



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**LIFE GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE
SEPTEMBER 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	SEPTEMBER 5	21

JESUS ARRESTED AND DENIED

JOHN 18:1-27

SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 18:1-27. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS WILLINGLY WENT TO THE CROSS, EVEN AS HE WAS ABANDONED BY HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: EVEN IN THE MIDST OF A HORRIBLE BETRAYAL AND ARREST, JESUS BROUGHT HOPE AND HEALING.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WE HAVE ALL DENIED JESUS LIKE PETER AND YET HE STILL WILLINGLY PAID THE PENALTY FOR OUR SINS.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 When you were in high school, where did you and your friends go to get away from the “harassment” of parents and other adult authority figures? Who were the friends you went there with?
- 2 What was the situation the last time someone came looking for you (i.e. you did something wrong at work, someone needed help, someone was angry, etc.)?
- 3 When was the last time you lashed out at someone but regretted it later? What happened?

After Jesus prayed for the protection and unity of His disciples, they faced a serious threat to both. Jesus had taught out in the open in Jerusalem, but He was never arrested because the authorities were afraid of the reaction of the crowds around Him. So Judas led them to the Garden of Gethsemane, where they could arrest Him at night without the crowds around. In today’s lesson, we’ll examine the events surrounding Jesus’ arrest that eventually led to His suffering and death for our salvation.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:1-11.

- What do you think you would have been feeling had you been one of the disciples with Jesus at the time of His arrest (i.e. fear, anger, disappointment, etc.)?
- Why did John point out that Jesus knew what would happen to Him (v. 4)? How does this change the impact of what happened to Jesus?
- Why do you think the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground when Jesus identified Himself (i.e. reverence, fear, expectation of attack, other)?
- What does it say to you that Jesus spoke up to protect His disciples? When were the words spoken that are quoted in verse 9?

This petition on the disciples' behalf is unique to John. It shows that even in his hour of need, Jesus was thinking of the welfare of His followers. It also shows that the disciples were in danger of arrest because of their association with Jesus. This is evident from other stories in John, such as Peter's denial (see 18:15-27) and the disciples' hiding behind locked doors after the crucifixion (see 20:19). Verse 9 refers to John 6:39 and 17:12.

- What is the "cup" that Jesus referred to? Why was it necessary that He take it?

- What enemy have you been tempted to strike violently against, as Peter struck against the high priest's servant? What do you think Jesus would say to you if you were to do so?

Notes:

Jesus used the refusal to meet force with force as a sign of the true nature of His kingdom. In Matthew's account, Jesus said, "Put your sword back in its place ... for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Luke added that Jesus healed the servant's ear (see 22:51).

In the Old Testament, drinking "the cup" was sometimes a symbol of experiencing God's judgment and wrath against sin. (See Ezek. 23:32-34; Hab. 2:16.) This use of the metaphor reminds us Jesus Himself would bear God's judgment against the sins of the people.

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 18:15-27.

- With whom do you identify most strongly in this story: Peter, the "other disciple", Jesus, or one of Peter's accusers? Why?
- Why did Peter and the other disciple follow Jesus after He was arrested? What were they hoping to accomplish?
- Why did Peter deny that he was one of the disciples? What was he afraid of? Why do you think the "other disciple" wasn't similarly questioned?

Peter was one of the first men Jesus called to be His disciple, along with Peter's brother Andrew. (See Matt. 4.) During Jesus' three years of earthly ministry, Peter was present for some of the most miraculous moments, like the

transfiguration. (See Luke 9:28-36.) Peter exhibited great faith—like the time he stepped out of the boat to walk on water (see Matt. 14:22-33)—and was one of Jesus’ best friends.

Even though Peter denied knowing Jesus, it is clear that he loved Jesus. Peter loved Jesus enough to go to Caiaphas’ house, just not enough to stand with Him. Peter’s answer to his questioners was a sharp “I am not!” Since John focused repeatedly on the affirmations of Jesus as “I am,” the contrast is very striking. The denial was especially significant in light of Peter’s earlier forceful statement that he would be willing to die for Jesus (see Luke 22:33) and his acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah (see Luke 9:20). When Jesus was present, Peter was filled with boldness. But when he was alone and challenged, Peter lost his courage and betrayed his Messiah.

Notes:

- What point was Jesus making to the high priest in verses 20-21? Why might the high priest not want to question those who heard Jesus teach in the temple?
- What is the significance of the fact that Peter was asked about his association with Jesus at the same time that Jesus himself was being interrogated? How do the two compare in how they dealt with their interrogators?
- Why is it significant that the last interrogator of Peter was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off? How would that affect Peter’s motivation to tell the truth?
- How would you respond if someone were to ask, “What good would it have done at this point for Peter to admit he was a follower of Christ?”

Betraying Jesus goes beyond saying we don't know Him. We betray Jesus when we have an opportunity to speak up for Him but fail to do so. We betray Jesus through ungodly speech, unethical actions, and when we compromise godly standards to go along with the crowd. When Peter heard the rooster crow, he realized what he had done and responded by weeping bitterly. He was truly grieved over his sin, as we should be too.

Notes:

At the same time Peter denied Jesus because of his fear, Jesus was holding true to His message in spite of violence and threats. What Jesus proclaimed as true, He stood by. He did not waver when one of the most politically powerful men of his society accused, struck, and threatened him. That Jesus showed this kind of courage reveals that the one we proclaim as Lord was not intimidated by pain and death. He was not intimidated because He knew God would give Him the victory over these forces. And the good news is that we can have the same victory if we put our faith in Him.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What season are you experiencing in your spiritual life right now: the warmth of summer, the dead of winter, the new life of spring, or the changes of fall? Explain.
- What are some situations where you're tempted to handle conflicts by "striking with the sword"? How does today's passage speak to you about that?
- What "enemies" seem to be "coming for you"? How can this group help you in prayer concerning them?

Notes:

PRAY

Praise Jesus this week for His commitment to the will of God. Thank Him for remaining strong, despite the temptations He faced. Ask God to continue to open your heart to appreciate the greatness of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - In what context do you have the hardest time admitting you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

 - What makes it difficult for you?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 18:11.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 18:28-40.

JOHN 18:1-27

18:1–3. As he told his story, John wanted us to see that Jesus hid from no one. The availability of the fugitive became obvious, since we learn that Jesus had visited this garden often with his disciples. Certainly Judas would have known it well.

Notes:

In the fulfillment of prophecy and surely the clear anticipation by Jesus, Judas brought quite an entourage—certainly no fewer than two hundred soldiers (the word detachment is *speira*) and the “big wigs” from among the chief priests and Pharisees. Picture them entering that quiet sanctuary with their torches, lanterns and weapons.

One wonders at this strange group that went out to meet Jesus. At first it looked like the usual religious antagonists and their uniformed guard. But the phrase a detachment of soldiers added a Roman group to this advance party in the garden. Bruce reminds us, “The fact that Roman troops were there as well as temple police implies that the Jewish authorities had already approached the military command, probably indicating that they expected armed resistance to the officers. That it was the Jewish authorities and not the Romans who took the initiative is shown by the fact that, after the arrest, the Jewish authorities were allowed to take Jesus into their custody. When Judas is described as ‘taking’ the cohort and the police to the place, all that is meant is that he acted as their guide” (Bruce, p. 340).

18:4–9. John also wanted us to see that Jesus controlled this night. His response to the events was different than the reaction of the guards. Notice Judas came with them, electing almost total allegiance to those who could make him richer. We can hardly imagine what caused the guards to draw back and fall down. A miracle? The repetition of that familiar I am closely linked to the Lord God of the Old Testament? Parallel passages in the other Gospels (Matt. 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46) do not help us much. This mob of armed officials displayed greater fear than the victim they were looking for.

Twice Jesus asked the same question; twice he received the same answer. He surrendered himself and released the Eleven. John's commentary reviewed 6:39, again fulfilling the prophecy that Jesus would lose none of those true believers whom the Father had given him. Throughout this Gospel we see reminders that Jesus died for us, what theologians call substitutionary (vicarious) atonement (1:29; 3:14–16; 10:11, 15–18; 12:32; 17:19).

Notes:

In verse 9 John offered another of his famous hermeneutical helps. He told us how Jesus requested the release of the disciples and then emphasized that this happened because of the prophecy of John 6:39. Surely it would have been easy to take Jesus' words purely in the physical realm. After all, he was the one they sought; let the other disciples escape. But not John. He saw the clear spiritual connection. Bruce puts it this way:

But in Jesus thus stepping to the front and shielding the disciples by exposing himself, John sees a picture of the whole sacrifice and substitution of Christ. This figure of his Master moving forward to meet the swords and staves of the party remains indelibly stamped upon his mind as the symbol of Christ's whole relation to his people. That night in Gethsemane was to them all the hour and power of darkness; and in every subsequent hour of darkness John and the rest see the same divine figure stepping to the front, shielding them and taking upon himself all the responsibility. It is thus Christ would have us think of him—as our friend and protector, watchful over our interests, alive to all that threatens our persons, interposing between us in every hostile event (Bruce, pp. 268–69).

18:10–11. Peter displayed admirable courage and loyalty but poor aim. He was a fisherman, not a swordsman. John did not record the healing of the ear, a detail reported by Luke. John's only reference to Jesus' final prayer came at the end of verse 11. We read more detail in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22.

Why did John not include more garden narrative as the other Gospels did? The answer seems to lie in his

purpose—to focus on the words of Jesus, thereby showing him as the Son of God rather than detailing history of his life incident by incident. The last phrase of this section is important for us, since the rhetorical question gives the motive for Jesus’ behavior on this occasion. The Father has given a cup of suffering and death. The Son, in obedience and subjection, will drink it.

Notes:

18:12–14. We will bypass these three verses at this point since John introduces Annas and Caiaphas, focusing on Annas in verses 19–24. But we can stop long enough to note that the garden contingent did not take Jesus to the high priest but to Annas, father-in-law of the high priest. This gave John one more opportunity to remind his readers of Caiaphas’s famous prophetic announcement of substitutionary atonement back in 11:49–50.

18:15–16. In John’s narrative it becomes necessary to pick up two different segments of text to understand Peter’s role on this fateful night. John first showed us how his friend was at the wrong place at the wrong time. The military and religious intruders had dismissed the eleven disciples, as Jesus asked. But Peter and another disciple followed their Lord and his captors. Almost every reputable scholar agrees this second disciple was John himself. His family had ties to the priesthood through Salome and Elizabeth. His influence allowed both men into the courtyard.

18:17–18. The girl at the door asked what appears to be a rhetorical question, calling for a simple negative response. Peter took the bait and joined the crowd around the fire (anthrakian), probably made of charcoal. John told the story straight: Peter also was standing with them. Having followed too far behind, he now joined a group of the Lord’s enemies. Leon Morris puts it well: “This was the last place where one might expect to find one of Jesus’ followers” (Morris, p. 759).

18:25–27. Once again we do a bit of juggling in the text to get the Peter segment all together. Notice how the first two questions were rhetorical, “Surely you are not another

of his disciples?” And the third got more personal, Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?

We have already seen this in verse 17, but here it is again. Warming himself at an alien fire, Peter heard the same kind of question and he gave the exact same answer. But the heat increased (someone has said that Peter’s ministry career could be summarized in three stages—at the fire, under fire, and on fire). This time a relative of the servant whom Peter had wounded got too specific for comfort: Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?

Notes:

For the third time Peter denied Christ, and the prophetic rooster began to crow (13:38). One legend that grew up around this event indicates that wherever Peter went for years after this night, people would make the sound of a rooster to harass and humiliate him.

Theologians and interpreters argue for endless pages about how many rooster crowings the Bible records. The prediction is quoted in all four Gospels (Matt. 26:34, 75; Mark 14:30, 72; Luke 22:34, 61; John 13:38). From the available information, some have suggested three denials before one crowing of the rooster, but a variety of other numbers have been put forth as well. We should not get caught up in that kind of banter, since the gist of the incident indicates a threefold betrayal before a rooster began to crow.

No serious scholar believes that God miraculously manipulated this rooster to crow at this particular time. This is a general time notation for early morning, similar to our common observation, “getting up with the chickens.” Before the night was over, before the roosters began their morning announcements, Peter denied Jesus three times.

18:19–21. While Peter stood by the fire, Jesus was taken to Annas, the godfather and power behind the high priestly throne. His residence was close to the wall on the south side of Jerusalem. He had served as high priest from a.d. 6 to 15, and then in predominant nepotism watched four sons and a son-in-law (Caiaphas) hold the office. John

remembered one good point about Caiaphas: he predicted the substitutionary atonement of Jesus (11:49–50).

In verses 19–24, Jesus asked two key questions while being questioned himself. Although John does not mention blasphemy in this paragraph, Annas tried to establish subversion and revolution on the part of Jesus. But Jesus emphasized the openness of his ministry and asked, Why question me?

Notes:

There was a good bit of switching from house to house as Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas and Caiaphas then sent him to Pilate. Interpreters find a bit of a curiosity regarding the number of bindings, although that is not the central point of the passage from John's viewpoint. Godet tries to clear it up: "Jesus had undoubtedly been unbound during the examination; after this scene, Annas causes him to be bound again, in order to send him to the house of Caiaphas. Probably he was unbound a second time during the session of the Sanhedrin. This explains why in Matthew 27:2 and Mark 15:1, he is bound anew at the time of leading him away to Pilate" (Godet, p. 362).

18:22–24. What a lesson these verses contain. Christianity is not a secret sect or a covert cult. Jewish law prohibited self-incrimination (a precursor to the Fifth Amendment). If Annas wanted to find out what Jesus had been teaching, hundreds of people could verify his message. For his defense, Jesus received a blow on the face. Whether this was ordered by Annas or not we do not know. The Lord called for the appropriate application of Jewish law (calling defense witnesses first), and asked the second question, Why did you strike me?

John carried the narrative no further at this point, but showed us that Annas sent Jesus to his son-in-law Caiaphas, who would have occupied another office in the same building.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	SEPTEMBER 12	21

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

JOHN 18:28-40

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 18:28-40. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastor, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: THE LEADERS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE BROUGHT JESUS TO PILATE FOR TRIAL, THOUGH JESUS HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG. PILATE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND TRUTH, BUT HE FAILED, CAVING IN TO THE SCREAMING CROWDS STIRRED UP BY AGENTS OF THE HIGH PRIESTS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHILE PILATE HID BEHIND INDECISION, JESUS STOOD FOR TRUTH AND DECISIVE ACTION.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. (SEE JOHN 14:6.)

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Would you describe yourself as a decisive person? Why or why not? In what situations or circumstances are you most prone to indecision?
- 2 Ask those who are comfortable to share the most difficult decision they have ever made. What made that decision so difficult?
- 3 How might the situation have turned out differently if you had remained indecisive?

We all struggle with indecision at times. Indecision seems harmless when trying to determine where to go out to eat or what show to watch on television. However, when facing some of life's biggest questions, indecision can be crippling. Whether it's where to go to college, what job to take, whom to marry, or where to live, life's most difficult decisions require action. When Pilate encountered Jesus, he was presented with an opportunity to take decisive action and to do the right thing. Pilate should have immediately released Jesus, as he had full knowledge that Christ was innocent. However, Pilate hesitated to do what he knew to be right. He listened to the lies of the religious leaders, ignored warning signs, procrastinated, and eventually caved into the demands of the crowd.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:28-32.

- What specific charges did the Jews levy against Jesus before Pilate? Was Pilate eager to get involved? Why or why not?
- Why were the Jews insistent that Roman authorities deal with Jesus by means of Roman law? Why did John say this happened?

Pilate would have expected the Jewish authorities to provide a charge specific to Roman law, yet he was also of the opinion that the Jewish legal system was sufficient for handling Jesus' case. The Jews were not interested in legal justice: They wished for Jesus' execution and expected the Romans to provide this for them.

- What does verse 32 communicate to us about the reason behind all that was happening to Jesus? Why is it important to realize this truth?
- What changes about our outlook when the truth of verse 32 rests in our hearts?

Jesus' trial was a great injustice, but John wanted to make sure His audience understood none of what happened was outside of God's sovereignty, as verse 32 explains. Jesus' trial and execution were not unfortunate events that could have been avoided, but necessary steps toward the redemption of God's people. God's providence and control can seem like distant theological doctrines but they are necessary for our

faith. God's providence means that He is able to do all that He purposes. When things seem at their darkest, God is still in control and guides all of human history in such a way that it glorifies Him.

Notes:

- What was the law designed to do for the Jews?

- What did this group of Jews use it for? How did they miss the whole point?

The law of God is meant to point people to God so they can have a relationship with Him. If they had been paying closer attention, they would've realized the fulfillment of the law stood before them in Jesus. Yet, Jesus threatened their ability to rule, so they rejected a relationship with the living God in favor of a law that does not and cannot save.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 28:33-39.

The direct examination of Jesus by the Roman governor highlights one of the major themes of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in John: Jesus is the King of the Jews. John's rendition of Jesus' final hours demonstrates how the King of the Jews willingly died as the Lamb of God.

- How did Jesus answer Pilate's question (v. 34)? What did Jesus' question reveal about Pilate's heart?

- What does Jesus' response to Pilate teach us about His kingdom and His role as King?

- What does it mean that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world (v. 36)? What implications does this have for the nature and impact of His kingdom on this world?

Jesus' question in response to Pilate's question revealed that the governor had been influenced by the Jewish religious leaders' unjust accusations. Pilate's response indicates that as a governor who was responsible for the "just" conduct of trials, he recognized the defendant's challenge, and he also found it ironic that Jesus' own people turned Him over to the Romans. What kind of king is rejected by His own people? The fundamental attribute of Jesus' kingdom is that it is not derived from this world. Jesus' kingdom came in a form people did not expect—He established His kingdom not through military conquest but through humble self-sacrifice.

Notes:

- What are the implications today of Jesus' words, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"? What kept Pilate from listening to Jesus? What keeps people today from listening to Jesus?
- Why do you think Pilate responded the way he did in verse 38?
- How do we avoid truth in our own lives?

For politically motivated people, truth can be inconvenient. Therefore, it is frequently sacrificed on the altar of expediency. Many politically oriented people pretend they are interested in truth. But Pilate summarized his politically oriented life pattern with the haunting question: "What is truth?" The implications of that question are far-reaching for any person. For Pilate, that question was an attempt to resist taking Jesus' statement seriously in his own life.

- Why did Pilate introduce Barabbas into the situation?

- How did Pilate's indecision stand against Jesus' decisive actions?

Notes:

Pilate found Jesus innocent. Instead of simply dismissing the case as a good judge interested in integrity, Pilate devised a scheme using Barabbas to deal with any potential fallout that might result. Pilate's scheme involved giving the people a predetermined choice he thought they could not refuse. He was clearly wrong.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- What did Jesus accomplish for us through His decision to die on the cross?
- What can we learn from His example in terms of taking action in our own lives?
- What are some ways our culture tries to obscure truth to appease the crowd? What are a few ways we can help one another live in light of God's truth?

PRAY

Thank Jesus for taking action to save us. Confess your desire to hold onto the truth of His Word and live it out. Pray that you would be able to decisively cling to truth even against the tides of popular opinion.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - When have you been pressured to compromise on truth?
 - Why is holding onto the truth more valuable than other's acceptance?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 18:36.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 19:1-16.

JOHN 18:28-40

18:28-32. By now it was approximately 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning. John was about to introduce the longest trial narrative in the Gospels. It began with the charges. Jesus had already been charged with blasphemy (Mark 14:60-64), but on this occasion his enemies offered no charges against him. Instead, we have one of the classic lines of the New Testament: If he were not a criminal. . . we would not have handed him over to you.

Notes:

Pilate had no intention of meddling in Jewish religious affairs, though we should hardly consider him a gentle fellow. On five occasions Pilate slaughtered Jews, earning such a violent reputation in Jerusalem that the emperor Tiberias finally yanked him back to Rome. The New Testament identifies seven different charges against Christ.

1. He threatens to destroy the temple (Matt. 26:61).
2. He is an evildoer (John 18:30).
3. He perverts the nation (Luke 23:2).
4. He has forbidden the Jews to pay taxes (Luke 23:2).
5. He is a revolutionary agitator (Luke 23:2).
6. He makes himself king (Luke 23:2).
7. He claims to be the Son of God (John 19:7).

All this happened early Friday morning, with the beginning of the Passover less than twelve hours away. But Pilate could not get a Roman handle on the charges. It must have been a confusing situation. And this dialogue regarding who should carry out the execution seems like political buck-passing between the Romans and the Jews until we read John's comment in verse 32: This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. Had the Jews taken him, he would have been stoned. But repeatedly he had talked about being lifted up to die—an exclusively Roman execution.

Where did this discussion take place? Some have suggested in Herod's palace, a magnificent building with three towers located north of Caiaphas' palace. Another suggestion is the Tower of Antonia at the northwest corner of the temple, a fortress that Herod the Great had used as his headquarters before his own palace was built.

Notes:

18:33-37. The incredulous Pilate could not imagine this broken and beaten man before him was the king of the Jews. But Jesus would not give him the satisfaction of claiming or disclaiming such an office. All this turned Pilate's disdain for the Jews up another notch in verse 35. He characterized this entire trial as petty religious bickering among these Jews whom he was authorized to control.

Verses 36-37 offer poignant truth from the lips of the Lord. All earthly kingdoms find their source with sinful humanity, but Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. It needs no human defense. Jesus was not referring to the ultimate millennial kingdom; his spiritual kingdom of truth represents the lordship of the King over the lives of his people. Who forms this kingdom? Everyone on the side of truth listens to me, said Jesus.

Once again Jesus set truth as the dividing standard for right and wrong. But if truth was all he cared about, he posed no threat to Rome. Pilate would have to weasel out of this situation in some other way.

18:38-40. In effect, Pilate declared Jesus innocent: I find no basis for a charge against him. Nevertheless, to appease the Jews, he let them select a prisoner of choice for release at the Passover. He seemed to be saying, "Let's be done with all this foolishness. You don't seem to care much for this king of the Jews fellow, but you certainly don't want Barabbas back out on the streets, so let's make that choice and get on with life."

But one should never underestimate the popularity of a folk hero, even a guerrilla who had participated in a rebellion against Rome. Pilate got caught in his own trap.

In this chapter we see intelligent and religious people warped by hate, much like the Nazis and neo-Nazis perverted the minds of their followers. We also see a fascinating play on the name Bar-Abbas, which means “son of the father.” One son of a father was released, and the other, Son of the Father, went to death row.

Notes:

As we look at these four characters, we may ask ourselves where we find a personal likeness. Do we see ourselves in Malchus, an innocent bystander watching the proceedings? Like Peter, who denied the Savior and warmed himself at the enemies’ fire? Like Annas, who illegally put Jesus on trial? Or like Pilate, confused and wanting to be rid of religious hassles as quickly as possible?

One thing is clear from these four witnesses and their four decisions: there is no place to hide when it comes to Jesus. We either decide for him or against him.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	SEPTEMBER 19	21

SENTENCED TO DEATH

JOHN 19:1-16

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 19:1-16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS FACED INJUSTICE AND PERSECUTION ON HIS PATH TO THE CROSS, MODELING THE PROPER RESPONSE TO SUCH EXPERIENCES FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN STANDING UP FOR OUR PERSONAL RIGHTS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: BECAUSE JESUS WAS SILENT WHEN UNJUSTLY ACCUSED, WE HAVE BEEN MADE RIGHT WITH GOD.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Have you ever been summoned to court for a moving violation or other similar misdemeanor? Were you innocent or guilty? Were you given the opportunity to defend your case? What was the end result of your hearing?
- 2 What lessons did you learn from your experience? How did it affect the way you lived in the days, weeks, and months that followed?

Hearings or trials before governing authorities for even the most minor offenses can still be nerve-racking, if not life-altering. The experience of being held accountable for our actions by those who have power over us serves as a test of our character. Similarly, Jesus' character and commitment to God's will was tested through His intense trials before the high priest and Pilate. Through injustice and persecution, Jesus remained humble and steadfast in His obedience to the will of the Father.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:1-16.

- Why would the Father allow Jesus to go through so much humiliation and pain even before the cross, as described in verses 1-5?
- What new charge did the Jews levy against Jesus at this point?
- What effect did this have on Pilate?
- What crime did Pilate eventually convict Jesus of?

Though Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, the Jews would not have such a verdict. Therefore, they revealed their true concern regarding Jesus: They refused to accept the fact that Jesus claimed to have a direct relationship with God, and therefore they interpreted His statements as though He “made” Himself the Son of God. This was an idea that deeply disturbed Pilate and led him to further review the case. Pilate’s verdict was obviously “treason,” namely here the treasonous rising of a king in opposition to Caesar. Moreover, the sentence must have been death by crucifixion.

- How is the Jews’ argument that Pilate would be disloyal to Caesar if he let Jesus go a powerful one?

- Why do you think Jesus was silent regarding where He was from but vocal regarding who had authority over Him?

Notes:

- What does that tell us about Jesus' mission? About His love?

Listening to the crowds rather than to truth, evidence, or reason, Pilate convicted Jesus of "treason." The claim was that Jesus had set Himself up as king of the Jews in opposition to Caesar. Jesus would have been within His rights to boldly and forcefully debate the Jews' bogus claims and Pilate's gross indecision, but He didn't, He remained silent and accepted the injustice Pilate and the Jews leveled at Him. Whereas Pilate was indecisive and allowed the crowds to sway him from doing right, Jesus was resolutely fixed on going to the cross so that He might pay the penalty for our sins. Pilate's indecision kept Him from seeing the truth and trusting Christ. In contrast, Jesus' decisiveness demonstrates His love.

Jesus' trial ended with Pilate granting the religious leaders' request to sentence Jesus and let Him be crucified. With that verdict, innocent Jesus was delivered over to death as God had planned.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8.

- How was the truth of this passage displayed in Jesus' mockery and trial in John 18 and 19?
- What does this passage reveal about Jesus? What does it reveal about how we are to reflect Him to a dark and hurting world, filled with pride?

Paul challenged the Philippian believers to have the mindset of Christ in their relationships with others, then went on to describe exactly what he meant by that. Paul pointed to Christ's love for others and His obedient service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. In the incarnation, Jesus—the Son of God and one with God Himself—left His heavenly throne and became human in an act of humble, selfless love that resulted in His death on the cross.

Notes:

- How do we make Jesus' attitude our own in natural ways that apply at work, home, and church? In what areas of life might you need to make changes to demonstrate a more Christlike attitude?
- What about in times when you face unjust opposition?

To understand God's nature and see who He is transforming us to become, we should look to Jesus Christ. From Him, we learn that we are not to be impressed with status or position, but should seek to have a humble attitude and unselfish love for others.

- Of what did Christ empty Himself when He came to earth (v. 7)? Why was this necessary?
- What might have happened if Jesus had not emptied Himself and assumed the form of a slave?

Rather than holding on tightly to the prerogatives of deity, Jesus emptied Himself. This does not mean He left His deity behind when He came to earth as a man. Jesus Christ was the God-Man, fully divine and fully human. At no point did He cease to be God. His miraculous conception and birth took nothing away from His deity; rather it added humanity.

- What does Christ becoming a man reveal to us about His humility?
- Why do we resist serving others with the same humble love as Jesus served us?
- What are some ways we might be emptied to produce an attitude of humility? How might others see Jesus in us as a result?

Notes:

Christ gave us an example we should follow. From Jesus' example of humility, we learn that as Christ-followers, we are to model Jesus' humble, selfless, sacrificial love to the world. By imitating Jesus, we ensure that our love is not boastful, proud, or self-seeking. (See 1 Cor. 13:4-5.) Evidence of obedience includes personal sacrifice as Philippians 2 shows but it also leads to ultimate joy.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Based on today's study, how are we called to respond when others unfairly accuse us, especially in the name of Jesus?
- How can you actively remind yourself this week of the great price Jesus paid?
- Who can you share the message of the cross with this week?

Notes:

PRAY

Praise God for His reconciling work through Christ that brought you to Him at the right time, when you were hostile and helpless. Pray that the people in your group would understand their need for a Savior and trust fully in Christ because of the price He paid for them.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How does the example Jesus set in His trial change the way you will live this week?

 - How is God calling you to humble yourself in a Christlike manner?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 19:11.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 19:17-42.

JOHN 19:1-16

19:1–3. In typical Roman fashion the process began with the humiliation of the prisoner. We are familiar with the flogging, the crown of thorns, and the mockery of the soldiers. Cruelty has always been a major hallmark of sin in the world, and the Romans had honed it to a fine art.

Notes:

It seems apparent that Pilate never intended crucifixion and expected to beat Jesus and release him. Carson argues convincingly that this was likely a *fustigatio*, the least severe flogging on the Roman menu: “The chronology of Luke and John is correct. But this means that Jesus received a second scourging, the wretched *verberatio*, after the sentence of crucifixion was passed. This would hasten the death, and the nearness of the special Sabbath of that week provided the officials with some pressure to ensure that the agony of crucifixion, which could go on for days, would not be permitted to run on too long (Jn. 19:31–33). This also explains why he was too weak to carry his own cross very far” (Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 597–98).

19:4–7. After the humiliation of the prisoner, the law required a formal presentation, and Pilate did the honors. The text seems quite clear that Pilate found no legal basis for arresting and holding Jesus, much less physically punishing him. Perhaps he thought the bloody sight of a beaten countryman would move the Jews to pity. But as he uttered the words *Here is the man!* (*ecce homo*), the mob became even more violent in their clamoring for crucifixion. The Jews had no authority to crucify, so Pilate seemed to mock them when he told them to take the crucifixion process into their own hands.

Of all the possible charges bouncing around that day, John settled on the one we find in verse 7, a choice completely in line with his purpose for this Gospel and the only correct charge on the list (John 10:34–38). In this maneuver the Jews attempted to invoke the law of blasphemy as the basis for their claims that Jesus must die (see Lev. 24:16).

19:8–11. Finding no success in any of his attempts to end this religious and cultural nonsense, Pilate returned to another interrogation of the prisoner. He was already afraid of this volatile situation, and now his fear increased. He tried to get some information out of Jesus that would help him arrive at a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

Notes:

But, we can ask ourselves, what did Pilate fear? Quite possibly this quiet prophet who, for reasons unknown to the governor, had evoked such emotional response from the mobs outside the palace. He also feared the mobs lest they break the sacred Pax Romana. Ultimately, however, all Roman governors feared Caesar, and the Jews knew that very well. In a moment the Jews would go to the mat: “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar” (v. 12). But we dare not rush to verse 12 since verse 11 may be the key to this first section: You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.

We do not know why Jesus interacted with Pilate in chapter 18 but now refused to respond at all. The Gospels mention Jesus’ silence at various points during the trial (Matt. 26:63; 27:14; Mark 14:60; 15:5; Luke 23:9). As much as the silence infuriated Pilate, immersed as he was in his own importance, most scholars see it as a clear fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7.

Suddenly Jesus spoke again when Pilate emphasized his own power. His answer proclaimed that a Roman governorship was nothing in the eyes of Almighty God (Rom. 13:1). Of this key statement Carson writes:

Typical of Biblical compatibilism, even the worst evil cannot escape the outer boundaries of God’s sovereignty—yet God’s sovereignty never mitigates the responsibility and guilt of moral agents who operate under divine sovereignty, while their voluntary decisions and their evil rebellion never render God utterly contingent (e.g., Gen. 19:20; Isa. 5:10ff.; Acts 4:27–28). Especially in writing of events that lead up to the cross, New Testament writers are bound to see the hand of God bringing all things to their dramatic purpose ... no

matter how vile the secondary causalities may be; for the alternatives are unthinkable. If God merely outwits his enemies, if evil sets both the agenda and the pace, then the mission of the Son to die for fallen sinners is reduced to a mere after-thought; if God's sovereignty capsizes all human responsibility, then it is hard to see why the mission of the Son should be undertaken at all, since in that case there are no sins for the Lamb of God to take away (Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 600–01).

Notes:

19:12–13. Suddenly we learn this governor did have a sense of justice and conscience, but they were no match for screaming mobs. The deciding factor here had nothing to do with the law or religion—it was purely political. The phrase that changed Pilate's mind was not connected in anyway to any of the charges against Jesus: If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. This was no small threat on the part of the Jewish mobs.

As Tenney puts it:

The phrase “a friend of Caesar” was more than a casual allusion to Roman patriotism. It usually denoted a supporter or associate of the emperor, a member of the important inner circle. The cry was a veiled threat: if Pilate exonerated Jesus, the high priest would report to Rome that Pilate had refused to bring a rival pretender to justice and was perhaps plotting to establish a new political alliance of his own. Tiberias, the reigning emperor, was notoriously bitter and suspicious of rivals. If such a report were sent to him, he would instantly end Pilate's political career and probably his life, too (Tenney, Merrill C. *The Gospel of John. Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 9. Ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981., p. 178).

19:14–16. John gave us detailed information on the time and place Pilate actually handed him over to them to be crucified. Backed into a corner of fear and confusion, bewildered by this articulate prophet, and frightened by the threat of some kind of political report to Rome, Pilate

caved in. In their misguided zeal the Jews were already out of control. In saying we have no king but Caesar, the chief priests denied all authority of Herod and even took Caesar's power beyond what the Romans would claim. Caesar was never called king by the Romans (at least up to this point), but the Greek word *basileus* seems to serve well in this context.

As Bruce puts it, "Their status and privileges depended on their collaboration with the imperial power. But normally they would not have been so rash as to say so outright and thus scandalize true Jewish patriots even more than they already did: they were goaded into saying so by Pilate's insistence that Jesus was their king" (Bruce, F. F. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, p. 365).

Let us be careful about the words to them in verse 16. In the context of previous verses, it sounds as though Jesus was being handed over to the Jews. But we already know they had no authority to carry out the death sentence. In light of verse 16b, however, we grasp that John intended us to see the soldiers in the pronoun them.

Notes:

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	SEPTEMBER 26	21

THE CRUCIFIXION

JOHN 19:17-42

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 19:17-42. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JOHN 19 GIVES US JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS' BEATING AND TRIAL BEFORE PILATE, HIS CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH, AND HIS BURIAL.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IT IS THROUGH JESUS' DEATH THAT WE ARE SAVED.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS PAID THE PRICE FOR OUR SINS ON THE CROSS.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 In our culture, what crimes would one have to be convicted of to receive a death sentence?
- 2 What is the execution of a criminal meant to communicate to the general public? What other things can it communicate instead?

Only the most heinous of crimes, usually those that involve taking the life of another, lead one to face execution. Proponents of capital punishment emphasize that it serves as a formidable crime deterrent to the rest of the public. In effect, it is said to communicate, "If you commit these crimes, we will use our power to do this to you." Roman crucifixions held similar purposes, but something other than a display of Rome's power was taking place in Jesus' crucifixion. In Jesus' execution, God the Father powerfully demonstrated His righteous judgment and gracious love.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:17-27.

- What did the soldiers who crucified Jesus do with His clothes? Why did they do that?
- Read Psalm 22:18 and Isaiah 53:12. What did these fulfilled prophecies confirm about who Jesus really was?
- How can these fulfilled prophecies move believers into deeper devotion to Jesus Christ?

The soldiers who crucified Jesus stripped Him of His clothes and divided them among themselves. All four soldiers likely wanted the seamless tunic; therefore, they decided to cast lots for it. John saw a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the dual actions of dividing Jesus' clothing and casting lots for the tunic. (See Ps. 22:18.) John wanted to demonstrate to His readers that what happened to Jesus occurred according to God's plan. The evil people who crucified Jesus appeared to be in charge of these events. In reality, however, God was superintending the events to provide the way of forgiveness for sinners.

- While hanging on the cross, Jesus instructed one of His disciples to care for His mother after His death. Read John 19:25-27 again. What does this scene reveal about Jesus' greater mission, the mission for which He died?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus displayed such love for family and followers while on the cross?

Jesus looked down from the cross and saw His mother and John, the disciple He loved, standing nearby. In an extraordinary act of love, Jesus commended His mother to the care of this disciple. This statement demonstrates His selfless love for others. At a time of great pain, Jesus focused not on His needs, but on the interests of others. (See Phil. 2:4.) In one sense, this was an illustration of Jesus' larger mission. Jesus was dying on the cross for the sins of others. He came to focus on our need for a Savior and was willing to give His life so that we might have eternal life. When we fully appreciate Jesus' provision of care for His earthly mother even as He hung on the cross, we are motivated to be devoted all the more to Jesus as our Savior.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:28-42.

These verses give us the description of Jesus' final moments on the cross, including His last two statements on earth. The first statement in these verses was His admission of thirst. Jesus' admission of thirst not only reminds us of His humanity, but is also a fulfillment of Scripture.

- Read Psalm 69:21. How does this prophetic verse from the Book of Psalms help us understand the intent behind the Roman soldiers' action in verse 29?

Jesus' cry for something to drink is likely a reference to Psalm 69:21, "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." There was nothing compassionate about this action, as this bitter liquid was intended to prolong pain by unnecessarily extending life. Indeed, some scholars believe such sponges would have been used to disinfect public toilets.

- When Jesus said, "It is finished," to what was He referring? In what sense was it "finished"?

- How does Jesus' statement show that He was in control to the very end of His life? What does this statement suggest to believers today about reliance on God?

Notes:

Jesus' cry is one of accomplishment, not defeat. It is grammatically and thematically linked to His statement in John 17:4, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." Through His death, Jesus loved His disciples to the end and completed all that the Father had charged. Furthermore, these verses reveal that Jesus chose the exact moment of His death. The control was always His.

- Read Colossians 2:13-15. How does this passage help you better understand Jesus' declaration, "It is finished"? What did Jesus' death accomplish for us and for our world?
- What did John mean in stating that Jesus "gave up His spirit" (v. 30)? How does this phrase compare to simply saying, "Jesus died"?

John described Jesus' death as bowing His head and giving up His spirit. Even in His death Jesus remained in control, and the yielding of His spirit demonstrated a willingness to die for our sins. The facts of Jesus' death on the cross do not alone provide salvation. The facts are true for all people for all time. However, Jesus' death becomes effectual as an atoning sacrifice when a sinner is convicted and drawn by the Holy Spirit to repentance and faith. Jesus' provision for salvation is complete and requires no addition. Yet salvation is a gift of God that can only be received by faith apart from works. (See Eph. 2:8-9.)

- Given that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were Pharisees, does it surprise you to see them playing integral roles in Jesus' burial? (See Matthew 23:25-28 for more on Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees.)

- What does their involvement teach us about God's sovereignty? About His saving power?

Notes:

No group of people gave Jesus more trouble throughout His earthly ministry than the Pharisees—a group of religious leaders whose hypocrisy and works-based theology Jesus harshly criticized. And yet, after His death, two Pharisees played an important role in making sure Jesus was properly buried. God orchestrated events such that the very person to whom Jesus said, “You must be born again” (John 3:7), paved the way for generations to know with certainty that Jesus died and rose again. What an example of God's sovereignty. This speaks also to God's saving power in that He changed the hearts of two men from a group of people who hated Jesus and actively opposed His ministry.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 3:14-15, Hebrews 9:22, and other verses related to the cross. How much did the cross really cost Christ?
- What difference does Christ's death and resurrection make in your daily life? What difference should it make?
- How can you use the story of Jesus' death and resurrection as a tool when you share your faith with others? How can it show others God's plan?
- How can you live out your role in God's story and invite others to do the same? How should that role affect the way you see and plan for your life?

PRAY

Close your time in prayer, praising God for who Christ is. Praise Christ for being God made flesh, who died and rose again. Thank God for the resurrection, which is the power of salvation. Pray that your group would reflect on and think about who Jesus is and all that He has done for you.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Read Psalm 22 this week, reflecting on how it points to Jesus' crucifixion.
 - Ask God to empower you to become bolder in your witness for Jesus. Demonstrate that new boldness by sharing the gospel with someone this week.

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 19:30.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 20:1-18.

JOHN 19:17-42

19:17. Jesus set out carrying the cross by himself until he collapsed. Simon of Cyrene was then pressed into service, and he carried it to the execution site (Mt 27:32). He went out means “out of the city,” where Jewish custom prescribed that executions should take place (Lv 24:14, 23; Nm 15:35–36; Dt 17:5; 21:19–21; 22:24; cp. Heb 13:12). Place of the Skull translates Aramaic Golgotha; the Latin equivalent used in the Vulgate is “Calvary.”

Notes:

19:18. Jesus’s crucifixion between two criminals is reminiscent of Ps 22:16: “A gang of evildoers has closed in on me.” The passage also echoes Is 53:12: “counted among the rebels.”

19:19. The inscription on Jesus’s cross specified the crime for which he was executed, probably to discourage others from committing similar acts.

19:20. On the place ... was near the city, see note at v. 17. Aramaic was the language most widely understood by the Jewish population of Palestine; Latin was the official language of the Roman occupying force; and Greek was the “international language” of the empire, understood by most Diaspora Jews as well as Gentiles. The trilingual inscription ensured that virtually anyone could read the crimes with which Jesus was charged.

19:21–22. Pilate was unwilling to give in to further Jewish pressures. For John, the inscription unintentionally confirmed Jesus’s true kingship.

19:23. The seamless tunic may recall Joseph’s robe (Gn 37:3, 23). Similar to several later events at the crucifixion (Jn 19:28–37), the soldiers’ division of Jesus’s clothes and their casting of lots fulfilled Scripture (Ps 22:18).

19:24. The quotation is from Ps 22, a lament psalm ascribed to David. This is the first of several references to Jesus as the righteous sufferer in keeping with the experience of the psalmist (Jn 19:28, 36–37). The soldiers

did not want to tear Jesus's tunic because it was woven of one cloth. John may have purposefully shaped his account of Jesus's crucifixion in a way that highlighted the parallels and fulfillments between the experiences of David and Jesus. For instance, Ps 22:15–18 mentions the sufferer's thirst (v. 15), his pierced hands and feet (v. 16), and the preservation of all his bones (v. 17).

Notes:

19:25. His mother's sister may be Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee mentioned in Matthew and Mark. On Mary the wife of Clopas, see Lk 24:18. On Mary Magdalene, see 20:1–18 (cp. Lk 8:2–3).

19:26–27. In keeping with biblical injunctions to honor one's parents (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16), Jesus made provision for his mother, who was almost certainly widowed and probably in her early fifties, with little or no personal income.

19:28–29. The reference to Scripture being fulfilled builds on v. 24 (see note there), most likely in allusion to Ps 69:21: "They gave me vinegar to drink" (cp. Mt 27:34, 48; see Ps 22:15). Soldiers and laborers used sour wine to quench their thirst (Mk 15:36). It is different from the "wine mixed with myrrh" Jesus refused on the way to the cross (Mk 15:23). Hyssop was a plant classified in 1Kg 4:33 as a humble shrub. It was used for the sprinkling of blood on the doorpost at the original Passover (Ex 12:22).

19:30. Gave up may echo "willingly submitted to death," which was prophesied of the Suffering Servant (Is 53:12).

19:31. On preparation day, see note at v. 14. That Sabbath was ... special because it was the Sabbath of Passover week. For the Jews, bodies of hanged criminals were not to defile the land by remaining on a tree overnight (Dt 21:22–23; cp. Jos 8:29).

19:31–33. The legs of crucifixion victims were broken to hasten death. This prevented them from pushing themselves up with their legs to open the chest cavity and thus breathe better. Since the victims would now have to pull themselves up by the arms instead, suffocation occurred once their arm strength failed. See note at v. 36.

19:34. The flow of blood and water proved that Jesus was dead (1Jn 5:6–8). The passage may also allude to Ex 17:6: “Hit the rock, water will come out of it and the people will drink” (cp. Nm 20:11). The spear was about three and one-half feet long and consisted of an iron spearhead joined to a shaft of wood.

Notes:

19:36. After vv. 24 and 28–29 (see notes there), this is the third scriptural proof that shows that Jesus’s death fulfilled Scripture (Ex 12:46; Ps 34:20). Jesus escaped having his legs broken since he died so quickly, and the spear did not damage any of his bones.

19:37. The Roman soldiers again fulfilled prophecy without knowing it: “They will look at me whom they pierced” (Zch 12:10; also cited in Rv 1:7).

19:38. Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Jewish ruling council (Mt 27:57), asked Pilate for Jesus’s body. Thus Jesus was killed alongside criminals and was buried in a rich man’s tomb. This fulfilled another Scripture: “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death” (Is 53:9).

19:39–40. The amount of aromatic spices brought by Joseph and Nicodemus—about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes—was considerable (2Ch 16:14). Myrrh was a fragrant resin used by Egyptians in embalming; aloes were a powder of aromatic sandalwood; the mixture cloaked the smell of decay.

19:41. On the place where he was crucified, see notes at vv. 17, 20. The garden was apparently somewhat elaborate; note the mention of a gardener in 20:15. Garden burials are recorded in the OT (Manasseh in 2Kg 21:18; Amon in 2Kg 21:26).

19:42. Sabbath was rapidly approaching, when all work ceased, including that of carrying spices or transporting a corpse. Thus we may see it as an instance of divine providence that the tomb was nearby.