

Good Friday

Passion Gospel

John 18:1 – 19:42



THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO JOHN

John 18:1 – 19:42

Please remain seated. During the reading the congregation says the part of the Crowd.

The Deacon or Priest announces the Gospel.

The usual responses are not said.

Narrator 1: When Jesus finished praying, He began a brief journey with His disciples to the other side of the Kidron Valley, a deep ravine that floods in the winter rains, then farther on to a garden where He gathered His disciples.

Judas Iscariot (who had already set his betrayal in motion and knew that Jesus often met with the disciples in this olive grove) entered the garden with an entourage of Roman soldiers and officials sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. They brandished their weapons under the light of torches and lamps. Jesus stepped forward. It was clear He was not surprised because He knew all things.

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?

Judas's Entourage: Jesus the Nazarene.

Jesus: I am the One.

Narrator 1: Judas, the betrayer, stood with the military force. As Jesus spoke "I am the One," the forces fell back on the ground. Jesus asked them a second time:

Jesus: Whom are you searching for?

Judas's Entourage: Jesus the Nazarene.

Jesus: I have already said that I am the One. If you are looking for Me, then let these men go free.

Narrator 1: This happened to fulfill the promise He made that none of those entrusted to Him will be lost. Suddenly Peter lunged toward Malchus, one of the high priest's servants; and with his sword, Peter severed the man's right ear.

Jesus (~~to Peter~~): Put down your sword, and return it to the sheath. Am I to turn away from the cup the Father has given Me to drink?

Narrator 1: So the Roman commander, soldiers, and Jewish officials arrested Jesus, cuffed His hands and feet, and brought Him to Annas (the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest). You may remember that Caiaphas counseled the Jews that one should die for all people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed behind Jesus. When they arrived, Peter waited in the doorway while the other disciple was granted access because of his relationship with the high priest. That disciple spoke to the woman at the door, and Peter was allowed inside.

Servant Girl (~~to Peter~~): You are one of this man's disciples, aren't you?

Peter: I am not.

Narrator 1: All the servants and officers gathered around a charcoal fire to keep warm. It was a cold day, and Peter made his way into the circle to warm himself.

Annas (~~to Jesus~~): Who are Your disciples, and what do You teach?

Jesus: I have spoken in public where the world can hear, always teaching in the synagogue and in the temple where the Jewish people gather. I have never spoken in secret. So why would you need to interrogate Me? Many have heard Me teach. Why don't you question them? They know what I have taught.

Narrator 1: While Jesus offered His response, an officer standing nearby struck Jesus with his hand.

Officer: Is that how You speak to the high priest?

Jesus: If I have spoken incorrectly, why don't you point out the untruths that I speak? Why do you hit Me if what I have said is correct?

Narrator 1: Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas bound as a prisoner. As this was happening, Peter was still warming himself by the fire.

Servants and Officers: You, too, are one of His disciples, aren't you?

Peter: No, I am not.

Narrator 2: Initially, Pilate tells the Jewish leaders to take Jesus and try Him according to Jewish law, but when they hint at capital charges, Pilate agrees to interrogate Jesus as a traitor to the empire. Rome reserves the right to decide who lives and dies in the provinces. They don't delegate that to the Jewish high council. The charge of blasphemy carries no weight in Roman jurisprudence, for it is a matter of Jewish religious law. Rome

has no opinion on such matters. So a new charge must be concocted, a charge that Rome does care about. Rome does care about taxes, of course, and takes a dim view of anyone making royal claims under their noses.

Pilate agrees to hear the charge, not wasting a Roman minute. He takes Jesus inside and begins asking Him about these charges. Pilate can't handle the truth when he asks, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus is the King of the Jews, and that is the truth. But as Jesus knows, the world doesn't recognize His kingdom. That's because it is sourced in heaven above, not in Rome. His authority comes from God the Father, Creator, Sustainer—not from the Roman senate.

Narrator 1: One of the high priest's servants who was related to *Malchus*—the person Peter *attacked and* cut off his ear—*recognized Peter*.

High Priest's Servant: Didn't I see you in the garden with Him?

Narrator 1: Peter denied it again, and instantly a rooster crowed.

Before the sun had risen, Jesus was taken from Caiaphas to the governor's palace. The Jewish leaders would not enter the palace because their presence in a Roman office would defile them and cause them to miss the Passover feast. Pilate, the governor, met them outside.

Narrator 2: Now Caiaphas is high priest at this time. The sacred office he occupies has been corrupted for more than a century by Jewish collaboration with Greeks and Romans. Reformers are few, and they have been unable to cleanse the high office from its pollutants. Because of this, many Jews have stopped coming to the temple. How can God's holy habitation on earth be pure if its primary representative is coddling the enemies of Israel? Caiaphas knows he needs friends in high places to put an end to Jesus, so he turns to Pilate, the Roman governor. It is Pilate's job to look out for Roman interests in Judea. He is an irritable man, unnecessarily cruel and intentionally provocative. Many Jews will die on his watch. For Pilate, Jesus is just one more.

Pilate: What charges do you bring against this man?

Priests and Officials: If He weren't a lawbreaker, we wouldn't have brought Him to you.

Pilate: Then judge Him yourselves, by your own law.

Jews: Our authority does not allow us to give Him the death penalty.

Narrator 1: All these things were a fulfillment of the words Jesus had spoken indicating the way that He would die. So Pilate reentered the governor's palace and called for Jesus to follow him.

Pilate: Are You the King of the Jews?

Jesus: Are you asking Me because you believe this is true, or have others said this about Me?

Pilate: I'm not a Jew, am I? Your people, including the chief priests, have arrested You and placed You in my custody. What have You done?

Jesus: My kingdom is not recognized in this world. If this were My kingdom, My servants would be fighting for My freedom. But My kingdom is not in this physical realm.

Pilate: So You are a king?

Jesus: You say that I am king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the cosmos: to demonstrate the power of truth. Everyone who seeks truth hears My voice.

Pilate (~~to Jesus~~): What is truth?

Narrator 1: Pilate left Jesus to go and speak to the crowds.

Pilate (~~to the people~~): I have not found any cause for charges to be brought against this man. Your custom is that I should release a prisoner to you each year in honor of the Passover celebration; shall I release the King of the Jews to you?

Crowd: No, not this man! Give us Barabbas!

Narrator 1: You should know that Barabbas was a terrorist.

Narrator 1: Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. The soldiers twisted thorny branches together as a crown and placed it onto His brow and wrapped Him in a purple cloth. They drew near to Him, shouting:

Soldiers (~~striking at Jesus~~): Bow down, everyone! This is the King of the Jews!

Pilate (~~going out to the crowd~~): Listen, I stand in front of you with this man to make myself clear: I find this man innocent of any crimes.

Narrator 1: Then Jesus was paraded out before the people, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

Pilate: Here is the man!

Chief Priests and Officers (*shouting*): Crucify, crucify!

Pilate: You take Him and crucify Him; I have declared Him not guilty of any punishable crime!

Crowd: Our law says that He should die because He claims to be the Son of God.

Narrator 1: Pilate was terrified to hear the Jews making their claims for His execution; so he retired to his court, the Praetorium.

Pilate (*to Jesus*): Where are You from?

Narrator 1: Jesus did not speak.

Pilate: How can You ignore me? Are You not aware that I have the authority either to free You or to crucify You?

Jesus: Any authority you have over Me comes from above, not from your political position. Because of this, the one who handed Me to you is guilty of the greater sin.

Narrator 1: Taking them to heart, he attempted to release Jesus; but the people opposed him, shouting:

Crowd: If you release this man, you have betrayed Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king threatens Caesar's throne.

Narrator 1: After Pilate heard these accusations, he sent Jesus out and took his seat in the place where he rendered judgment. This place was called the Pavement, or Gabbatha in Hebrew. All this occurred at the sixth hour on the day everyone prepares for the Passover.

Pilate (~~*to the people*~~): Look, here is your King!

Crowd: Put Him away; crucify Him!

Pilate: You want me to crucify your King?

Chief Priests: We have no king but Caesar!

Narrator 1: Pilate handed Him over to his soldiers, knowing that He would be crucified. They sent Jesus out carrying His own instrument of execution, the cross, to a hill known as the Place of the Skull, or Golgotha in Hebrew. In that place, they crucified Him along with two others. One was on His right and the other on His left. Pilate ordered that a plaque be placed above Jesus' head. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Because the site was near an urban region, it was written in three languages (Greek, Latin, and Hebrew) so that all could understand.

Chief Priests (~~to Pilate~~): Don't write, "The King of the Jews." Write, "He said, 'I am King of the Jews!'"

Pilate: I have written what I have written.

Narrator 1: As Jesus was being crucified, the soldiers tore His outer garments into four pieces, one for each of them. They wanted to do the same with His tunic, but it was seamless—one piece of fabric woven from the top down. So they said,

Soldier (~~to other soldiers~~): Don't tear it. Let's cast lots, and the winner will take the whole thing.

Narrator 1: This happened in keeping with the Hebrew Scriptures, which said, "They divided My outer garments and cast lots for My clothes." These soldiers did exactly what was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus' mother was standing next to His cross along with her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus looked to see His mother and the disciple He loved standing nearby.

Jesus (~~to Mary, His mother~~): Dear woman, this is your son (~~motioning to the beloved disciple~~)! (~~to John, His disciple~~) This is now your mother.

Narrator 2: Now you know who "the beloved disciple" is: the last eyewitness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Mary has become family to John, fulfilling the dying wish of Jesus, his Savior. For those who are gathered at the foot of the cross, family is less about blood kinship than it is about covenant obedience.

The mother of the Lord will serve the redemptive purposes of her son and the Savior of the world until her last day on earth. Anyone feeling sorry for himself should think about Jesus. He spent all this time before His death, and through His death, demonstrating how to love and how to serve. He is asking John to do no more in serving Mary than He did in serving us.

Narrator 1: From that moment, the disciple treated her like his own mother and welcomed her into his house. Jesus knew now that His work had been accomplished, and the Hebrew Scriptures were being fulfilled.

Jesus: I am thirsty.

Narrator 1: A jar of sour wine had been left there, so they took a hyssop branch with a sponge soaked in the vinegar and put it to His mouth. When Jesus drank, He spoke:

Jesus: It is finished!

Narrator 1: In that moment, His head fell; and He gave up the spirit. The Jews asked Pilate to have their legs broken so the bodies would not remain on the crosses on the Sabbath. It was the day of preparation for the Passover, and that year the Passover fell on the Sabbath. The soldiers came and broke the legs of both the men crucified next to Jesus. When they came up to Jesus' cross, they could see that He was dead; so they did not break His legs. Instead, one soldier took his spear and pierced His abdomen, which brought a gush of blood and water.

Narrator 2: This testimony is true. In fact, it is an eyewitness account; and he has reported what he saw so that you also may believe. It happened this way to fulfill the Hebrew Scriptures that "not one of His bones shall be broken"; and the Hebrew Scriptures also say, "They will look upon Him whom they pierced."

Narrator 1: After all this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple who kept his faith a secret for fear of the Jewish officials, made a request to Pilate for the body of Jesus. Pilate granted his request, and Joseph retrieved the body. Nicodemus, who first came to Jesus under the cloak of darkness, brought over 100 pounds of myrrh and ointments for His burial. Together, they took Jesus' body and wrapped Him in linens soaked in essential oils and spices, according to Jewish burial customs.

Narrator 2: Near the place He was crucified, there was a garden with a newly prepared tomb. Because it was the day of preparation, they arranged to lay Jesus in this tomb so they could rest on the Sabbath.