

Last Days of Jesus

Friday | Day of Crucifixion | John 19:16 – 30

Sermon Discussion Guide

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STUDY NOTES

Bearing His own cross (v.17). As a part of the humiliation before crucifixion, condemned prisoners had to carry at least the crossbar of the cross to the site of their execution, where the vertical bars were normally permanently installed.

Pilate also wrote an inscription (v.19). There is not evidence that this was a normal practice, although some prisoners were required to wear signs listing their crimes around their necks.



Open your small group with prayer.

John R. W. Stott in *The Cross of Christ* asked why the cross emerged as the symbol of Christ. Why did the early Christians not choose the symbol of a crib where he was born, or a boat where he preached, or the towels with which he washed dirty feet, or the stone rolled away from the tomb where he rose? Stott answers that while Jesus' birth and life and preaching and resurrection are all vital, it is his crucifixion that is absolutely central to knowing him. Here in John 19 we see Jesus' cross as the greater divider between belief and unbelief.

1. What modern symbol of execution would have similar impact to the cross in the first century?

Read John 19:16 – 30.

¹⁶So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

¹⁷They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

¹⁸There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. ¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

²⁰Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." ²⁵Therefore the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

STUDY NOTES

Hebrew, Latin and Greek (v.20).

These were the three common languages of the area. Jews from outside of Palestine would not necessarily have been able to read Aramaic (the local language of that area, nor Latin (the official language of the Roman empire), but all would have known Greek since that was the common trade language.

To fulfill the Scripture. Psalm 22:18 is in view. This phrase is also used in John 18:9, 32 and 19:28, 36 to express how the words of Jesus or the Old Testament came to fulfillment in the events of the crucifixion. This intent is not to say that Jesus manipulated events so that these things would occur, but that, as a matter of fact, they did occur in such a way that proved the prophecies true.

The disciple whom he loved (26). It appears that by this time Joseph Mary's husband, was dead. As the oldest son, Jesus would have assumed the responsibility of caring for his mother. In John 13:23, we have the first mention of the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is assumed that this is a reference to John, to whom this Gospel is credited. This title does not need to mean that Jesus loved him more than the others, but that his identity was defined by the reality of Jesus' love for him.

Sour wine (v.29). This was cheap wine. It was probably on the scene for the entertainment of the soldiers as they waited for the process of the crucifixion to accomplish its course. It would have done little for thirst, and its bitterness would have been symbolic of the overall bitterness.

2. What strikes you most about this passage?
3. In John 19:17 – 18 John uses very few words to describe the physical act of crucifixion. Do you think it was because of the cruel nature of crucifixion or that the crucifixion was a familiar kind of execution? Do you think there could have been another reason? If so, what?
4. Why do you think Pilate had the notice placed on the cross? What was the notice? How would it have changed in meaning if Pilate had been persuaded by the chief priests to write what they wanted? What did they want written? Yet how can we see this statement Pilate wrote in an ironic statement of truth about Jesus (see John 18:36)?
5. The soldier's gambling (John 19:24) seems like a small detail. But here and in John 19:28 and 36 John sees the crucifixion as fulfilling Old Testament Scripture (Psalm 22:18). What significance does this give to Jesus death?
6. Three groups were involved in Jesus' death – the soldiers, the Jewish Leaders and Pilate. How would you characterize each one's attitude toward Jesus?
7. In what ways do their attitudes toward Jesus parallel those of men and women today?
8. Besides the soldiers, who else was standing near the cross? Where were Jesus' disciples during his crucifixion? (John 16:32)

Given Jesus' mother's faith in him at the outset of his public ministry (2:3 – 5), what must she be feeling now at the end? Why is Old Testament prophecy about Jesus' death (Ex 12:46; Zech 12:10) so important in this chapter?
9. It has been said that Jesus' cry "It is finished" (John 19:30) was a shout of triumph, not a cry of resignation. What had Jesus finished?
10. What does that mean for you? (See John 1:29 and John 17:1 – 4)
11. In what way does the cross of Christ become a dividing line between belief and unbelief. Who in this section is on the side of belief, and who is on the side of unbelief? Explain.
12. In the story, whose lives were changed most by Jesus' death? How has your life been changed by Jesus Christ?