

John 19:1-16

~ Jesus: Lord of His Own Sentence ~

Introduction

1. Judas Iscariot!
2. A governor's wife!
3. A crucified thief!
4. A Roman centurion!

What do these 4 people have in common...?

Judas Iscariot

Take the **first one** for example – Judas Iscariot:

After **recognizing the outcome** of his own traitorous act – and receiving in his heart a **worldly kind** of grief – he returns to the temple with **30 pieces of silver** – throwing them down to the ground and crying out:

*I have betrayed **innocent** blood!*

Pilate's wife

And then there is Claudia – the Roman Governor's wife:

After suffering a terrible dream in the middle of the night regarding Jesus– she sends word to her husband in Matthew 27 informing him:

*To leave that **innocent** man alone!*

Crucified thief

After some time later when Jesus is **being crucified** on the cross **flanked between** 2 criminals:

One of them is relentless in his vile accusations – while the other simply turns to Jesus and says:

*This man has done **nothing wrong**...*

Roman Centurion

Finally, there is the **Roman Centurion** – the one who is standing at the foot of the cross in Luke 23 – and after watching Jesus **suffer and die** – he looks up at the body of Jesus and says:

*Surely this man was in fact **innocent**!*

1. Judas Iscariot!
2. A governor's wife!
3. A crucified thief!
4. A Roman centurion!

What do these 4 people **all** have in common?!?!

Answer:

A surprisingly **consistent verdict** regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ

See when it comes to **the likelihood** of these 4 individual people – coming together to agree on anything other than their own **circumstantial happenstance**:

You probably could NOT get **any more** of a **diverse** or **divergent** group of individuals!

4 individuals who really should have **nothing to do** with one another!

And yet it **just so happens** that this crowd of unlikely witnesses all come to a **surprisingly consistent** verdict regarding the Person and work of Christ – and that verdict is unmistakably:

Innocent!

Blameless!

Faultless!

This man has done nothing wrong!

Pontius Pilate

Which just leaves one more **significant player** who still needs to come to the table...

The one who has been **at the centre** of this entire trial – the one who has probably had the **most time** inspecting the Person and work of Jesus!

The man with the **ultimate decision**:

Pontius Pilate!

The Roman governor we met last week whose headquarters are located at Caesarea:

A beautiful coastal region on the Mediterranean Sea!

But during the **high feast of celebrations** when Jewish nationalism **ran high** and the need for a **strong military presence** was necessary:

Pilate would make the 120K journey down to Jerusalem to set up shop in the city of the Jews!

Now we met Pilate last week **standing next to Jesus** and talking about the Kingdom of God!

Pilate you remember questioned His authority and after he got **no sufficient answers** that were **in accordance with** his **post-modern worldview** – Pilate now turns again to address the crowds of the people!

But what's interesting to note – is that Pilate himself has **already come** to a final decision regarding Jesus Christ:

He just needs to **solidify** his claim!

Chapter 18 verse 38:

I find no basis for a charge against Him!

Chapter 19 verse 4:

I find no basis for a charge against Him!

Chapter 19 verse 6:

I find no basis for a charge against Him!

And so if this **is in fact** his final decision regarding the Person and work of Jesus ...why then does **Pilate persist** in having Him executed at the end of this passage?!?!

What is the benefit of satiating the crowds with the death and crucifixion of an innocent man – when Pilate himself knows that Jesus is innocent!

Well for **the simple fact** dear friends – as one pastor has said:

Pilate is **smart enough to know** the consequences of his own political decision!

*If he chooses what he knows to be **right** [letting Jesus go free] he will surrender his job, his power, his people & prestige on the **alter of justice** – but in so doing he will forfeit his **earthly job!***

*But if he chooses what he knows to be **wrong** he will keep his job, his power, his people & prestige,
but **in so doing** he will forfeit his eternal soul!*

3 Options

Tough choice for any Roman Governor to be in – and a position in which **no one in here** would ever **dare to dream** to **want to be in** – and yet:

Pilate **is the one** in that very position...

He is the one that **God has ordained** in this very moment to make the final call:

Will he **flounder** and **flake** under the pressure of this wicked and evil **mob-mentality**?!?!

Or will he **conquer** and **contest** standing firm in the face of open opposition – **releasing Jesus** knowing that **he will have** a potential riot on his hands?!?

Or will he **cower** and **cringe** at the thought of making final decision – and ultimately try to **pass the buck** to someone like his father Adam in the Garden did all those years ago?!?!

Will he:

Flounder & flake?

Conquer & contest?

Cower & cringe?

Attempt #1

Notice the first attempt Pilate gives in **evading a verdict** for Jesus Christ – chapter 18 verse 38:

*After he had said this, he went back out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no grounds for charging Him. But you **have a custom** that I release one prisoner to you at the time of the Jewish Passover...*

Opening Gambit

It's almost too good to be true Pilate thinks to himself!

He's **figured out a way** that he can both satiate the crowd with political justice while leaving the **final decision** in their ultimate hands!

See every year **it was the custom** of Rome to release **one Hebrew prisoner** at the time of the Jewish Feast – this custom was seen as a **goodwill gesture** on the part of the Roman Empire – it was a way to keep the peace – and it was kind of a goodwill offering toward the Jewish people...

And so Pilate figures that this will give him a way to disperse this Jewish lynch mob without having to order the death of a man he's already pronounced as:

Being fully innocent!

And so normally **the Roman governor would release** one Jewish man who had committed **relatively minor crimes** that were not worthy of public execution!

But this year Pilate decides to do something different!

Something very risky for. Roman governor to do!

Jesus Barabbas

In order to dissuade the crowds from killing Jesus – he chooses **the worst criminal** he has on deck!

He chooses the **worst kind** of Jewish prisoner!

And the worst criminal that was on deck that year was:

*A notorious murderer by the name of Barabbas [Jesus Barabbas]*¹

¹ <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/jesus-barabbas-or-jesus-christ/>

And it's actually interesting that some of the **earliest Greek manuscripts** treat Barabbas as a **surname** and give '*Jesus*' as his **first** name:

Jesus of course being a transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua which was a very **common Hebrew name!**

And so some have even said that if this was indeed Barabbas's given name, then it would make sense of the expression in Matthew 27 when Pilate says to the crowds:

Whom do you want me to release for you: [Jesus who is called] Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Christ?

Nevertheless, **Barabbas was notorious** in every sense of that word – His villainy & crimes were both **detestable** and **known** throughout the Roman Empire!

Mark's refers to him as an **insurrectionist** in Mark chapter 15 verse 7!

Matthew describes him as a notorious prisoner in Matthew 27!

John describes him as a **robber/or a thief** in John chapter 18!

And Luke simply refers to him as a murderer in Luke 23!

If he were alive today – Barabbas would be labelled:

A known terrorist

He was a very evil man – he deserved to die **the worst kind of death** – by the worst kinds of people!

The sinfulness of man's heart

And so surely the Jews **were NOT going to anger Rome** by releasing a genuine threat to the Empire right?!?!?

Surely, **they wouldn't dishonour God** by withholding biblical justice from this murderous thief?!?!?

That's what Pilate was probably thinking!

Surely these people will do what is right in the eyes of their own Scriptures?!?!

Well as we have **so often seen** throughout the Gospel of John – sin has a **very real way** of **blinding** human hearts – and **inverting biblical justice!**

And so while Pilate is on the **inside** thinking of a way to escape his own political decision – the Jews are on the **outside** stirring up the crowds for the murder of Jesus Christ!

And so here is Pilate's first attempt in trying to avoid the decision – and **in so doing** he puts a **known terrorist** back onto the streets:

And guess what...?

He's **still left** with making a **decision** about Jesus Christ!

Avoiding Decisions

And see this is what happens friends when you & I try to avoid:

Making **hard decisions** for Jesus Christ

When you & I try to **avoid making decisions** that are costly/painful/heavy/ or hard simply because they're awkward and difficult to do!

God **in His wisdom** will often **chastise His people** for their lack of courage & faith in Jesus Christ!

And that's what happens to Pilate – God chastises him for being a coward who refuses to take responsibility in standing up for Christ!

One pastor has said it like this:

*All of our problems are caused either by ignoring Jesus completely –
or else beginning with Christ and adding our own wisdom & works to the process...*

So for instance we might on the one hand just **completely ignore** executing the **right decision** for Christ:

We know what He says!
 We know what He wants!
 What know what we should be doing!

But we refuse to do it out of cowardice – spite – & sin!

And that in itself has consequences!

God will **NOT** be mocked when we flippantly decide to reject His word!

Add our wisdom

But there's **another way** that we can incur the chastening of God – and that is:

By trying to add to the equation and add to Scripture what we think is the best way forward in our
own human wisdom!

This is what the bible calls **compromise**

We know what the word says – we know what we ought to be doing but:

We're just gonna **tweak it** just a bit!
 We're just gonna **add to it** just a bit!
 We're just gonna add our own **human ingenuity** to the situation!

And that's also a **recipe for** disaster!

Galatians 3

Paul recognized this in Galatians 3:

O Foolish Galatians who has bewitched you?!?!

*Are you so foolish to believe that **having begun by the Spirit**, are you now **being perfected by the flesh**?*

Like did you receive the Spirit of God by works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

Are you that dull that you actually think that you're going to add to the wisdom and the works of God?!?!?

So our own **wisdom & works** that are **apart from** walking in the Spirit – trusting in His grace – and walking in obedience by faith in Christ:

Will **always be accompanied** by our own **fallen fleshly desires!**

When we try to **avoid making decisions** for Jesus – or adding our wisdom to Scripture God in His wisdom will **NOT** allow us to go through life unscathed – unpunished – and unhindered by our lack of courage!

And that's what's happening in the life of Pontius Pilate:

He thinks that **he can avoid** a decision **for or against** Jesus Christ and **in so doing** – Galatians 6:

God will **NOT** be mocked in the process!

Jesus Christ demands a verdict!

Attempt #2

Which is why Pilate now attempts to manoeuvre a **second way** of avoiding making a decision:

If passing the buck **wasn't going** to work – maybe satiating the crowd with a little bit of violence will **do** the trick!

This is what we see in chapter 19 verse 1:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and clothed Him in a purple robe. And they kept coming up to Him and saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" and were slapping His face...

Beaten

Outside of crucifixion – this is arguably the **most horrific** form of punishment there is!

In a technical sense this is what is known as:

An official Roman scourging

Some of your translations will have the word *flogging* there in verse 1 – most commentators agree that there were **3 levels** of a Roman scourge!

Minor offences – Major offences – Capital offences!

Now it's hard to know exactly **which one** of the 3 was being received by Jesus here **prior** to His crucifixion – many believe that this is probably the **minor** offences – and the **major** one happens subsequent to His **sentence** – verse 16!

Nevertheless, a Roman Scourging was among one of the **most horrific** forms of punishment to ever exist in Ancient Israel!

The victim would be **tied to an upright post** and stripped down naked **in order to expose** the sensitive parts of his back...

At which point the Roman executioner would grab his *flagellum* – **a specially designed whip** primarily fashioned **to accomplish** one thing:

Pain – Pain – and more pain!

Made from a specially designed leather – the *flagellum* had small pieces of **bone or metal** attached to the ends of the chords – so that when the soldier whipped their victims – **jagged pieces of bone** would claw into the back:

Ripping chunks of flesh out onto the floor and exposing parts of their organs!

It was horrific!

And whereas in the Old Testament – the Jews **had a limit** on the number of blows a victim was **legally allowed** to take:

According to Roman Law there was **no limit** of blows a victim could take!

The punishment would go until either the soldiers were exhausted – or the commanding officer intervened!

And in some cases the Roman Scourge was **so severe** that the individual **wouldn't even survive** – they would **often die** just prior to their crucifixion!

Mocked

And so history has **informed us** – that many of these Roman soldiers who carried out these floggings did this kind of this **so often** that they **actually became bored!**

They become so **de-sensitized** to the entire process that they actually came up with ways to **stop themselves** from becoming **bored!**

To **keep themselves** entertained – **they would often** turn these scourges into a public spectacle of drama – a kind of sick Roman play for their own sanity & entertainment!

Dressing their victims up & mocking them in the process!

And that's **what we see happening there** in verse 2:

The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and clothed Him in a purple robe. And they kept coming up to him and saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" and were slapping His face...

They were humiliating Him!

Now Matthew in his Gospel notes that the soldiers gave Jesus a reed at this point (imitating a royal sceptre) and they began coming up to Christ – spitting in His face – and slapping Him with the reed:

Hail King of the Jews

And so this entire process – was designed **NOT only** for pain – but to **humiliate** the Person & Work of Christ:

Jesus is mocked as **Prophet** – He is mocked as **Priest** – Mocked as a **King!**

And Pilate thinks that this will **be enough** to satiate these crowds!

Pathetic Man

We see that coming out in verse 4:

Pilate went outside again and said to them, “Look, I’m bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no grounds for charging Him...”

Now it’s hard to know **exactly how** Pilate thought that this flogging **would accomplish that** – because you don’t **typically treat** an innocent man this way!

You don’t typically beat Him half to death **in the hopes** of showing He’s innocent!

But we get a bit of a clue from **Luke’s Gospel** – because in Luke 23:16 Pilate says:

Therefore I will punish Him and release Him!

And so the idea here **seems to be** that Pilate would punish Jesus **in the hopes of:**

Nipping the problem in the bud!

Because a Roman scourging was a **strong deterrent** for any bad behaviour!

Verse 5:

*Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe and Pilate said to them, **here is the man***

Ecce Homo in the Latin!

It's a phrase that is designed to:

Overemphasizing the **humanity** of Jesus – while **underemphasizing** the **authority** of Jesus!

Pilate is wanting them to see that:

*Jesus claims to be a King **but in reality** is nothing more than a bloodied – beaten – bruised – mocked – stupid – and foolish man!*

Threatening – Don't be ridiculous!

All inspiring – don't be absurd!

A King ha– only a pathetic King!

Behold the man:

The bloodied man!

The pathetic man!

The ordinary man!

He's No threat to Rome – no threat to Jews!

*He's simply a pathetic man **who bleeds** like the rest of us!*

Behold the man!

Pilate's Frustration

So did it work?

Did Pilate's genius satiate the crowds?

Or has Pilate **once again** underestimated the depravity of the human heart – verse 6:

When the chief priests and the temple servants saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Verse 6:

So Pilate responded, "you take him and crucify Him, since I find no grounds for charging Him..."

He's given them Barabbas – he's now given them a **scourge** – he's given them His humiliation!

Like what more can these animals desire?!?!

What more could they want!

And we can see that Pilate is **getting frustrated** with these men – He's beginning **to lose patience** with this crowd!

Trumped up Charge

And **at the same time** the crowds are starting to grow **impatient** with him – verse 7:

So the Jews replied: we have a law and according to that law He ought to die, because He has made Himself the Son of God...

See in their **anger & frustration** against **Pilate & Jesus** they now begin to **modify the charges** – hoping that **this will now** tip him over the edge!

*And when Pilate heard this, he was even **more afraid than ever**...*

Even more afraid than ever!

Here we get an insight into the **vacillating nature** of Pilate's heart:

He's confident on the one hand – and cowering in the next!

Roman swagger for days – only to **have it stripped** from his hands in a single sentence!

And so this guy is **as fickle** as they come as John now tells us the source of his fear was that:

Jesus Christ claims to be the Son of God!

But why would that be such a terrifying claim for Jesus to make!

2 main fears

Well, we can't be certain but there are **2 possible reasons** for Pilate's reply here – 2 reasons why he was afraid!

First – there is a story recorded in **Philo & Josephus** [early **Jewish historians**] who record events where upon his introduction to office in 26 A.D. **Pilate brought** images of Caesar **into Jerusalem** for the people of that region to worship!

And knowing that the Jews are **mono-theistic** Pilate **in his obstinance** brought in these images – not giving a rip about how they would react!

And this obviously **infuriated the Jews** to such a degree that it almost caused a national revolt in the city of Jerusalem!

That is however **until he got word** from Tiberius Caesar himself [the Emperor of Rome] – commanding him to have those **images removed** immediately **lest he face** the wrath of the Roman leadership!

Those images almost caused a national Jewish uprising!

And Pilate's job is to keep the peace as the Roman governor – and so he's **already had 2 strikes** with the Emperor of Rome himself!

So it could be that these Jews are **using that event** to manipulate Pilate and saying to him:

*Remember that time you almost **lost your head** over something like this!*

The last time you put images up of a man who claimed to be the Son of God!

*Imagine how angry the Caesar is **going to be** when he finds that you are **NOT just tolerating** but releasing a man who claims to be the Son of God!*

*Do you really think that Caesar is **going to go easy** on you this time Pilate!*

So that could be the source of Pilate's fears!

Roman Superstition

But **more likely the case** is that Pilate himself is ultra-superstitious!

This is something that Andreas Köstenberger points out in his commentary on John – he says:

Although Roman officials may have been deeply cynical, they were often superstitious. In pagan ears, the designation title “son of god” conjured up notions of “divine men” believed to have enjoyed certain divine powers. Commonly enough the Pagans believed that “the gods had come down to us in human form” (Acts 14:11). And so if Jesus was in fact “a son of god” Pilate may have reasoned that he might incur the wrath of the gods for having Jesus flogged!

Silent Jesus

And so it seems to be that Pilate's initial fear of incurring the wrath of Caesar – is now **turning into panic** as he begins to think about:

Incurring the wrath of the Roman gods!

And in verse 8 this panic is palpable:

When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. And so he went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?”

Notice that the one who couldn’t care less about absolute truth **just a few verses ago** now all of a sudden...**is consumed** with knowing absolute truth!

How ironic!

That the one **who had just** stated:

What is truth!

Is now all of a sudden **seeking for answers** of absolute truth!

And even more surprising is the reply he gets in verse 9:

So Jesus remained silent and did not give him an answer!

Pilate asks **3 interrogating questions** and in reply Jesus remained absolutely silent for each:

Where are you from?

Do you refuse to speak to me?

Don’t you know that I have authority to crucify you?

And in **every single one** – Jesus remained silent:

And did NOT speak a word!

One pastor says:

*There was never a **more tortured** individual that **had met** Jesus Christ than Pontius Pilate!*

No one has ever been more tortured than Pontius Pilate in meeting Jesus' silence!

Jesus in Control

Pilate is now looking for truth at the behest of Jesus and Jesus looks at Pilate and says:

If you want the truth – the truth of the reality of today is simply this – verse 11:

*You would have no authority over me **at all** if it had not been given to you from above....*

You think that you're the King Pilate!

You think that you're the one who is in control!

I am the ultimate King of glory!

I am the one who is in control of every step I take!

I am the one who's controlling the path to glory!

I am **the one** who is fully in control of my very **own trial!**

The one fully in control of my very **own arrest!**

The one who is fully in control of the **sentencing** you give me here today!

Greater Sin

In fact, the reality is Pilate – that you're **NOT even a secondary player** in the trial of Jesus – that position **He says** belongs to Caiaphas' crew!

Evidenced by the phrase – that:

*There's is the **greater sin!***

Implying that:

There is a measure of sin that Pilate **is in!**

Pilate is acting sinfully!

He is acting unjustly!

And by **refusing to come to a decision** and – trying to **pass the buck**:

Jesus condemns **both Pilate** and **the Jews** for their wicked acts of treason!

Panic Mode

And the panic is starting to set in – verse 12:

So, from that moment on Pilate kept trying to release Jesus...

This is an ongoing continuous action in the Greek:

The idea here is that panic was **so frantic** that he wants to just give Jesus away!

Get Him. Off my hands!

Get Him out of my sight!

He's **NOT** just in a daze – He's now in **frantic** mode!

There is a man claiming to be God!

There is a man claiming to be King!

There is a man claiming a Kingdom!

A man claiming to have authority!

A man claiming I'm in sin!

A man claiming absolute truth!

And now I have a **violent mob of** Jewish leaders threatening to undo me and to take away my position as Governor!

I mean you can feel the panic of Pilate starting to set as:

Pilate is **literally watching** his **authority and power** slip away from his very hands!

What Sin does

What a terrible place to be friends – what a terrifying reality for him!

To know the right thing – to know the right decision to make – but to be **so fearful** of what other people will think – that you cannot **find it in yourself** to do the right thing!

And this is what sin does friends – this is what sin does:

Sin always robs us of our ability to live for Jesus – it compels us & controls us to the whims of men – and it makes **obedience difficult** & sin easy!

And for someone like Pilate – the known **narcissistic ruler** to be in that kind of a position – I mean this must have been:

The ultimate blow to his political pride!

NO King

And so like a wounded puppy who's just lost the battle of his life – **Pilate is now forced** to make his final decision in verse 13:

So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. Sat down on the judge's seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha).² Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, "Here is your king!"

But they shouted, "Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!"

So Pilate said to them, shall I crucify your king?

*And the chief Priests replied – **notice this:***

We have no king but Caesar

Friends they are the ones who have **just condemned Jesus** calling Him a **blasphemer of God** and yet **here they are** blaspheming their creator and crying out:

We have no King but Caesar!

Gideon had said to them back in the book of Judges chapter 8:

The LORD will rule over you...

In Isaiah 43 God Himself says:

*I am the LORD, the holy one, Israel's Creator, **your King!***

Isaiah 44 verse 6:

*Thus says the LORD, **the King of Israel:** I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god...*

² Gab-Baitha literally means "the ridge of the house". The most common interpretation of Gabbatha is that it refers to a raised or elevated area, possibly a platform or pavement where Roman officials, like Pilate, would sit when issuing judgments. This suggests that it was a place of prominence, symbolizing the authority of the Roman government.

And yet **here they are** – blaspheming their God and crying:

Caesar is our ruler!

O friends Sin does some very evil things to the human heart!

They have rejected their Creator – they have rejected their God – they have rejected their messiah:

And now they have put a Roman gentile in the place of Him!

And in so doing they have called down the wrath of a Holy God!

And in fact **it's at this point** in **Matthew's Gospel** that Pilate **attempts to wash his hands** of Jesus' blood – Matthew 27:24:

*So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather a riot was beginning to take place, so he took the water and washed his hands **before the crowd**, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, He delivered Him over to be crucified...*

This is the story of John 19...

This is the story of our God and King!

3 Things

3 things that I want us to see from this text – as we come away from this horrendously dark yet glorious scene – here's what I want us to behold:

Behold the Man!

Behold the King!

Behold our God!

In verse 5 we see the famous phrase Ecce Homo:

Behold the Man!

Verse 5:

*So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe And Pilate said to them,
Behold the man*

He was **truly** man!

He **wasn't** half **God** and half **man**!

He **wasn't** partly God – and **partly** man!

He was **fully** God – and **fully** man!

He **was** **truly** God – and truly **man**!

He was a **real** person – a real human being!

With real human organs!

And a nervous system that could **feel pain**!

And **experience pain**!

With a torn back and torn side!

And Pilate here **speaks far better** than what He really knows because John explains to us in John chapter 1 that:

*The word **became flesh** – the eternal Word – the eternal Logos – that God took on **human flesh**!*

Notice that **it doesn't say:**

*And the Word **assumed** flesh – or the Word **put on** flesh...*

Taking to Himself **the appearances** of Flesh!

He didn't **masquerade around** as flesh; He did not **pretend to be** flesh...

But rather:

He **became** flesh!

That is – **without ceasing to be God** the Word **added to His deity** that which He **did NOT Possess** formally!

Remaining what **He WAS** – He **BECAME** what He was not:

By taking to Himself a FULLY HUMAN NATURE!

So that nothing **that was true of Him** back in John chapter 1 **ceases to be true of Him** here in John 19!

Deity was **NOT** subtracted from Him – Humanity **was added** to Him!

And that flesh – that man – that God dwelt among us!

On this earth!

With this flesh!

*And we have **seen** His glory!*

*We **beheld** His glory!*

*We **touched** Him!*

*We **felt** Him!*

*We **saw** Him!*

*We **heard** Him!*

This is **NOT** something that was theory – this is reality!

And it's always stunning to me to consider that when John **uses that word** *flesh* in John 1 – He **could have used** a number of words **relating to** humanity!

He could have said:

And the Word became a body [Soma] – so that the Word became a human person/body!

John could have said:

And the Word became Anthropos – that is man...taking on properties like hair, teeth, eyes, legs!

But he didn't do that!

John uses this **highly provocative/ highly offensive** Greek expression SARX because John **wanted to make sure** that his readers understood the offensiveness of this **nature**!

He wasn't just a human person with flesh & bones & teeth & sinew & skin, & blood ... but flesh in the sense of:

A FULLY HUMAN NATURE!

With **all of** the creaturely weaknesses that accompany it!

Human frailty – Human weakness – Human vulnerability!

Human temptation!

He had to be made fully like us:

IN EVERY WAY possible!

YET WITHOUT SIN!

Behold the man!

The second Man!

The second Adam!

The one made flesh!

And He's suffering

BEHOLD THE MAN!

King

Second:

Behold the King

In verse 14 Pilate brings Jesus out to the Jews and says:

Behold your King

This is the King!

This is our King!

The Sovereign King!

The Heavenly King!

The transcendent King!

The one before whom **all creation bows** in submission!

The before whom **creation is upheld** by the power of His word!

The one **who John records** as being **with** the Father!

And **in** the Father!

And **that's the one** who is **standing there** before them!

That King!

That God!

That Lord of glory is there!

Crown

And what is He doing?!?!

He's standing there **with a crown!**

This is a coronation ceremony!

And John wants us to **see the crown** – because it **harkens back to Creation!**

To the fall

To Genesis!

Remember John's **favourite book** of the bible is the book of Genesis!

And so much of his Gospel **centres around** Genesis & echoing the themes found in Genesis:

Light and Dark!

Good and Bad!

Faith & Fear!

Water and Word!

Bread & Wine!

Sabbath & Rest!

All of these themes that are connected to Genesis

And right at the centre of it all is **the curse!**

Thorns

And remember how **His Gospel started:**

In the beginning was the Word!

And the Word was with God!

And the Word was God!

And how does Genesis chapter 1 begin:

In the beginning God!

See John wants us to understand – that this crown of thorns is **where it all began!**

In Genesis chapter 3 Adam and Eve fell into sin!

And **the result** of their rebellion was:

Thorns and thistles

Coming up upon them and choking out their work!

And so this crown of thorns is a **symbol** of the **curse**!

It's a **symbol** of our **sin**!

A symbol of man's rebellion!

And John is wanting us to see this:

The King who created the world:

He bears our Sin!

He takes our curse!

He wears our shame!

He bears our guilt!

BEHOLD THE KING!

Substitute

And then finally:

Behold our God

John alludes in chapter 18 to the **custom of the Jews** where:

They would release one man at the time of Passover!

And the man being released that year was Barabbas!

Barr – Abbas.

Barr meaning *son* like – Simon **bar** Jonah, or Simon, **son of** Jonah!

And Abba meaning *Father*

So literally Barabbas' name means:

A son of the father

Which could be a descriptive nickname for a mischievous kid whose family always said, *He's just like his father...*

But more likely **in this culture** it was a term of respect for someone whose dad was a notable Rabbi!

This was a common surname in the Rabbinical class—"Son of the father," meaning the Rabbi's son...

And many have said that Barabbas **actually came from** notable stock – or a respectable family!

In any case what John is communicating here is the idea of **2 Sons** – both being Sons of a father:

One was the spotless – sinless – Stainless – flawless **perfect Son** of God!

The other was a notable – evil – wicked – malicious son of a Rabbi!

Substitute

And Barabbas is standing next to Jesus thinking that the crowd is going to crucify him for his villainous crimes – but instead they end up:

Crucifying Jesus and letting Barabbas go!

And in the words of Phil Johnson:

*Here then is a **vivid, living illustration** of the principle of penal substitutionary atonement. Christ **literally died** in Barabbas' place – on a cross meant for Barabbas – taking the punishment that Barabbas did deserve – while Barabbas himself went free...*

Now that **doesn't** mean that Barabbas had true & saving faith – but what it **does mean** is that in a **true & literal** sense – **Barabbas** was the first person that could actually say:

Jesus Christ died for [my] sins – He died on my cross!

In a **literal** and **physical** sense Christ had taken His place and Barabbas the guilty/filthy criminal goes free!

And if he is **NOT** a flesh-and-blood symbol of the good news of the gospel friends – then:

Nothing else is!

J.C Ryle says:

Great is the contrast between the first Adam and the second – our first father Adam was guilty and tried to excuse himself – the second Adam was guiltless and yet made no defence at all...

He willingly took our place in His body on that tree!

PSA

I actually heard an illustration this week about this scene that I had **never really** thought about!

The praetorium (Pilate's palace) is standing no more than about 1500 feet away from the **Tower of Antonia**:

The place where Barabbas is being held as a prisoner awaiting his final execution!

And so during **Pilate's negotiations** with these Jews – it's most likely that Barabbas can only hear **one side** of the conversation!

He cannot hear what Pilate is saying to the Jews – but **in all likelihood** he probably **could hear** what the crowd is **shouting back** to Pilate!

So keep that in mind as I read for you Matthew 27 verses 21 to 25 – keeping in mind that Barabbas can only hear **one side** of the conversation:

Pilate: *Which of the two do you want me to release for you?*

Crowd: *Barabbas!*

Pilate: *What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?*

Crowd: *Crucify Him!*

Pilate: *Why what has He done wrong?*

Crowd: *Crucify Him!*

Pilate: *I'm washing my hands – His blood be on you!*

Crowd: *Let His blood be on us and on our children!*

Now what does Barabbas hear?

All he hears is this:

Barabbas – crucify him – Barabbas – crucify him – his blood be on us and on our children!

And **10 minutes later** the key to his cell is being unlocked – and he's being led down the halls to his crucifixion!

Only to find that **when he gets there** there's another man **standing in His place!**

A Messiah!
 A King!
 A substitute!
 Who is bloodied!
 And beaten!
 And battered!
 And bruised!

And Barabbas the criminal goes free!

He's let go!

And Jesus dies!

Main Point

It's the Good News of the gospel friends – the good news of the gospel and the **main point** that I want us to see here today:

Jesus Christ the King, becomes a curse for me, while I the guilty sinner, have pardon and go free!

That's the Good News of the Gospel friends!

That's the reason we're here!

And it's what we sing **for all eternity!**

Behold the man!
 Behold the King!
 Behold our God!

He's our King!
 He's our Lamb!
 He's our substitute!
 And He's beautiful!

John 19:1-16

Discussion Questions

[Read John 19:1-16].

Main Point: *Jesus Christ the King, becomes a curse for me, while I the guilty sinner, have pardon and go free!*

Q1. [Read 18:38; 19:4; 6]. Why do you think Pilate, despite knowing Jesus' innocence, allowed Him to be crucified? – How do power, politics, and fear influence people's moral decisions today?

Q2. Reflect on Pilate's internal struggle with what to do with Jesus. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose between what is right and what was expedient? – What was your final decision, and how did it impact you spiritually?

Q3. How should Christians make hard choices/decisions for Jesus? – What does this passage teach us about people who try to remain neutral for Christ?

Q4. The crowd chooses Barabbas over Jesus, releasing a murderer while condemning an innocent man. What does this reveal about the condition of the human heart and how sin can blind people to the truth?

Q5. What does the crowd's cry, "*We have no king but Caesar*" (John 19:15), reveal about their spiritual state? – How do we sometimes place earthly leaders or values above our loyalty to Christ in our lives today?

Q6. In verse 9, when Pilate asks Jesus where He is from, Jesus remained silent. Why do you think Jesus chose silence at this moment? – What does His silence teach us about His control over the situation and His submission to God's will?

Q7. Jesus tells Pilate, *"You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above"* (John 19:11). What does this say about God's sovereignty over human affairs, even in unjust situations? – How does this truth deepen your understanding of the cross?

Q8. How does the picture of Barabbas inform your understanding of the gospel? – Does this event have any bearing on the concept of Penal Substitutionary Atonement – why or why not?

Penal Substitutionary Atonement – *The belief that Jesus, as a sinless substitute, took the punishment for humanity's sin, satisfying God's justice and allowing for reconciliation [Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21].*