

The Death Sentence (John 19:6-16)

John 19:4-5 And Pilate came out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." 5 Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And {Pilate} said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

- The crowd could see that Jesus passed the test of the scourge of TRUTH, yet they still cried out to Pilate, "Crucify Him!" He answered "*Why? What crime has he committed?*" (Mark 15:14). Jesus did not deny that He was a King when pressed into doing so through several lashings from the Roman torturers.
- The Jews cried out even louder "*Crucify Him!*" They did not count on Jesus passing the truth scourge and now they would stiffen their necks by throwing a fit. They were not interested in the truth and it was that truth that could set them free.

John 19:6-9 When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out {to be} the Son of God." 8 When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

- They continue their chant of death for Jesus, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate told them do it themselves, but they could not because it was a religious violation and not a Roman violation, for Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God. This was the real charge, but for that they could not carry out the death penalty without Pilate doing so. Pilate could see through all this and it put him in an extremely awkward position.
- There is something concerning this event that carries great importance. What would have happened had Pilate not followed the Roman law and simply turned Jesus over to the Jews for stoning? We know that there were cases when out of control mobs carried out this method under Roman rule (John 8:1-11 and Acts 7:59). If that would have occurred then Jesus could not have been the Man of Destiny, for as the scripture says *John 18:32 that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die*. Jesus had to die in this way for that was the plan as ordained by God.
 - a) John 3:14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;
 - b) Matt 20:18-19 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify {Him,} and on the third day He will be raised up."

- c) Ps 22:16-18 For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; 18 They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.
- Pilate was really in a no win situation and was terrified Pilate, not wanting to be the one to carryout this crucifixion. Jesus was a polarizing presence before Pilate, having positive sway with a very large population and on the other hand a great threat to the positioned hierarchy of the Jews. The only charge that Jesus had against Him at this point was the claim to be a king, yet Pilate thinks he is crazy. He stood by His word and Pilate demands to know "Where is this Jesus from?" Jesus had already answered that in a previous discussion and Pilate did not listen; why would he now?

John 19:10-11 Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has {the} greater sin."

- Pilate wanted an answer that would hopefully get him off the hook concerning the decision before him. Now for a little intimidation to convince Jesus to speak Pilate basically said, "Don't you understand that the power of life or death concerning you resides with me?" Jesus reminded Pilate that he would have no power except that what was given to him from above. Some say this was referring to God and His ability to empower certain leaders to come to power. *Rom 13:1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (KJV)* I am not convinced this is what Jesus was referring to. More likely He refers to the fact that Caesar, the one above Pilate, has allowed him to be in that position. This is likely connected to the final straw of the "Caesar threat" that is coming in the next verse of the text.
- For that reason Jesus stated the following "...he who delivered Me up to you has {the} greater sin." Pilate is just doing his job, though it was a pitiful one. He did not ask for this, but it was in his lap and would have to deal with it. The Jews on the other hand would face a greater consequence because they were ones that had planned to do evil to Jesus, not Pilate.

John 19:12-16 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out {to be} a king opposes Caesar." 13 When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" 15 They therefore 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." 16 So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.

- They will not rest until Jesus is crucified. They know that Pilate is not on good terms with Caesar and stated, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out {to be} a king opposes Caesar." They were right; Caesar would have Pilate's head on a stake if he blew that deal this time. The Jews and Pilate had no love for each other. They were always trying to make any Roman official look bad when they had a chance.
- Pilate had had enough of this and was ready to bring it to an end. Ten times he tried to free Jesus, but the Jews were stubbornly persistent in their desires.
- There has been much said from the biblical scoffers concerning the statement of timing from John, "...it was about the sixth hour." According to Hebrew time, this would be some time around noon. Mark records in Mark 15:25 *And it was the third hour when they crucified Him*. Obviously there seems to be a contradiction here and we cannot trust the accuracy of the Bible...NOT! If Mark records the Hebrew time of 9 AM and John is using the Hebrew time of 12 PM, it does not make any sense at all. The harmony comes in the following explanation.
- Roman time did not begin at 6 AM, but 12 AM. This would make "...about the sixth hour" to be 6 AM. Is it possible that John is using Roman time in this instance? The scoffers say NO, but the evidence says YES! Consider the following:
 - 1) He is writing his account much later in the century than the other gospel writers. Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote their accounts prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and John more that twenty years after that event; therefore John was addressing a Greek / Roman audience from that territory.
 - 2) John wrote in the most detail concerning the trial, for he was closer to the events. He was the apostle that was actually within speaking distance from Jesus during the crucifixion while the others scattered.
 - 3) This particular account directly involved Romans, including Pilate, the torturers and the public executioners. If there was to be scrutiny by his reading audience, it would be here; therefore use the Roman time.
 - 4) It was against Roman law to sentence someone to death before 6 AM. (The Gospel According to John. Guy N. Woods. pg 398) It is quite possible that John, who was writing to a non-Jewish audience, wanted to make sure to establish that the crucifixion was legal.
 - 5) This series of trials of trials started sometime after midnight and before 3 AM (cock-crowing time). The trials were Annas,

then Caiaphas, then the Sanhedrin, then Pilate, then Herod and here in this passage again before Pilate. It is quite reasonable to assume that it must be sometime after 6 AM and before 7 AM. All these locations are just are less than a couple of hundred yards from each other, there would have not been much time wasted in between. Hence, "...it was about the sixth hour."

- But what about the difference between, lets say 6:45 AM and the 9 AM Mark account of time? That is over two hours, which seems like a lot of time until the planting of the cross. Not really when you consider what must occur within that time.
- Jesus would be beaten with a death-sentence flogging (coming next), be burdened with a heavy cross to be carried to the site of Golgotha outside of the city and would be delayed many times with fatigue, the acquiring of the forced hauling services of Simon of Cyrene, the stripping of the clothes, the fastening and mounting of the cross into the ground. If that is not enough, there is this additional information from Bible scholar William Barclay about the placard that was eventually placed on Jesus' cross.

"There was a double reason for that. There was the grim reason that as many as possible should see and take warning from his fate. But there was a merciful reason. The placard was carried before the condemned man and the long route was chosen, so that if anyone could still bear witness in his favour, he might come forward and do so. In such case, the procession was halted and the case retried."
(The Gospel of John Volume 2. William Barclay. The Westminster Press. 1975)

- In summary proposition of the discussed timeline: Jesus was sentenced to death by shortly after 6:30 AM, was "death-scourged" and prepared for execution, slowly carried a heavy cross over a long route, the acquiring of assistance to finish the journey to Calvary, being stripped naked, laid and nailed on the cross to be lifted up and planted in the ground.
- That is actually quite a bit to accomplish in such a short time. It is not at all unreasonable to harmonize John's and Mark's timelines concerning the crucifixion. In fact it seems to justify the accuracy of the Bible in light of the historical evidence brought forth.

Matt 27:24-26 And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see {to that} yourselves." 25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood {be} on us and on our children!" 26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified.

- Matthew enlightens us to another detail of this account that John leaves out. He said that Pilate actually took water before these riotous Jews and rinsed his hands of the responsibility of Jesus' execution. This was a common first-century gesture of releasing oneself from accountability of the actions of another.
- The Jews cry out, "His blood {be} on us and on our children!" With that the trial is done; Barrabas is freed; Jesus would receive the beating of His life, the scourge of a death-sentenced man condemned to the cross.
- Concerning this beating, it was intended to bring the victims as close to death without killing them. This was a horrible event as described by historian Mark E. Moore.

The victim would be tied to a post or hung from a wall. Either method would draw the muscles taut across the victim's back. The soldier would then use a flagellum, also called a "cat of nine tails." It was a short wood stick with often nine thong strands attached to it. At the end of each strand was tied something sharp (e.g., bone, metal, glass), or metal balls. The purpose was not to lash out quickly so as to inflict welts. Rather, the soldier would attempt to rake the victim's back with sharp objects, literally shredding the muscles of the back, buttocks and legs. The Jews limited the lashes to thirty-nine. The Romans, however, were hindered only by their animosity and endurance. So much muscle was left shredded and hanging that the victim's vertebrae were exposed and sometimes even his intestines. Often the "tails" would whip around the victim's face, gouging out his eyes. It is not surprising then that flogging alone was lethal six out of ten times."

- We have sanitized the beating of Jesus in a way that actually lowers the love that He holds for us.
- We like our Jesus to have just a little blood trickling down His forehead and from His mouth. We don't want to look at the Jesus that was ripped apart and covered in blood from top to bottom. We don't want to imagine possibly one of His eyes gouge out or to see that skin and muscle hanging His back, His bottom and His legs. We don't want to see that Jesus!
- We don't want to look at Him grimace in pain and torture. That is not the Jesus that we want to see! We want the network version that has been sanitized so we can still eat our popcorn and Junior Mints!
- Don't you look away! We are the reason He went through this! The Jewish leaders may have pushed for it and the Romans may have carried it out, but we are the ones for which He suffered this!
- Take a good look! This beaten, battered and bloodied Messiah was beaten because of you and me.
 - He was beaten for all those things that you can't overcome.
 - He was beaten for your drug addiction that you are trapped in.
 - He was beaten for those times that you lost your temper with your family.

- He was beaten for that porno magazine that you just cannot put down.
 - He was beaten for all those times that you lied, stole, cheated and coveted.
 - He was beaten for all those weaknesses that you had, that you have and that you will ever have, if only you will not turn away and disconnect.
 - This is why He went through this, for He knows that we are sinners and no sinners can come before God. He loves us and needed to have our sins forgiven so that we might have eternal life with our Creator and inventor, God the Father.
- 1 Pet 2:21-25 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting {Himself} to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.
 - Unless our can see our personal responsibility in these hideous actions against Jesus, we can never truly have a personal relationship with Him that causes us to personally live for Him.
 - I challenge you in this lesson to put the thought of Jesus receiving this inhumane beating for preparation for the cross at the forefront of your mind, personally connecting it to Him. If you can share in His suffering in this way, then I challenge you to make it up to Him by serving Him for the rest of your life out humility for what we have done to bring this on. "...for by His wounds you were healed..."