

Gospel of John Study Session 34

In our last session we saw that Jesus led His disciples to a place known as the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas Iscariot revealed Himself as Jesus' betrayer and led the party of those who were sent by the Jewish high priest to arrest Jesus. After this, Jesus was led away to Annas, the former high priest and father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas, for questioning. It was during this questioning where Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. The mockery of justice continued by Jesus being taken to Caiaphas who delivered Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The Jews needed Pilate to sentence Jesus to death, as they were unable to do so themselves. On the other hand, Pilate saw, no guilt in Jesus and became aware that something was suspicious in the Jews charges against this man. So while the Jews hoped that Pilate would just rubber stamp their verdict on Jesus and grant them the crucifixion they so wanted, Pilate, wanting to exercise his authority and ego, decided to hold a new hearing concerning this man named Jesus. The last session ended at the front end of this new hearing by Pilate and Pilate was in the process of antagonizing and attempting to humiliate the Jewish leaders by encouraging them to mete out whatever justice they wanted upon Jesus knowing well that they could not kill Him.

In this session we will examine the rest of the hearing of Jesus' case before Pilate. We will clearly see multiple attempts by Pilate to release and exonerate Jesus but the hatred of the Jews will not allow it. This will lead to Jesus being crucified.

1. Jesus' trial before Pilate

[John 18:33-40]

Pilate was puzzled by the Jews' attitude and withdrew to his audience chamber and had Jesus summoned to him.

Q: What was Pilate's first question to Jesus? (*v.33 - Are you the King of the Jews? The tone of the Greek is emphatic and puts the question in a rather sarcastic manner, "So, You are the King of the Jews, are You?!"*)

Pilate didn't trust the Jewish priests but he also didn't see Jesus looking like a belligerent rebel but rather someone who was calm, even when facing crucifixion. He was having trouble reconciling the character of Jesus with the charges leveled against Him.

Q: How does Jesus reply to the question of Pilate? (*v. 34 - Did others put you up to asking this or is this your own question? This reply irritated Pilate as he was used to getting answers, not being given challenges. The fact that Pilate had shown enough interest in Jesus to hold a private hearing gave Jesus the opportunity to ascertain if Pilate was curious of his own volition or was purely acting as a puppet of the Jewish council.*)

Q: What is the second question Pilate asks Jesus? (*v.35 - What have You done? Notice that Pilate is indignant with Jesus' reply. By saying, I am not a Jew, he is telling Jesus that he has no interest in the outcome of this trial personally. He is not satisfied with the charges of the Sanhedrin but there must be something behind their hatred of this man. Maybe it was something*

Pilate could use to further frustrate the Jews down the road.)

Jesus' reply in v.36 gives us the nature of Jesus' kingship. By answering this way, Jesus raises the horizon or scope of His claims from that of being some local pretender to a universal ruler. Yet, it bewildered Pilate as Jesus claimed His kingdom was not of this world. He had no military support and did not claim sovereignty over any one geographical location. His men did not fight when captured and abandoned Him when He was arrested. He didn't deny the term "king" but it was a different kingdom that Pilate had ever encountered. Pilate could not see Jesus intending to threaten the Roman throne.

This answer also clarifies the nature of Jesus' reign for the Jews of the dispersion who John was writing this gospel for in the first place. If Jesus is to be believed, then they needed to know the nature of His reign. His kingdom is not of this world. Though He was the Messiah, this appearance of Jesus in human history would not reveal Him as the conquering king the Jews expected but rather as the sacrificial lamb of God.

Q: What did Jesus say was His purpose for coming into this world? *(v.37 - to testify of the truth)*

Q: What do people who are of the truth all have in common? *(v.37 - they hear Jesus' voice- they hear the Word of God and the implication is that they follow the Word of God. Jesus had just revealed His true identity to Pilate. King of the Jews and King from another world to bring the truth to mankind. The principle way new subjects are brought into Jesus' kingdom is by disseminating the truth, not physical conquest. Only those who are rightly related to Jesus' witness of the truth are citizens of His kingdom. Based upon this, when we hear a lost person understanding some truth, then we know God is at work in their hearts to some degree.)*

Q: What is Pilates' response to Jesus' self-disclosure? *(v.38 - He said, "What is truth?" Here's the rub on this one. The grammar is ambiguous and this makes it very difficult to interpret. Was Pilate speaking scornfully, facetiously, impatiently, despairingly, or sincerely - we just don't know for sure but due to his abrupt departure, it was probably cynical or a quick response to end the conversation admitting he didn't know the truth of the situation. What we do know is that Pilate understood Jesus answer of "Yes I am a King" to really mean "No, I am not a king in a political sense that would endanger the Empire.")*

All we do know for sure is that Pilate's next move is to immediately clear Jesus of any crime and attempt to set Him free. He sees no crime, from Rome's standpoint that warrants any punishment. He realized that Jesus was a mere victim of the Sanhedrin and as Jesus was irritating Pilate, he ended the interview abruptly.

Q: What does Pilate do in order to secure Jesus' release? *(v.38 - He offers to release Jesus according to the tradition of releasing one Jewish prisoner during the Passover feast. Note that even to the end, he is antagonizing the Jews by calling Jesus "the King of the Jews".)*

Pilate was aware of the political overtones of this case now and also that it was going to demand some action on his part. Pilate's solution to free Jesus was something he hoped would satisfy all parties involved. However, what Pilate didn't expect was that the priests had been working the crowd to get them to do their will. Remember the story of the man born blind back in chapter 9. After the man's healing, the Jewish religious leaders called the man's parents in for

questioning. They were afraid of their leaders because they knew they could throw them out of the synagogue and ruin their lives. Because of this fear, they told the leaders that the man was of age and could speak for himself. This same crowd had received Jesus into their city as their king and Messiah just five days earlier, so what changed? The Scripture is silent on the details but it's not hard to see the same forces at work through the Jewish leaders that they had always used. This would have been a two-pronged campaign used on the masses. First, they used propaganda against Jesus. They would tell the crowd that He was not the Messiah they expected. He was not planning on overthrowing Rome with God's power and so He was just a pretender or a man demon-possessed to mislead them. The other prong would have been fear as used against the parents of the man born blind. "Do as we instruct you to do and you won't come under our punishment." The Jewish leaders were feared by the people as they held the keys to God (supposedly) in their hands. This turned out to be the hurdle that tripped Pilate up in the end as far as his plans to release Jesus. By calling for Jesus' crucifixion, the crowd made themselves guilty of Jesus' death along with their leaders.

[Acts 2:36]

Barabbas was a true terrorist and he murdered a person during his attempt at overthrowing the Roman government in Judea. He was a criminal by all means, yet the crowd asked for him to be released instead of Jesus. His name means "Son of the Father" which is strangely ironic in that the false son of the Father was released while the true Son of the Father was delivered over for crucifixion. With such a name, as a point to us, remind us that we are all, in like Barabbas - sons of a human father - full of sin needing the same pardon Barabbas received through Jesus' death. In this sense, Barabbas represents all humans. We all rebelled against God's rightful rule over us until we came to Christ for salvation. We need that same mercy shown to us at Jesus' expense.

Pilate miscalculated the crowd. Had he been a man of moral virtue and strength, he would have stood by his verdict of Jesus and released Him and not gone through these political and social schemes. He didn't know the priests had filled the courtyard with their own supporters. Yet Pilate still had another trick up his sleeve. Maybe he could have Jesus beaten and that would placate the Jews and thus he could release Jesus as action had been taken.

2. The mocking and abuse of Jesus during the trial

[John 19:1-7]

Q: What did Pilate have done to Jesus according to v.1? (*He had Jesus scourged*)

Q: Was the trial completed and the verdict by Pilate rendered at this point? (*No - there was still more trial after this and Pilate hadn't pronounced the sentence yet.*)

John shows us something of Pilate's desperation to get Jesus off the hook with the Jews. He performs an illegal scourging. It was illegal to scourge a person who had not yet been found guilty and then had sentence pronounced against them. Pilate skipped this step for a reason and in this we are going to see something John brings up that the other gospels omit.

[Mark 15:15-21]

Notice in Mark's account, which has the same flow as Matthew, the scourging happens after Pilate hands Jesus over to the Jews for crucifixion. It happens after the verdict and sentence, not before. (Luke doesn't mention the scouring at all.) What John is bringing out here is a separate scourging, a first but not last scourging of Jesus that day.

Scourging is the English translation of several Greek words. All of the Greek words depict a public lashing or whipping of a guilty person. What these Greek words don't have in common is the severity of the whipping and the purpose of the whipping. The Greek words describe Latin terms and in Latin (the official language of Rome) there were three words for whipping that get translated into English as scourging and they are different punishments.

1) *Fustigatio* - this is the least severe and physically damaging whipping meted out for relatively light and minor offenses. The intent of this one was not to damage the person permanently and just as a means of inflicting pain.

2) *Flagellatio* - this was the mid-range beating. It was brutal and intense and meted out for the more serious of offenses. This was usually a stand-alone punishment or in conjunction with jail. The pain would last much longer than the *fustigatio* and would often leave permanent scars.

3) *Verberatio* - this was the most severe, intense and brutal of all whippings. This one was never meted out by itself and only given in conjunction with other harsh penalties, especially crucifixion, as it weakened the person being crucified drastically. It could not be used on a Roman citizen or soldier. Often people died from *verberatio* and saved the Romans the exertion of a crucifixion. The victim was stripped and tied to a post and usually brutally beaten by several torturers until they were exhausted. This one was the one where pieces of metal and bone and glass were affixed to the ends of the whip cords and so with each blow, these would pull hunks of flesh off the person being punished. The goal was to dehumanize the guilty before their death.

Matthew and Mark describe the *verberatio*, the last and most horrific of scourgings in their gospels. John uses the first one, *fustigatio*, or the mildest of the public beatings. In John, when Pilate orders Jesus to be beaten, Jesus had not been condemned yet nor had the sentence been passed down. Pilate had Jesus beaten mildly (and that is only by comparison to the others) which would have left Jesus bleeding, bruised and looking defeated in pain. His hope was that when the Jews saw Jesus in this state, it would elicit some sympathy for Him and the crowd would see that the beating was enough and allow Pilate to release Jesus. What this means is that Jesus endured two separate beatings that day. This one mentioned in John and then the brutal one later mentioned in Matthew and Mark just before Jesus was taken out to be crucified.

Q: What "gift" did the soldiers give to Jesus? (*v.2 - a crown of thorns, literally a twisted wreath*)

These thorns were probably thorns from the date tree which would be up to a foot in length and had sharp points. The emperor wore a crown that was made of gold and to show that he was the light of the empire, the crown had arms radiating from the circular base that symbolized him being like the sun, with rays of light shooting up from his head. Well, this crown was meant to look like the emperor's crown, except instead of gold, it was made of very sharp thorns that would cut into Jesus' head and forehead as they pushed it down on Him. However, the soldier's main goal was to mock Jesus, the pain was just an added bonus.

Q: What were the soldiers saying to Jesus? (*v.3 - Hail, King of the Jews!*)

This lets us know the charges the Sanhedrin finally charged Jesus with to bring to Pilate was that of being a pretender to the Jewish throne, a messianic pretender who they felt Pilate

would see as a dangerous rebel against Caesar and his throne. This is ironic in that they speak better than they know as Jesus was actually the King of the Jews.

Q: As Pilate came out to the Jews again, what does he tell the Jews? (*v. 4 - He finds no guilt in Jesus*)

Notice after this, Jesus comes out with Pilate before the Jews. This is the first they have seen of Jesus since they turned him over to Pilate at the beginning of this hearing.

Q: What did Jesus look like when He appeared before the Jews? (*v.5 - He was wearing the purple robe and crown of thorns. He would have been beaten so he was bleeding and haggard while in great pain.*)

Pilate realized that it was the masses of the people who got to choose who got amnesty at the Passover, so he presents a beaten and broken Jesus, harmless and pathetic in an attempt to make his case for Jesus' release.

Q: What does Pilate say to the crowd upon presenting Jesus to them? (*v.5 - Behold the man!*)

What Pilate is really saying is, here is the man you consider so very dangerous and threatening. Can't you now see He is completely harmless and broken? Pilate is mocking the Jews and their trumped up charges against Jesus by this statement.

John shows us this portrait of Jesus for another reason.

[John 1:11-14] - Jesus was truly human and He was not accepted by His own people.

Q: Did Pilate's mild scourging work to elicit sympathy for Jesus from the Jews? (*v.6 - no - they shouted "Crucify Him!"*)

The Jewish leaders and officers showed that they would not be appeased by anything short of Jesus' death. They knew that sedition by a non-Roman citizen always carried the sentence of death by crucifixion. Pilate saw that his plan had failed and responds to them in disgust. Pilate's remarks are not meant to symbolize him transferring his authority in this matter over to the Jews. We know this by the Jew's response in v.7. The "You" is emphatic, it is what Pilate was emphasizing. This was sarcasm. What Pilate was truly saying was, "*You bring me this man for a trial but you do not accept my judgment!*" To this the Jews finally show their hand.

Q: What was the real charge that led the Jews to bring Jesus to Pilate? (*v.7 - Jesus blasphemed by calling Himself the Son of God.*)

Now the truth is out. The Jews have finally revealed their hand to Pilate. This wasn't about a revolt against Rome but it was a matter of their own law, a charge that is religious in nature. They thought their trumped up political charges would sway Pilate but when they failed, they resorted to sharing their real motivation. Pilate was charged by Rome to uphold not only the Roman laws but also the local laws of the land. So when the Jewish leaders shouted out, "*We have law...*" they weren't referring to the entire Torah but rather a specific point of the law.

[Leviticus 24:16]

If you recall from earlier studies, John has been diligent in showing the reader that the Jews had been building this case for quite some time. (John 5:18, 8:58-9, 10:33-36). The Jewish leaders showed that the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God presumed guilt on His part.

3. The sentencing of Jesus

[John 19:8-16]

Q: What did Pilate hear that led him to become afraid? (*v.7 - that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God*)

When Pilate heard this adjustment to the charge it says he became even more afraid. Though Pilate mainly showed a tough, sarcastic and cynical outside there were things about this trial that gave him reason fear.

[Matthew 27:19]

What is important to understand is that the phrase “Son of God” meant something completely different to a Graeco-Roman mind than to a Hebrew mind. To a Roman and thus Pilate, this charge has nothing to do with blasphemy but rather it placed Jesus into a category of people who were known as “divine men” or “gifted men”. In Greek and Roman religion, the male gods would often come down and procreate with human women and then these women would give birth to half-human/half-god offspring. These people, like Hercules, enjoyed certain divine powers and usually divine favor. Romans were also highly superstitious and so when Pilate heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he heard that Jesus claimed to be the son of a god. Pilate just had Jesus illegally whipped and allowed his soldiers to mock and further beat Him. The phrase “even more afraid” could be translated “very much afraid”. He just abused the child of one of the gods and this man, Jesus, could have special powers of His own to pay Pilate back for what just happened. He didn’t want to suffer divine judgment over abusing Jesus. This led Pilate back inside to further interrogate Jesus. He does this to attempt to alleviate his own fears.

Q: What does Pilate ask Jesus? (*v.9 - Where are You from?*)

Q: How had Jesus already answered that question? (*18:36 - He was not of this world and His kingdom was not of this world*)

Q: What was Jesus’ response to Pilate to this question? (*v.9 - Jesus remained silent*)

Q: What did Pilate tell Jesus after getting the silent treatment from Jesus? (*v.10 - He reminded Jesus of his position as the judge and one who could release Him or condemn Him. Pilate did wield imperial authority.*)

Notice the contrast between who Pilate thought he was and who he truly was that John is drawing for us here. On one hand is Pilate who claimed to have the authority and power to do as he pleased. Yet on the other hand he had done nothing but cave into the wishes of the Jews

throughout this trial. The silence of Jesus irritated Pilate as he was used to getting answers when he asked questions.

Q: How does Jesus respond to Pilate's outburst concerning his authority? (*v.11 - Pilate would not have his authority unless it had been granted to him from God.*)

John sees and names God's hand behind Pilate's authority. Even the worst evil cannot escape the boundaries of God's sovereignty. Yet, God's sovereignty never mitigates the responsibility and guilt of those who operate under Him. Because all people have free will, their voluntary decisions and rebellion against God do not render God unjust. He did not force them to act apart from their own will. Thus, those who act outside God's will will face His justice because they acted freely (and separately from Him). If this were not the case, God would have to judge Himself for making the person act sin and rebellion out. If this were the case, there would be no need for the cross as God, not man, orchestrated and instigated all the sin of mankind.

Q: Who is the one Jesus is referring to who has the greater sin than Pilate? (*v.11 - Caiaphas, as it was he who brought up Jesus on these charges and failed to believe all the miracles and teaching of Jesus despite having known the Law.*)

But notice, that Jesus does not exonerate Pilate from all guilt. He just has less than the Jewish leaders. Pilate would have no authority apart from what God gave him does not absolve him of his part in this kangaroo court

[I Corinthians 4:2] - Pilate was not a trustworthy steward of God or really even Caesar.

By diving into the Greek grammar weeds again, we can come to understand that the "authority" Jesus is speaking of here is not just the civil authority God grants to all rulers. What Jesus is getting at is that the "entire turn of events concerning Jesus" had been put in Pilate's hands by God. Yet, the one who devised the scheme that was before Pilate had the greater sin.

In v.12 the opening phrase is "as a result of this" and this could be translated "from then on" or "for this reason".

Q: What did Pilate attempt to do for Jesus from that point on? (*v.12 - he attempted to free Jesus*)

Q: There were a lot of things Pilate didn't know about these proceedings but what one thing did Pilate understand? (*that Jesus was not guilty of anything deserving death - neither charge held up in Pilate's eyes*)

However the Jews were convinced that Jesus was a blasphemer and trouble-maker (for them) and knew that He needed to die if they were to retain their place of authority over the Jews.

Q: What did they tell Pilate when he made efforts to release Jesus? (*v.12 - They accused Pilate of not being a "friend of Caesar", if he released Jesus*)

The term "friend of Caesar" was not a casual term. It had a specific meaning. It denoted a strong supporter or close associate of the emperor. A friend of Caesar was a special person who was part of Caesar's inner circle and someone Caesar himself had invited and promoted to this

position. Pilate had obviously been elevated to the “friend of Caesar” status in order to get his position as governor of Judea.

Now this very high and lofty position that Pilate must have treasured and boasted of became the very weapon the Jews used against him at this pivotal moment in the trial. The Jews brought Jesus up to Pilate on charges of sedition, disloyalty to the emperor and thus if Pilate exonerated Jesus, a known pretender to the throne, someone who talked about and wanted to start a new political order, then Pilate would be seen as either complicit or worse, an accomplice to the revolt against Caesar. Tiberias, who was Caesar at this time, was a ruthlessly suspicious and bitter man. He worried about rivals to his throne and if one were uncovered, he had them executed swiftly and brutally. If the Jews reported to Tiberias that Pilate let a man accused of sedition free and worked against the Jews in this trial, then Pilate’s career and probably his life would both come to an end. Pilate knew this well. After all, what excuse could Pilate give to a paranoid ruler for not executing man found to be a rebel? On an earlier occasion, the Jews had expressed displeasure with Pilate to Rome and so there was no reason to think that they would not do it again. This was the straw that broke the camels’ back in this trial. Pilate saw that he had been outsmarted by these Jews.

Again, John brings out a strong irony here. The Jews, to make these charges against Jesus stick, had to make themselves out to be deeply loyal subjects to the Caesar and in fact, more loyal than the emperor’s governor in the region. These Jews were not only slaves to political expediency but also to sin. Jesus may be the One claiming to be a king but He is far less dangerous than the Jews making the charges against Him. (On a side note, when the Jews finally did revolt against Rome, Titus ruthlessly crushed them in 70 A.D. and destroyed the Temple in the process.)

Q: What does Pilate do when he hears these words from the Jews? (*v. 13 - he capitulates and sentences Jesus as they wished*)

Since the charge was sedition, the verdict must match the crime and for a non-Roman citizen, sedition always carried crucifixion as the penalty. Pilate’s judgment seat was brought out to the stone court. This seat was used to deliver the actual sentence and hand down the official and final verdict. We see here the personal representative of Rome is offering his judgment on the One in whom all authority and judgment has been handed over to by the Heavenly Father.

The significance of John mentioning that this is the day of preparation for the Passover means that this is the day in which the Passover lamb was slaughtered and it was done about the sixth hour of the day. John is showing the reader that Jesus is the Passover lamb given for us by inserting this verse here.

[I Corinthians 5:7-8]

Pilate throws one more bit of abuse at the Jews by proclaiming, “Behold your king!” in v.14. While he could not escape the trap set by the Jews for Jesus, he could taunt them again. He did this without an ounce of regret or remorse. Again this mocking is saying that this bloody and beaten man is YOUR king and will be the only king they will ever get. The Jews had the long awaited King standing right before them and they didn’t recognize Him and instead politically plotted to have Him killed. However, Pilate’s tactic infuriate the crowd and it drove the chief priests to actually blaspheme themselves.

[Isaiah 43:15]

The Scriptures (Old Testament) repeatedly teach that the Lord is the only true King of Israel. David's heirs are legitimate because they are vassals of the Lord by covenant and love. By insisting that they have no king but Caesar, they are abandoning all hope of a Messiah coming from God ever. They have rejected the claim of God upon them as their King. This is terrible blindness on their parts.

Q: What was Pilate's final act? (*v.16 - He handed Jesus over to the Jews for crucifixion*)

Think of how uncertain Pilate was in this narrative. John reveals to us that he "went in" or "went out" seven different times in this passage. He is incapable of acting out what he knows is right but in the end it is political expediency that rules his heart.

4. Jesus is crucified

[John 19:17-22]

The soldiers took Jesus away to be crucified. An execution squad was traditionally four soldiers and a centurion. The judge would write a placard that contained the condemned person's crime and then hang it around the condemned's neck. Then the condemned would have to take the horizontal crossbeam upon his back and haul it to the place of the crucifixion. Once there, the person would be stripped bare and have their hands nailed to the cross. Then, they would hoist up the accused dangling from the cross beam and affix that beam to the vertical pole, already in the ground. The executioners would then nail the feet to the cross, usually at a strange angle so that they could not use their feet to support themselves without inflicting great pain upon themselves. Then a rope was usually tied around their torso to keep them in place. The placard which was hanging around the neck of the condemned was then removed and nailed to the top of the vertical beam for all to see.

Jesus, despite his double beating, manages to carry his cross beam all the way to the gates of the city where the soldiers pressed Simon of Cyrene to carry it the rest of the way. However, to John, Simon is a distraction to the main theme of this passage and that is Jesus is resolute to follow His Father's will and suffer and die for our sins.

John does not dwell on the physical horror of crucifixion because everyone in the empire had witnessed one and knew how bad it was. This was a punishment of both shame and horror.

Q: Where did the crucifixion take place? (*v.17 - The Place of the Skull or in Hebrew, Golgotha*)

Before reading on, this has much greater significance than it being the name of a place. In truth, no one knows where Jesus was crucified. It was outside the city of Jerusalem and though Christians often place it on a hill, it was probably not on a hill as the Romans crucified people on flat ground and places where others could be near them to see the pain these condemned people were enduring. So this is not a hill shaped like a skull, but how did it get its name?

For this we need to venture back to the life of David, before he was king, when he fought the giant Goliath.

[I Samuel 17:50-54]

Notice that David cut Goliath's head off his body and then took the head to Jerusalem. At this point in history, Jerusalem was not part of Israel. It was a fortified city on the border between Judah and Benjamin and the Jebusites stubbornly defied all of Israel's attempts to capture it. It was not until five years after this event that Jerusalem was captured. So it was symbolic of a pagan stronghold in the midst of God's people. So why did David take Goliath's skull there? It was a message to the pagan Jebusites.

The message was political in nature. Goliath had been the Philistine champion. Now David was the champion of Israel and he just defeated the giant of the Philistines. Taking the head to Jerusalem was a message to a people who had defied God and Israel for centuries. David was saying that just as he killed Goliath, he was going to kill the Jebusite pagans. This was also a prophetic claim in that David was showing that he intended to make Jerusalem the future center of God's people, even before he was ever crowned king.

In that day and time, it was common to take the head of an enemy champion to an enemy city. The message was: Your protector is dead; your gods have failed you; your city is next. David was proclaiming to the Jebusites that as Goliath had fallen on that day, their day to fall was coming - and it did as David captured it.

This was also a theological statement. By bringing Goliath's head to Jerusalem, David was declaring the Lord God's victory. It humiliated the gods of the Philistines and showed them where God would have His king rule some day. David understood that military events were actually acts of God and had deeper significance than just winning or losing a battle.

Now, how this relates to John and the story of Jesus' crucifixion is that this becomes a foreshadowing of the Messiah to come. Goliath is a serpent-like figure. He's wearing scale armor and taunting God's people and inspiring fear in them. David was the anointed one who crushed the serpent's head.

[Genesis 3:15]

So David brought the head to Jerusalem - the future site of the temple and the cross. David's act becomes a Messianic signpost. So just as David defeated Goliath, who represented Satan, Jesus defeated the real Satan and sin. (There is no mention that the skull was ever buried in Jerusalem. It is just legend but we do know the head was displayed there in some way.) So this was much more than just an announcement by David of his victory over the giant. David was making a claim on the territory for the future. He was also making a warning and a prophetic declaration of the future. God's king has arrived. God's enemies will fall. Jerusalem will be the center of His kingdom. In the same way, as Jesus was crucified at the Place of the Skull, it shows that God's king has arrived and His enemies, such as Satan and sin, will fall and that God's kingdom is now open for all to join. In this sense, David is a type of Jesus in that he killed the "little" giant before him just as Jesus defeated the "big" giants before Him (and us).

Q: How many others were crucified at the same time as Jesus? (*v.18 - 2 other men*)

Q: What did Pilate's inscription say? (*v.19 - Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews*)

Q: Why do you think that the sign was written in Latin, Greek and Aramaic? (*Those were the three languages to this area. Everyone could read at least one of these languages. The Romans and any imperial officials would have read the Latin. Aramaic was the Hebrew dialect of the Jews of that area. Greek was the universal language of the empire and beyond at this time in history. Every*

educated person spoke Greek thanks to Alexander the Great. The Roman official who wrote the charges wanted everyone to know why this person was being crucified so they would know they would meet the same fate if they did the same thing. The Romans had a vested interest in publicizing the nature of the crime.)

Q: Why did the Jews take offense to Pilate's wording on the placard? *(v.21 - they felt that Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews. They did not see Him as the actual king of the Jews as Pilate's placard indicated.)*

Q: Based upon what you know about Pilate at this point, why do you think he wrote the charges in the way he wrote them? *(It was out of spite for the Jews. It was one last vengeful act against the Jewish leaders. It was his last chance to humiliate them in this encounter.)*

What is interesting is that Pilate's placard advances John's theme that Jesus truly is the rightful king of the Jews. Pilate's malice is serving God's ends. The cross is not the end of Jesus but will merely be the instrument of His exaltation and glorification. Caiaphas and Pilate both serve God's redemptive purposes despite their actions.

This section, like the last, is steeped in history and politics yet we miss out on some of Jesus' heart at this time.

[Luke 13:34] - Jesus had wept over Jerusalem. When He went to the cross we need to keep in mind that His was doing it for us - for those who despised Him. He loved the Jews and wanted to see them saved yet, for the vast majority, they wouldn't have anything to do with Him. Any tears He shed were for those who rejected Him.

[Luke 23:33-43] - The word "robber" here means rebel or guerrilla fighter. These men were guilty of sedition. Yet, one of them, who did nothing to deserve a pardon, gained one on the cross. If there is ever a passage of Scripture that teaches that man is saved apart from his own works, this is it. Jesus, while dying on the cross, reached out in mercy to offer eternal life for this sinner and this sinner took hold of that offer by faith in Jesus. Pure and simple picture - no works, no baptism, no religious rites or rituals. He got what Jesus wished everyone around would have left with.

These are just a glimpse of why Jesus did what He did that day.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?