who had heard Him speak (v.21). According to rabbinic law, it was not proper procedure for the high priest to open a trial by questioning the defendant. The correct approach was to question the witnesses.

Jesus' apparent uncooperative answer needs to be interpreted in the light of the decision already made by the Jewish leaders to put Him to death. Even though the question of the high priest was improper, Jesus' answer brought a blow to His face from one of the officers (v.22). This action was a further indication of the impropriety of the trial. It was characteristic, however, of those who are determined to establish a case regardless of whether or not truth is being followed. Annas concluded that he could make no progress in the informal examination; therefore, he sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas who is identified also as a high priest (v.24). It is uncertain if Jesus was sent to another courtyard or if Caiaphas was nearby. The account of Peter's denials gives no indication of a change in location.

The narrative returns to the denials of Peter, who had joined the group surrounding the fire to warm himself. He was asked if he was a disciple of Jesus (v.25). Again, the question put to Peter implied that a negative answer was expected; consequently, it was easy for Peter to deny any relation to or knowledge of Jesus. His answer, however, did not satisfy all of

Annas wanted to know if Jesus was planning

a M _____ r _____.

(Messianic revolt)

READ THIS PARAGRAPH AND THE NEXT OF THE TEXT BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Impropriety of the trial before Annas was evidenced by:

1. *Annas opened the trial by questioning the _____.*
2. *One of the officers _____ Jesus because of His answer.*

(1. defendant, 2. struck)

those present. The high priest's slave, who was a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, pressed him further. Peter may have retreated to the porch after the second question, but his answer continued to be challenged. The wording of the third question indicated an affirmative answer was expected. The servant of the high priest thought he had seen Peter in the garden with Jesus, but the lighting was poor and the identity was uncertain. John simply stated that Peter denied a third time and the cock crowed immediately (v.27). The author did not mention the oaths and curses of Peter nor his further reactions which are presented in the Synoptics.

The Roman Trial of Jesus

18:28-19:16

The Jews' accusation (18:28-32)

Although John mentioned that Jesus was taken to Caiaphas for trial, he did not describe what took place. After a description of Peter's denials, John noted that Jesus was led from Caiaphas into the praetorium, the official residence of the provincial governor (v.28). Usually the Roman governor resided in Caesarea, but he would appear in Jerusalem during the great feasts to discourage Jewish disturbances. The Jews had access to the praetorium but chose to remain outside in order to avoid pollution from contact with Gentiles which would disqualify them from partaking of the Passover (v.28). Jews who entered the dwelling places of Gentiles were considered unclean.

The Jews' prejudice did not bring a reaction from Pilate whose concern was to maintain order during a feast. He accommodated the Jews by going out to them (v.29). Since the Sanhedrin should not have been meeting at night, the trial before Caiaphas may have been extended beyond 6 a.m. in order to make it legal.

The Jews had to bring an accusation that would be of concern to the Romans since they were before the Roman tribunal. They had determined that Jesus should die, but their charges would not stand up in a Roman court; therefore, they were in a somewhat difficult position. When Pilate asked for the specific accusation against Jesus, the Jews answered with the generality that He was an evildoer (v.30). They appear to have responded indignantly to Pilate's question which they interpreted to challenge their integrity. He referred the case back to the Jews and instructed them to judge Jesus according to their laws (v.31). He still did not realize that they were requesting capital punishment. The Jews responded that they could not judge Jesus according to their laws because Roman rule would not permit them to put anyone to death. Jesus would have to be condemned by the Roman tribunal if He was to receive the death penalty.

To whom was each of Peter's three denials made?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text. See the first paragraph on the preceding page and the first part of this paragraph which also begins on the preceding page.)

The Jews' accusation against Jesus before Pilate was that He was an _____.

Under Roman rule, could the Jews put anyone to death?

By whom did Jesus have to be condemned if He was to receive the death penalty?

(evildoer, no, Roman tribunal)

John's presentation of the trial before Pilate plays down the responsibility of the Romans and emphasizes the responsibility of the Jews in the death of Jesus. Although Romans and Jews shared in the death of Christ, their evil deeds did not thwart the plan of God but rather fulfilled the words of Jesus (v.32). John put emphasis on the fact that Jesus' death would be by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans rather than by stoning by the Jews. Jesus had escaped stoning on two occasions (8:59; 10:31). Instead of experiencing the usual Jewish execution, Jesus' death was to come by being lifted up (3:14; 8:28). He had stated that when He was lifted up He would draw all men to Himself (12:32). His being lifted up from the earth had reference to His dying on the cross. The Jewish leaders' determination to secure His death by the Romans fulfilled Jesus' prediction and God's divine purpose.

Pilate's interrogation (18:33-38a)

Apparently the Jews said more to Pilate than is recorded. His first question to Jesus upon returning to the praetorium was: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (v.33). The emphasis on "thou" indicates Pilate's surprise that his prisoner who had been deserted even by His friends could consider Himself a king. Certainly He was not the revolutionary implied in the title. Jesus was interested in knowing whether Pilate himself had arrived at the conclusion that Jesus is the King or had others told him (v.34). The source of the question determined the meaning of the question. If the question originated with Pilate, he was asking whether or not Jesus was conspiring against Caesar. If Pilate was pursuing a question raised by Caiaphas, he was referring to the Messianic King of Israel and may have wanted to know more about Him because of personal interest. Pilate responded that He was not a Jew (v.35). In other words, He did not understand the nature of the Jewish Messianic King. The charge of the chief priests, who had delivered Jesus to him, was not clear. Pilate demanded to know why the hostility of the chief priests had been aroused. John's presentation of the encounter emphasizes that Pilate himself was struggling with the mysterious truth about the royalty of Jesus. Pilate had evaded the deeper meaning of Jesus' question by expressing the sentiment that such Jewish questions were nothing to him.

Perhaps Pilate was pressing Jesus to reveal whether or not He planned sedition against Rome. Jesus assured him that He did not, for His Kingdom is not of this world (v.36). If He had had ambitions to establish a worldly kingdom, He would have armed and instructed His disciples to fight when the Jewish leaders, temple police, and soldiers had come to arrest Him. The fact that He had made Peter put up the sword indicated that His Kingdom was not of this realm. Kings of the world fight for supremacy, but Jesus did not plan to fight nor did He encourage battle. Pilate, like the disciples, had difficulty understanding this new concept of victory and kingly authority.

The Jewish leaders' determination to secure Jesus' death by the Romans fulfilled

*Jesus' _____ and
God's divine _____.*

(prediction, purpose)

Match the parts of these two statements.

- _____ 1. If the question concerning Jesus' kingship originated with Pilate,*
- _____ 2. If Pilate was pursuing a question raised by Caiaphas,*
- a. he may have wanted to know more about the Messianic King because of personal interest.*
- b. he was asking whether or not Jesus was conspiring against Caesar.*

(b-1, a-2)

The fact that Jesus did not arm his disciples and instruct them to fight at the time of His arrest is evidence that His

is not of this

_____.

(Kingdom, world)

Jesus' statement that His Kingdom is not of this world means several things.

1. There is a sense in which He has a Kingdom, but His differs from kingdoms of the world order.
2. His Kingdom is not established or maintained by military power; otherwise, His disciples would have fought at the time of His arrest.
3. His Kingdom supersedes geographical boundaries, and those born into His Kingdom are from all nations.
4. His Kingdom is not on the level of flesh or material but requires a birth from above in order for His chosen people to enter it.
5. Not all the people of the world, not even every Jew, is called into His Kingdom.

Since His Kingdom is not of this realm, it defies chronological dates and geographical boundaries. The fact that His Kingdom differed from those of this realm explains why the Jews could not understand Jesus as the Messiah who would gain victory through submission in death rather than through aggression and domination. The Jews rejected Jesus as king because they could not understand the nature of His Kingdom and messiahship. Only those who are chosen of God and who are given the Holy Spirit can understand His teachings. It is the task of the Church, the servant of the Kingdom, to set forth in all the world the teachings of the Kingdom. It is the work of the Spirit (Paraclete) to enable those who have been chosen by God to understand the message which the Church proclaims and to respond to it in faith.

Pilate, like the Jews, had difficulty understanding whether or not Jesus was claiming to be a king (v. 37). He pressed Jesus concerning the question of kingship in this world. Jesus answered that Pilate stated He was a king of this world but Jesus had not made such a claim. On the other hand, Jesus did not deny He was a king. He was sent into the world and was born in the flesh for that purpose. However, only those who are of the truth can understand the nature of Jesus' kingship. Pilate dismissed the subject of kingship and pursued the question of what is truth (v. 38). The answer to this question cannot be found in the physical realm but must involve an exploration of the spiritual realm—the nature of God, the purpose of creation, and the destiny of man. Jesus came to reveal truth on the spiritual level.

The Jewish and Roman condemnation (18:38b-19:16)

The question has often been argued whether the Jews or the Romans were guilty of the condemnation of the innocent man Jesus. Neither can be acquitted of responsibility and guilt. John emphasized that the Romans attempted to free Jesus; nevertheless, Pilate passed the formal death sentence because of expediency rather than justice.

Write several of the implications in Jesus' statement that His Kingdom is not of this world.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Circle the correct word or words.

When Pilate stated Jesus was a king of this world, Jesus (did, did not) deny He was a king.

The nature of Jesus' kingship can be understood only by those of the _____.

(did not, truth)

Is the following statement true or false?

Neither the Romans nor the Jews can be declared not guilty of the death of Jesus.

_____ *(Compare your answer with the text.)*

Pilate's declaration to the Jews that he found no guilt in Jesus gave John opportunity to emphasize the political innocence of Christians. In the day when he wrote the Gospel, Christians were being persecuted by political leaders who accused them of being traitors. Pilate judged that Jesus was not a revolutionary and, therefore, was no threat to the Empire.

Pilate addressed the crowd and sought to gain Jesus' freedom (v.39). He referred to a custom of the Jews in which a prisoner was released at Passover. This custom has not been attested elsewhere, but there is not sufficient reason to discredit it. Pilate suggested to the people that he release Jesus, their king, as a favour to them during their festival season. Although no record indicates that the people had cried out previously, they answered Pilate by crying out "again" for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus. Barabbas means son of abba (father). The people requested "son of father" be released while calling for the condemnation of "the Son of the Father." John mentioned that Barabbas was a robber. Luke added that Barabbas had taken part in an insurrection and a murder (23:18f.).

The Jews accused Jesus of being a revolutionary because they knew the Romans would condemn Him for sedition. Actually, the Jews rejected Him because He refused to lead in a revolt. They preferred the revolutionary Barabbas.

After Pilate's attempt to free Jesus by complying with the custom to release a prisoner at the feast had failed, he scourged Jesus with the hopes that this would suffice. Luke noted that Pilate stated that He would chastise Jesus and release Him (23:16). Ordinarily scourging came before crucifixion, but Pilate apparently had hoped to whip Jesus instead of crucifying Him. The Romans' whip was made of several thongs, each of which was tipped with pieces of bone or metal. The sharp instruments would cut into the back of the person, often cutting to the bone or severing veins and arteries.

The soldiers added humiliation to pain by placing a crown of thorns on His head and a purple robe on His back before mocking Him as king of the Jews (vv. 2f.). Instead of showing respect for a dignitary, the Romans expressed their contempt for the Jews and Jesus by striking Him on the face. The irony of the situation was that the One whom they mocked was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Pilate appeared before the people again and stated his plan to return Jesus to them because he found no fault in Him (v.4). The questioning and scourging had produced no evidence nor confession of guilt. Perhaps Pilate thought that when the people saw the condition of the One whom they wanted to be crucified, they would consent to His release. When Jesus came out, He was wearing the crown of thorns and purple robe (v.5). Pilate introduced Him with the words, "Behold the man!" which meant the poor man or the poor creature. John saw another meaning in this statement. Jesus is THE Man—the heavenly Son of Man! The chief

Read John 18:31. How did Pilate first attempt to free Jesus?

(By requesting that the Jews judge Jesus according to Jewish law)

Next Pilate tried to have Jesus freed following the custom of releasing a prisoner at

(Passover)

Another attempt was made to free Jesus when Pilate had Him _____, hoping that would suffice.

(scourged)

priests and officers led in the cry for His crucifixion (v.6). Perhaps they incited the people to join them.

Pilate's efforts to avoid responsibility for Jesus' death had failed once again. He responded to the shouts of the Jews with the retort for them to crucify Jesus themselves because he did not find Him to be a criminal. The Jews wanted Jesus to be put to death, but they did not want to assume responsibility for the death of an innocent man; therefore, they pressed Pilate to pass sentence on Him (v.7). When they mentioned that Jesus was guilty of breaking their law by claiming to be the Son of God, Pilate was made more fearful by the mysterious nature of His prisoner. A Roman saw no crime in Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, but the Jews were infuriated by it.

When Pilate returned into the praetorium with his prisoner, his apprehensions caused him to inquire further concerning Jesus' place of birth. Since there was no simple answer which Pilate would understand and accept, Jesus gave no answer. Pilate was further disturbed by the silence of his prisoner; therefore, he tried to restore confidence in himself by asserting his authority and dignity with the statement that he had the power to release or crucify Him (v.10). This statement of Pilate reveals that he was ultimately responsible for the death of Jesus. Jesus responded to Pilate's assertion of authority. Pilate was the instrument of the power of evil which claimed authority over God's Son. Jesus informed Pilate that he did not have authority over the Son of God except to the extent that God permitted it in accomplishing His divine plan (v.11). An earthly governor could act only as God permitted him. Pilate's limitations reduced his responsibility in the miscarriage of justice, but the Jewish leaders who delivered Jesus and demanded His crucifixion were fully guilty of their sin (v.11).

Pilate attempted to release Jesus again. The Jews thwarted his efforts by threatening to report to the Roman emperor that the governor had released a revolutionary who opposed the emperor (v.12). Perhaps John had in mind a deeper meaning for the saying of the Jews that one cannot be a friend of Caesar and of Christ. The claims of Christ were such that loyalty to Caesar must take second place. This threat of the Jews against Pilate determined his decision, and official sentence was passed for Jesus to be crucified. Whether Pilate took his position on the judgement seat (tribunal) or placed Jesus there is uncertain (v.13).

John pointed out that it was noon on the day of preparation for the Passover (v.14). The day of preparation ordinarily referred to Friday which was the day of preparation for the Sabbath. "The preparation of the passover" could have meant Friday in the Passover week rather than the eve of the Passover which was Thursday, Nisan 14. John's placing the time of Jesus' judgement at noon conflicts with Mark's "third" hour which was nine o'clock in the morning. John presented the death of Jesus as taking place during the afternoon at the time the paschal lamb was slain.

Who passed the formal sentence on Jesus even though he found Him innocent?

Who pressed Pilate to pass the sentence?

(Pilate, the Jews)

The "day of preparation" could have meant either _____ or _____.

(Friday, Thursday)

Numerous explanations have been attempted to reconcile the differences between John and the Synoptics. A.T. Robertson has interpreted the preparation of the Passover to have been Friday of Passover week which was the preparation day before the Sabbath.² He suggests that John's notation of time, "about the sixth hour," was based on the Roman method of computing time which began at midnight. If this was the case, the trial took place at 6 a.m., and His death came three hours later at 9 a.m.; therefore, John would coincide with Mark. C.K. Barrett and Leon Morris both say there is no evidence that the Roman method of computing time was used by John.³ They further contend that John's purpose was to represent the death of Jesus as that of the true paschal lamb; therefore, the schedule he followed placed Christ on the cross at the same time the paschal lambs were being killed for the Passover.⁴ According to Barrett and Morris, John's theological purpose overshadowed his chronological reporting.

Pilate brought Jesus before the Jews again, and instead of pronouncing the sentence he remarked in irony, "Behold your King!" Perhaps he was suggesting that the only king the Jews were capable of having would be a prisoner who was condemned to death. The Jews responded that they would not have Him as their king and shouted for Pilate to take Him away and crucify Him (v.15). It is uncertain whether Pilate continued the irony by asking if he should crucify their king or whether he was giving them a last chance to change their minds. The people assured him that they had no king but Caesar. This assurance was in contradiction to the Old Testament teachings that the only true king of Israel was God Himself (see Judges 8:23; 1 Sam. 8:7).

John is not clear concerning those to whom Jesus was delivered for crucifixion (v.16). He may have left the reference ambiguous intentionally since he attempted to avoid implicating the Romans any more than was necessary. He stated in verse 23 that the soldiers crucified Jesus.

With reference to variations in reporting the time of the crucifixion, some scholars say the time was based on the

_____ method of computing time and others say the _____ method.

(Roman, Jewish)

Before Jesus was taken away to be crucified, the people assured Pilate they had no king but _____.

(Caesar)

²Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. V: The Fourth Gospel (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), p. 299.

³The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), p. 454; The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 800.

⁴Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 454.

John's Account of Jesus' Crucifixion

19:17-42

It was customary for a condemned prisoner to carry the transverse beam of the cross to the place of execution (v. 17). The Synoptics indicate that Simon of Cyrene relieved Jesus of that burden because He was too weak from the flogging to carry His cross all the way. John did not indicate that Simon was conscripted to bear the cross part of the distance; whereas, the Synoptics do. John gave both the Greek and Aramaic names of the place where the crucifixion took place. It is uncertain why the hill was called Golgotha (Skull-place). The Aramaic word for skull is *golgotha* and the Latin equivalent is *calvaria*.

The crucifixion of the two criminals alongside Jesus is mentioned, but John omitted the Lucan tradition of the penitence of one of them (v. 18; see Luke 23:40-43). Although John used only one word, "crucified," to describe Jesus' death, that word draws a picture of atrocious physical suffering for a lengthy period of time. The victim was fastened to the cross either with cords or nails. He straddled a narrow projection of wood which bore some of the weight of the body and prevented the flesh's tearing from the nails. The victim was stripped of his clothing and reduced to helplessness on the cross, unable to brush away the flies which covered the torn flesh from the nails and the wounds on his back caused by the scourging.

The cross was not a special device designed only for the death of Jesus but was the customary means of putting criminals to death. Ordinarily, a degraded group of people gathered around and found pleasure in the torture of others. They added to the victim's misery by casting insults and curses upon him.

John did not appeal to the emotions of his readers by describing the physical torture of the cross. The true meaning of Jesus' death is often distorted by well-intended sermons which describe only the physical torture experienced by Jesus on the cross. It should be remembered that many men suffered crucifixion, but no other innocent man had to bear the internal agony of misunderstanding by his closest friends and of scorn by those whom he came to help. By nature, Jesus deserved the dignity of a king. In order to redeem men who rebelled against Him, He assumed the infamy of a shameful criminal and died for the sins of the world. Only the heavenly Father understood fully the meaning of that tragic event.

A placard which described the crimes of the condemned was placed above the victim's head. Apparently Jesus' claiming to be a king was the crime which caused the Romans to condemn Him (v. 19). To the Romans, this claim was an error and crime worthy of death. To John and the Christian disciples, it had a deeper meaning and a truth which was not understood by the world. John noted that the declaration of Jesus' crime became a title which was read by many (v. 20).

The Latin equivalent of Golgotha is

C _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Many men endured the physical suffering of crucifixion, but Jesus bore the internal agony of

_____ by His closest _____ and scorn by those He came to _____.

Jesus assumed the infamy of a shameful _____ and died for the _____ of the world.

(misunderstanding, friends, help, criminal, sins)

The title was written in three languages: Hebrew or Aramaic was the language of the country, Latin was the official language, and Greek was the common language throughout the Roman Empire. This trilingual inscription symbolized the universality of Jesus' kingship.

Although the Jews desired a messiah who would defeat the Romans, their opposition and rejection of Jesus was so strong that they requested the inscription be changed to read that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews (v.21). Since Jesus had voluntarily surrendered Himself to the Gentiles and accepted death without attempting to defend Himself, the Jews wanted nothing to do with Him. If He had come as a revolutionary who gave promise of a military victory, He probably would have been followed and honoured by the Jews. Jesus had been tempted to be that kind of Messiah. Pilate refused to change the inscription to satisfy the whims of the Jewish leaders (v.22).

It was customary for the executioners to take the clothing of the criminals. The outer garments were divided into four parts. It is uncertain whether different articles, such as the headpiece, girdle, sandals, and outer garment with fringe, were parcelled out. On the other hand, the outer garment with fringe may have been divided into four parts (v.23). The undergarment was woven as one piece without seams, and its value caused the soldiers to gamble for it rather than to divide it and reduce its value. These activities were of interest to John because they literally fulfilled Scripture (v.24 ; see Ps. 22:18). This fulfilment revealed that the sovereign God had authority over all that was done. Even the wicked deeds of sinful men are not beyond the control of God.

The author shifted attention from the soldiers to the loved ones of Jesus (v.25). The disciples fled in fear, but the women stood near the cross. Only the "disciple whom he loved" stayed with the women. Coinciding with the pattern followed in the Fourth Gospel, the mother of Jesus is mentioned first but her name is not given. Matthew and Mark also named a Mary who was the "mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome." It is uncertain whether the sister of Jesus' mother was also unnamed or whether she was "Mary the wife of Cleophas" (v.25). It would have been unusual for two sisters to have the same name. It is possible that "his mother's sister" was Salome (Mark 15:40). Salome may have been the mother of the sons of Zebedee (see Matt.27:56). If the beloved disciple was John, son of Zebedee, it would have been consistent with John's style not to name his own mother but to refer to her as the sister of Jesus' mother.

As the oldest son, Jesus was responsible for the care of His mother. His death prevented His honouring that custom. It was characteristic of Jesus' selflessness that He thought of His mother during His agony on the cross (v.26). Since Jesus could not fulfil the responsibilities of the eldest son, He committed the care of His mother to His beloved and trusted disciple.

The title placed above Jesus' head was written in:

This trilingual inscription symbolized the _____ of Jesus' kingship.

(Aramaic, Latin, Greek, universality)

John included the account of the distribution of Jesus' clothing because it fulfilled _____.

(Scripture)

To which disciple did Jesus commit the care of His mother? _____

(John, the beloved disciple)

His establishing a mother-son relationship between Mary and the beloved disciple with the statements "Behold thy son!" and "Behold thy mother!" has been interpreted by Catholic theologians to mean that Mary is the mother of all believers. All believers can be assured of being heard by their universal mother who in turn can expect her requests to be honoured by her respectful son who is the Son of God. Such an interpretation is strained and misses the point of Jesus' instruction to His beloved disciple.

Perhaps Jesus did not entrust His mother to His younger brothers because they had not believed on Him. The meaning of the commitment of Mary to John is implied in the statement that the disciple took her into his own home from that hour (v.27). C.K. Barrett rejects the allegorical interpretation which views Mary's acceptance into the home of the beloved disciple as representing the absorption into the Church of the faithful remnant of Israel from which the Messiah sprang.⁵

After showing that Jesus had completed the work of the Father on earth and had fulfilled His social and family responsibilities, John turned to a brief description of His death. The numerous events which appeared to be disruptive of God's order actually had developed according to His plan as set forth in the Scripture (v.28).

The soldiers responded to Jesus' statement that He was thirsty by filling a sponge with cheap wine and lifting it to His mouth on the reed of a hyssop bush. Reference to the vessel of wine, sponge, and reed indicates that they had been placed there for the victims (v.29). John indicated that Jesus drank the vinegar or cheap wine, but Matthew and Mark tell us that He refused it. Whether the purpose of the wine was to moisten Jesus' throat to enable Him to speak or to relieve some of His suffering is uncertain. His cry that it was finished and His death followed immediately the drinking of the wine (v.30). His cry was a triumphant declaration that He had accomplished fully the work that He had come to do. Previously John had emphasized that death could not claim Jesus until that work had been finished.

With the approach of sundown and the end of the day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses on the Sabbath. Friday, the day of preparation, was drawing to a close; therefore, request was made of Pilate to break the legs of the victims in order that their deaths would come more quickly (v.31). The approaching Sabbath was a high day because it was either the first day of the Passover festival (Nisan 15) or the next day when the Omer sheaf was presented (Lev. 23:11). Pilate responded to the request by instructing the soldiers to break the legs of the victims (v.32). The use of their legs to support part of their weight relieved some of the pressure on

What were the words Jesus declared to show that He had accomplished fully the work that He had come to do? _____

(Compare your answer with John 19:30)

The Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses on the _____.

(Sabbath)

⁵The Gospel According to St. John, p. 459.

their chests and resulted in the victims' lingering for days on the cross. When the legs were broken, the additional strain on the arms would bring about constriction of the chest and would hasten death. Also, the excruciating pain inflicted by the mallet in breaking the legs would speed up the process of death. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they found that He was already dead; therefore, they did not break His legs (v. 33). Perhaps John included this information to emphasize that Jesus as the Passover Lamb had the qualification of not having broken bones.

It is uncertain whether the soldiers' brutality or their determination to assure Jesus' death caused them to thrust the spear into His side. The blood and water which came out made it plain that Jesus was a real man, but other significances of the phenomenon are unclear. First John 5:6 and 8 refer to water and blood as witnesses that Jesus is the Christ. Men are prepared for birth from above by the blood and are begotten from above by the water and the Spirit (John 3:5). John emphasized that he was an eyewitness to the incident and that he recorded it to encourage faith (v. 35). The fact that the bones of Jesus were not broken and His side was pierced fulfilled Psalm 34:20, Exodus 12:46, and Zechariah 12:10 (vv. 36f.).

Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret and perhaps wealthy disciple of Jesus, carried out the burial of Jesus (v. 38). After Pilate permitted the removal of Jesus' body from the cross, Nicodemus, probably also a secret disciple, joined Joseph in providing a proper burial for Jesus. Nicodemus brought about seventy pounds of spices to place in the sheets wrapped around the body (v. 39). Perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus were moved to action by the death of their Master and by a recognition that they had refused to endanger their own lives to prevent His condemnation.

Only John pointed out that they buried His body in a garden near the place of crucifixion (v. 41). The tomb was new and expensive. There was a stone prepared to be moved in a groove to close it. According to Matthew, the tomb belonged to Joseph. The burial was completed before the day of preparation had expired and the Sabbath day began with the setting of sun (v. 42).

Breaking the legs of those crucified would hasten _____.

Did the soldiers break Jesus' legs? _____

If not, why? _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Which two secret disciples of Jesus carried out His burial? _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Why do some scholars think that chapters 15 through 17 are misplaced? _____

2. Did the Jews or Romans arrest Jesus? _____

3. What event in the garden indicates Peter had not understood the nature of Jesus' messiahship?

4. Why was Jesus taken before Annas? _____

5. How did Peter gain entrance to the courtyard of the high priest? _____
6. What were the purpose and irregularities of Jesus' trial before Annas? _____

7. To whom did Peter deny Jesus? _____
8. What accusation did the Jews make against Jesus before Pilate? _____
9. Why did Jesus need to know the source of Pilate's question concerning His kingship? _____

10. What is the evidence supporting Jesus' statement that His Kingdom is not of this world, and what are its implications? _____

11. What answer did Jesus give to Pilate's statement that He was a king? _____
12. What attempts did Pilate make to free Jesus? _____

13. What evidence is there that both Jews and Romans were guilty of the unjust condemnation of Jesus? _____
14. To what time did "day of preparation" refer? _____
15. How do Robertson and Barrett differ concerning the time of Jesus' crucifixion according to John?

16. Why is the word calvary associated with Jesus' crucifixion? _____

17. How did Jesus' suffering on the cross differ from that of other men? _____

18. Name the three languages of the inscription placed above Jesus' head, and give the symbolic significance of the use of the three. _____

19. Why did John include an account of the distribution of Jesus' clothing? _____

20. Why did Jesus say to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother"? _____

21. Interpret Jesus' words "It is finished." _____

22. Why were the legs of those being crucified broken? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 131-145 in Filson and answer the following questions.

1. What request did Jesus make of those who arrested Him, and why?
2. What was the purpose of Jesus' trial before Annas?
3. What was ironical about the Jewish refusal to enter the praetorium?
4. What was Pilate's concern in questioning Jesus, and how did Jesus define His kingship?
5. What tactics did Pilate use with the Jewish leaders after he found Jesus innocent?
6. To what does Filson believe the blood and water from the pierced side of Jesus refer?

Alternate supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 193-220 in Tasker and answer the following questions.

1. List the points of similarity in the Four Gospels concerning the Passion of Jesus and the unique concern of John's Gospel.
2. Why was Jesus' prime concern at His arrest that the disciples should retain their freedom?
3. What kind of kingship was apparently intimated to Pilate?
4. List the steps Pilate took in attempting to uphold justice while pacifying the Jewish leaders.
5. Interpret 18:36 and 37.
6. How does Tasker interpret the flowing of blood and water from the side of Jesus?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

Explain the differences in time between John's Gospel and the Synoptics, and suggest a solution to this problem. At least two essays by reputable scholars on the subject should be read.

Seminar Discussion

1. Why did the Roman soldiers accompany the temple police in arresting Jesus?
2. How did John emphasize the sovereignty of Christ rather than His helplessness during the arrest and trial?
3. What caused Peter to deny his Lord?
4. Why did the Jews present Jesus to Pilate for trial, and what were their charges against Him?
5. What strategy did Pilate follow during the trial of Jesus?
6. What did Pilate believe about the kingship of Jesus?
7. What did Jesus mean in His statement to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother"?
8. What is the significance of John's statement that blood and water came from the pierced side of Jesus?