



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 19:1-7 Commentary **New Revised Standard Version**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 19:1) Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

The high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, conducted a mock trial of Jesus. They had already decided to murder Jesus; so, they brought forward false witnesses against Him to convict Him of a crime against their law. Then, they took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, for Pilate to sentence Jesus to death by crucifixion according to Roman law. Hoping to satisfy the Jewish leaders with a punishment less than death, Pilate ordered Jesus to be flogged.

The Jewish law stated specifically how the Jews were to execute someone convicted of a serious crime, but only after a legal trial with two or more truthful witnesses. Leviticus 24:14 reads: "Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands on his head, and let the whole congregation stone him." One requirement for a legal trial was the testimony of two witnesses who knew that if they lied about what they heard or saw that God would punish them for their sin. The fear of God's punishment for telling lies kept many from lying. Obviously, neither the priests nor their false witnesses feared God or that God would punish them

for lying and murder. The second requirement was a just sentence according to the Law of God. The Law of God stated that a blasphemer was to be stoned outside the camp after the two witnesses placed their hands on the head of the criminal. “Outside the camp” would be “outside the city of Jerusalem.” Placing their hands on the head of the person sentenced to die would indicate that the witnesses had told the truth on penalty of death.

The religious leaders did not always follow their own laws regarding a just trial and a just punishment. Later, in a rush to judgment, the religious leaders and people stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr, to death without a legal trial (Acts 7:56-60).

Unsuccessfully, the religious leaders tried twice to stone Jesus to death without a trial. In John 8:58-59, we read: “Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” And in John 10:30-33, when Jesus said, “‘The Father and I are one.’ The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?’ The Jews answered, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.’” The priests and Pharisees could not successfully stone Jesus (Jesus always easily escaped) because to fulfill the prophecies in the Old Testament, the Messiah, “The King of the Jews,” could not be stoned to death. The Messiah that God promised to send them had to die by hanging from a tree (hanging convicted criminals on a wooden cross was the preferred method of Roman execution). Not knowing the Scriptures or that they were fulfilling the Scriptures, the religious leaders arranged for the prophecies to be fulfilled by following their own evil designs to have Jesus crucified (the most shameful and painful form of death). In Galatians 3:13, the Apostle Paul quoted Deuteronomy 21:23, and wrote: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’”

(John 19:2) And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe.

The soldiers probably flogged Jesus with a whip that had several ends to which bits of rock or metal were tied to bruise and break the skin. They wove a crown of thorns and pressed it upon His head, which would have resulted in much pain and bleeding. The crown probably covered Jesus' head entirely and was not a carefully woven circlet. They put a purple robe that symbolized royalty upon His back, a robe they probably borrowed from one of their commanders. Later, when the robe was torn from Him, the dried, bloody wounds would have reopened and have bled profusely again. Jesus would have shed much blood before they crucified Him.

(John 19:3) They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face.

The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus and the Jews by calling Jesus “King of the Jews” as they whipped and beat Him. Each time they struck His face and head, the thorns from His crown would dig deeper into His skin. To strike Jesus on the face was to intentionally insult Him. Jesus could have easily defended himself, but Jesus practiced what He taught in Matthew 5:38-39, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.’” Jesus went through this abuse and mockery to suffer and die as a sacrifice for our sins, to demonstrate the love, justice, and mercy of God in the forgiveness of sinners, and to save from sin and death all who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, God the Father returned His true kingly crown and divine authority to Jesus.

(John 19:4) Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.”

Pilate then brought Jesus out to face the religious leaders and the crowd. For the second time, Pilate declared that he could find no case or legal evidence that Jesus had committed a crime, for Jesus had not broken any

Roman laws. Perhaps respecting Jesus' answers, intelligence, and royal demeanor when unjustly accused of a crime by those demanding His death, Pilate may have hoped that the cruel beating would satisfy Jesus' bloodthirsty enemies. Pilate must have at least respected the courage and humbleness of Jesus though dressed in mockery and savagely beaten by his soldiers. Pilate believed that Jesus had suffered enough, but the religious leaders would not be satisfied with anything less than Jesus' death. The crowd, bitterly disappointed that Jesus had not used His miraculous powers to overthrow their brutal Roman oppressors, probably felt that Jesus had deceived them and deserved punishment as their chief priests encouraged them to seek Jesus' crucifixion.

(John 19:5) So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

One can only imagine the pain and suffering of Jesus up to this point, and the shock of His disfigured appearance before the chief priests and the crowds of onlookers. Dressed as a king with a purple robe, wearing a crown of thorns, humiliated by the Roman guards, and covered with blood Jesus did not fulfill the expectations of a hopeful crowd who looked for a conquering hero Messiah. Jesus had called himself the Son of Man, and Jesus was surely "a man" to suffer as He did and remain truly kingly before those who hated Him. As the Son of God, Jesus suffered and died as no mere man could possibly do. Pilate saw something in Jesus that would eventually cause him to become "more afraid than ever" (see John 19:8).

(John 19:6) When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him."

Not satisfied with Jesus' suffering up to this point, the chief priests and people cried out for Jesus to suffer more punishment. Their leaders encouraged the crowd to shout, "Crucify him!" For the third time, Pilate emphasized again that Jesus had not done anything wrong according to Roman law and in his own judgment as a Roman governor. He declared that Jesus was no threat to Rome or the emperor. He told them that if they were so determined to kill Jesus that they could crucify Jesus themselves.

Jesus' eventual crucifixion fulfilled Scripture: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (see Galatians 3:13 & Deuteronomy 21:23).

(John 19:7) The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Unable to convince Pilate that Jesus was a threat to Rome as a lawbreaker, the Jewish leaders finally admitted that Jesus had only broken a religious law according to their interpretation.

The Bible teaches that Jesus did not break any of their laws, because He only told them the truth. Jesus is the Person that He told them He was. Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy as you or I would be if we claimed to be "I Am." Through faith in Jesus, believers in Him are adopted children of God; they are not God. As we have seen, the Jews wanted Jesus dead because He threatened their power and wealth. But Jesus never sinned. Jesus made no false claims or gave false testimony. During three years of public ministry Jesus proved He was the Messiah. Only the true Son of God could have done all that He did and teach what He taught as He faced increasingly dangerous opposition from those in power. Only the Son of God could always faithfully practice what He preached and suffer as He did for sinners rather than try to strike back and hurt His enemies. The Apostle Paul explained in Romans 5:7-10, "Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life." After the chief priests told Pilate that Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate decided to question Jesus once again, but Pilate did not want to become involved in what he determined was really only a religious matter instead of a political matter or a serious threat that should concern Rome. To crucify Jesus, the religious leaders had to change Pilate's mind.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did Pilate tell the Roman soldiers to do to Jesus? What did they do to Jesus?
2. What did the Roman soldiers call Jesus? How were they wrong when they spoke the truth?
3. What did Pilate tell the Jews after he brought Jesus out to the religious leaders? How did Jesus look when Pilate brought Him out?
4. What did the religious leaders want done with Jesus and why?
5. Who had Jesus claimed to be that infuriated the chief priests?

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