

The Word Became Flesh
(Week 58)
John 19:1-16
“By His Stripes...”

Introduction

He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed. **Isaiah 53:5b (NKJV)**

For over two thousand years now the debate over who was actually responsible for the murdered The Savior has been raging. Some say it was the Romans who caused His death. While it is true that he was sentenced to die by Pontius Pilate and executed on a Roman cross, Rome alone does not bear the burden for Jesus' death.

Others have argued that the nation of Israel is responsible. And this has actually been used at times to fuel the anti-Semitism that is so prevalent in the world. The fact is... that while the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin lead by Caiaphas the High Priest were instrumental in handing Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified, it is unfair to say that the entire nation of Israel was responsible. After all, it was Jews who wrote *The New Testament*. It was Jews who first believed in Christ and began to spread the gospel in the first place. If it weren't for the nation of Israel my friends, we, The Church, would have never come into existence.

Anti-Semitism has always been rampant in this wicked world, for one reason and one reason only: The Jews are God's chosen people. And God promised Abraham, their patriarch that He would always protect him.

I will make you into a great nation.
I will bless you.
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you.
I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt.
and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. **Genesis 12:2-3**

So you see, anti-Semitism is not only misguided, it is foolishness. For God has never made a promise that He has not or will not keep. To despise or persecute the descendants of Abraham in any way is to call a curse down upon your own head. Let's not forget that our Savior Himself was a Jew. He descended in His humanity from Abraham. And this is exactly what God meant when He said that **“all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you (Abraham).”** Thank God for His chosen people, Israel, for it is through them that we have been blessed with the grace and forgiveness of God.

So, bearing all this in mind, who then is responsible for the death of Christ? Answer: We are! For it is our sins that caused the Sacrifice of The Son to be necessary. **“He was wounded for OUR transgressions.”** If we should wonder who is solely responsible for The Cross, my friends, we need look no further than the mirror. We are the guilty ones, you and I. Our sins nailed Him there!

As we continue to study John's narrative with the trials and subsequent execution of The Savior, we can clearly see how He was wrongly accused, wrongly tried, and wrongly punished. But all of it was according to God's plan. **For God so loved... (John 3:16).** Everything that happened to The Son was predestined by The Father. And it was done for us. Today we will study together the first measure of Christ's suffering as narrated by John the beloved disciple. We see the Scourging, The Son of God, and The Sentencing.

The Scouring (vs. 1-5)

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. Pilate went outside again and said to them, "Look, I'm bringing Him out to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging Him." Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is The Man!"

Do not miss the truth of what took place that day. Pilate examined Jesus and found him innocent of any crime, then had him beaten none the less. Even by Roman law this was an illegal act. So why would Pilate do such a thing? He was trying to find a compromise. He wanted to keep the peace in Jerusalem, so he had hoped to appease the Jewish council by having Jesus beaten. His hopes were that the sight of Jesus after he was brutalized by the Roman guards would have a chilling effect upon the mob and their bloodlust would be satiated.

Pilate's hopes were dashed upon the rocks when he saw that the beating Jesus received that day had the exact opposite effect. It only caused the mob to hunger for more bloodshed. How wicked were these men that the visage of The Savior's torn flesh wasn't enough for them. They would settle for nothing less than His death.

Scouring in Rome was as brutal as can be imagined in the worst of nightmares. The Jews had a law that limited all scouring to a maximum of 40 lashes. So, in order not to exceed the limit by way of a miscount, all prisoners who were to be struck with the whip would receive thirty-nine lashes (forty minus one). The Romans however, had no such restriction. When they beat a prisoner, the torture would continue until the soldiers either grew weary of using the lash or their commanding officer ordered a halt to the proceedings.

Rome's normal weapon of choice for such punishment was flagellation whip commonly known as "the cat of nine tails". It had a wooden handle with nine strips of leather that extended from the handle. At the end of each strip there were metal hooks or pieces of bone attached. The instrument was designed to not only stripe the victim upon impact, but to tear loose the flesh when the whip was retrieved after each blow. The victim of such punishment was often left with bone, as well as, internal organs exposed and bleeding by the time the scouring was over. Many didn't survive, and those who did were left horribly scarred for the rest of their lives.

After Jesus was beaten by the soldiers they placed a crown of thorns upon his head and draped a scarlet soldiers cloak over His shoulders and mockingly hailed as "King of the Jews" which was intended not only as an insult to The Savior, but to His race as well. The Romans despised the Jewish people with a passion, and this to the guards, was yet another opportunity to ridicule the people that they so despised.

Pilate had Jesus brought out and put on display before the angry mob, once again declaring His innocence. And once more they shouted for Him to be executed. Perhaps it was the robe and crown that caused their bloodlust to swell exponentially. Whatever the reason, there was not even the slightest bit of compassion for the unrecognizable figure Who now stood before them. Their visceral hatred for God's Only Begotten Son juxtaposed against their pious religiosity and self-righteousness is to say the least... disgusting. But we must never forget that all of this was God's redemptive plan for us.

"Yet The LORD was pleased to crush Him severely. When you make Him a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, and by His hand, The LORD'S pleasure will be accomplished. After His anguish He will see light and be satisfied."
Isaiah 53:10-11a

So when you read of the cruel and unjust scouring that Christ received, just remember that it is **by His STRIPES that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5)**.

The Son of God (vs. 6-12)

When the chief priests and the temple servants saw Him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!” Pilate responded, “Take Him and crucify Him yourselves, since I find no grounds for charging Him.”

We have a law,” the Jews replied to him, “and according to that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”

When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus did not give him an answer. So Pilate said to Him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?” “You would have no authority over Me at all,” Jesus answered him, “if it hadn’t been given you from above. This is why the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin.”

From that moment Pilate kept trying to release Him. But the Jews shouted, “If you release this Man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!”

The Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin had been so very careful to try and paint The LORD as a seditionist against Rome. But when they saw that Pilate was wont to drop the charges, in their zeal to see Jesus executed, they blurted out their real motive; Jesus had claimed to be God! This to these religious zealots was tantamount to blasphemy. So the charges were religious in nature after all. When Pilate heard these words from the Jews, he was terrified. For his wife had already warned him that she had suffered a frightful dream concerning this man from Nazareth. She warned her husband to stay clear of the entire proceeding.

While he was sitting on the judge’s bench, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I have suffered terribly in a dream because of Him.” **Matthew 27:19**

This warning from his wife coupled with the knowledge that Jesus had claimed to be The Son of God struck a deep fear in the very heart of Pilate. He took Jesus back inside and asked Him where He came from. Now Pilate did not subscribe to the Jewish notion of One True God, but as a Roman he most certainly believed in a plethora of gods. The thought that Christ might be one of them was disconcerting to say the least. Pilate wanted answers. Jesus had already told the procurator that He was not of this world. And this was all the information on the matter that He would to share. He refused to answer Pilate’s inquiries as to His identity any further. For The Savior knew to explain further would simply be a waste of time. He was well aware of what Pilate would ultimately do... and He knew it from before the foundation of the world.

Pilate demanded an answer by way of a threat. He tried to intimidate The LORD by reminding Him that His very life was in the governor’s hands. Jesus calmly reminded Pilate that he had no authority over Him whatsoever. His Father had all authority. Pilate was merely a pawn on a chessboard, and all the pieces were moving in accordance with the Master’s plan. This answer must have terrified Pilate all the more. For he tried once again to extricate himself from the proceedings. He went to the crowd and declared Christ’s innocence a final time.

The response from the crowd was to accuse Pilate of treason. They accused him of being disloyal to Caesar. Now the governor had been officially painted into a corner. He had already been warned from his superiors in Rome that another uprising would not be tolerated. Now if these religious zealots went over his head and accused him of aiding and abetting an enemy of the state... well that

would spell the end for him. Pilate refused to take that chance. In that moment he chose the fleeting pleasures of this world over the righteousness of Christ. It is a decision that lost and dying men make every day. Pilate chose the temporal over the eternal. He had tried so hard to find a compromise. To hold onto this world and somehow not alienate himself from the divine at the same time. But there can be no such compromise in this life. One must choose Christ or live with the consequences. For:

Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the Name of The One and Only Son of God. **John 3:18**

The Sentencing (vs. 13-16)

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge's seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha). It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, "Here is your King!" They shouted, "Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your King?" "We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered. Then he handed Him over to be crucified.

After making several attempts to extricate himself from the matter, even going so far as offering to allow the Jewish leaders to take Jesus to execute Him themselves, Pilate brought The Messiah outside to the stone courtyard, where there was an official "judgment seat" in order to pass sentence on the accused. The Hebrews called the place "Gabbatha", which literally means "house on high". Pilate assumed his place on the judgment seat and after declaring the LORD "not guilty", he proceeded to sentence Jesus to death by crucifixion in order to placate the mob. According to Matthew the final exchange between he and the Sanhedrin was of profound significance.

Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?" They all answered, "Crucify Him!" Then he said, "Why? What has He done wrong?" But they kept shouting all the more, "Crucify Him!" When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves." **Matthew 27:22-24**

And with that, The Son of God was judged and condemned to die on a cross.

The irony of this entire story is that one day everyone will stand before the judgment seat at heaven's throne, the ultimate "house on high". And there, once and for all, every man shall be judged according to their works. We will be there to see Caiaphas, as well as, Pilate himself stand before this Great White Throne of judgment (**Revelation 20:11-15**). They will be found guilty. And their Judge shall be this very same Christ that they once condemned to die. He was innocent, and yet He was crucified. They will be found guilty and shall be eternally condemned to hell. And the sad truth is they could have been forgiven for their crimes, if they had but answered Pilate's last question correctly:

"What should I do then with Jesus, Who is called Christ?"

The correct answer is simple:

If you confess with your mouth that 'Jesus is LORD', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **Romans 10:9**

Be certain that you answer this question correctly, for your very life depends upon it.

Let the believers say... TRUTH!!