

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 19

When it comes to roads, there're different types: dirt roads, and paved roads, and country roads, and super highways, and back alleys, and cobblestone streets...

There's famous roads: Wall Street, Pennsylvania Ave., Sunset Boulevard, Peachtree Street, the German Autobahn, Boardwalk and Park Place, the Road to the Final Four... and of course, the Yellow Brick Road...

There're even famous roads in the Bible: In Acts 9 the angry rabbi Saul became a follower of Jesus on the Road to Damascus... In Luke 24 the risen Lord walked with two disciples on the Emmaus Road... And in Acts 8 Philip met an Ethiopian on the Road to Gaza...

But of all the roads - biblical and otherwise - the most famous in history is the Via Dolorosa. It's the path Jesus took... *from Pilate's Judgment Hall, to a hill called Golgotha, to the tomb of a rich man...*

The term "Via Dolorosa" is Latin for "the way of sorrows" - and indeed it was... This evening I want to take you for a walk down the Via Dolorosa...

I would prefer to charter a plane and fly you all to Jerusalem's Old City. We could explore its arches and stone streets - and even walk the alley-ways together.

Yet there are Jerusalem-ites who comb those streets daily, and never feel the importance of the events we'll discuss

tonight... Likewise, there are people who read John 19 and take for granted what happened there...

This is why I'm praying something else happens to us tonight. As we read John's account of the cross I'm praying it hits us, "He did it for me!" From time to time tonight we'll push pause on the commentary and take a moment to whisper to ourselves, "He did this for me."

If you and I understand the real message of John 19 there'll be tear stains in our Bible on these very pages.

Recall in John 18, Jesus is betrayed by Judas.

A scuffle occurs in the Garden. Peter drew his sword and lopped off the ear of the arresting officer.

Jesus rebuked Peter, and then reattached the ear.

Jesus was then taken to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where He was sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. The Jews then shuttled Him across town to Rome's governor, Pilate.

Only the Romans could perform executions, so the Jews needed Pilate to sign off on their lethal hatred...

Pilate tries to win a reprieve for Jesus. He offers to release a prisoner, and he gives the Jews a choice between Jesus and a menace to society - a brigand named Barabbas. Surprisingly, they choose the rabble-rouser, and ask Pilate to crucify the Prince of Peace...

This gets us up to speed. Chapter 19 picks up the story, "So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him."

This scourging had a nickname - called "the half-way death." It was so brutal, many victims never survived.

The Roman "flagellum" consisted of 12-13 leather thongs attached to a single handle. A lead ball was attached to the ends of the cords - and pieces of glass or metal were embedded in the thongs between the ball and its handle. The victim was tied by the wrists and dangled about a foot off the ground. The beating consisted of thirty-nine lashes at full force.

The ordeal was carried out by professional, hardcore executioners, accustomed to *the sight of blood* and *the screams of pain*. They had callous consciences.

The first blows caused welts to form on the shoulders and back... By the seventh or eighth blow the glass and metal had sliced through the skin layers and were churning up muscle... It was not uncommon for a rib bone to fly off the body after a blow. The victim's back ended up the texture of hamburger meat.

At the conclusion of the beating the victim was cut down, and would hit the pavement in a puddle of his own urine, and feces, and sweat, and blood.

The ancient historian, Eusebius, writes of the martyrs who endured such beatings, "(They were) torn by scourges down to deep seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed."

Medical Doctor, William Edwards, gives an accurate description of a scourging victim, "the iron balls would cause

deep contusions... the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous muscles, and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh." Let that sink in, "*Quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.*" After that Jesus looked like a sacrificed lamb.

Now close your eyes and whisper, "He did it for me."

Verse 2, "And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head..." These "*thorns*" were "*briers*" - sharp, pointed needles. There're several species of plants around Jerusalem that grow such thorns.

And the torturers didn't lightly lay this crown on Jesus' head. They smashed it in place. They literally screwed the needles into His scalp. Like little daggers they caused blood to flow down Jesus' disfigured face.

Here's the only crown King Jesus ever wore... *a crown of thorns...* Since it was man's sin that brought thorns and thistles into an originally, perfect world, now in bearing the sin of the world, it was symbolically fitting for Jesus to be crowned with a wreath of thorns.

"And they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands." The prophet Isaiah speaks prophetically of an additional gory detail not mentioned in the Gospels.

Isaiah 50:6 is a prophesy quoting Jesus 700 years before His first coming, "I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard; I did not hide my face from shame and spitting." When my kids were babies I had a beard, and at times they would grab it with their little

fingers and jerk - *it hurt!* But imagine, grown men ripping out your beard - yanking out handfuls of skin, blood, and flesh.

Hey, close your eyes and whisper, "He did it for me."

Today, when you go to Old Jerusalem you can visit the place where the scourging of Jesus took place.

It's called the "Lithostratos" or "raised pavement."

This was part of the Antonio Fortress - Pilate's judgment hall and Roman headquarters on the Temple Mount. Today, the pavement is several feet below street level, but excavations allow you to walk on the stones over which Jesus was scourged.

The reddish stones give the impression they're stained with blood. And in a sense they are - Jesus' DNA is deep in the crevasses. For me the Lithostratos is holy ground. It's a powerful place for reflection.

An amazing discovery was found at the Lithostratos. Carved into the stones are lines and circles that make a game Roman soldiers played on their victims.

It wasn't unique to Israel. It was found in Roman outposts around the empire. It was called, "The Game Of The Kings," and was designed to mock the victim, and entertain the calloused soldiers. This is why they twisted a crown of thorns on Jesus' brow, and threw a purple robe on Him. Apparently it was part of the game.

Here's a picture... The **circle** is a crown... The "**B**" is the initial for Basilicus, or Latin for *king*... The **scorpion** is the

symbol of the Roman legion... The **double square** is the dice the soldiers tossed...

There's also a **horizontal line** that represents the victim's life... Later a **sword crosses the line** - which indicates where in the game the victim loses his life...

This all adds to the horror of what was done to our Lord Jesus. Imagine, they played a game with God's Son. They *were making sport of killing God!*

Verse 4, "Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!" In Latin it's the phrase, "*ecce homo.*" Today, Pilate's words are a famous phrase. It challenges the skeptic to examine the majesty, and miracles, and identity of Jesus.

If you take the time and make the effort to *Behold the Man* your doubts will flee and your faith will grow. You'll fall down and worship Jesus as Lord and God.

But when Pilate uttered these words they were an attempt to conjure up sympathy for Jesus. As cruel as it seems, the awful scourging Pilate inflicted on our Lord was his attempted to engineer Jesus' release...

How could anyone with a shred of decency not pity a man Who'd just endured such torture. Surely, the Jews would say "*enough*" and mercifully set Jesus free.

But “When the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”

Some of the same folks who a few days earlier greeted Jesus on the Mount of Olives with “Hosanna, Hosanna” now are crying, “*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*”

Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” *He wanted no part in a lynching.* “The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.” Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid...”

If you read Matthew 27:19, Pilate's wife – history knows her as Claudia Procula - had sent word to her husband concerning Jesus... “*Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.*” *His wife's dream - and the power of Jesus' presence - and now His claim of being God's Son - all combined to shake Pilate up.*

He doesn't like the responsibility of this decision...

He wants to placate the Jews - that's his job - but He can't escape the searching eyes of this man named “Jesus.” Pilate is a politician - he's a professional compromiser - *why won't the Jews work with him?*

Verse 9, “And (he) went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Jesus isn't interested in chit-chat.

At this point, Jesus isn't going to release any new information to Pilate, until Pilate is willing to obey what he already knows to be true? *In fact, why should Jesus talk to anyone who won't obey what he's already been told? Is this the reason He isn't speaking to you?*

Pilate tries to threaten Jesus - flex his Roman muscle - "Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above." Pilate thinks he's in control, but he's just a pawn in a bigger drama.

Everything was unfolding according to God's will.

In reality, it wasn't Jesus Who was on trial before Pilate - it was Pilate who was on trial before Jesus!

Jesus adds the observation, "Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Jesus almost empathizes with the difficulty of Pilate's predicament.

Judas knew better. He logged 3½ years with Jesus, yet denied what He'd learned and betrayed His Master.

Pilate interviews Jesus one time and has to make a decision. *Sometimes life unfolds in unexpected ways.* Jesus is encouraging Pilate to make the right decision.

Verse 12, "From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us the Jews had already complained to Rome about Pilate's heavy-handed tactics and insensitivity toward their religion.

Pilate is between a rock and hard place. He's wants to show Jesus justice, but at the same time he's watching out for his own skin. Pilate is going to have to choose... *political expedience* or *personal integrity*?

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.” This was the Lithostratos, It was part of the Roman garrison in the Temple - the Antonio Fortress.

These types of pavement existed all over the empire. They were traditional sites of Roman justice.

History tells us that when Julius Caesar traveled into battle he would carry a portable mosaic pavement that he would set up to judge his conquered opponents.

Verse 14, “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. Unlike the other Gospel writers, John uses Roman time. It was the 6th hour or 6:00 AM. The Jews counting the hours of the day from dawn - the Romans began at midnight.

We'll talk about “*the Preparation Day*” in a moment.

“And (Pilate) said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" “But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered

Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.”

The motto of Rome was, "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall!" As a Roman, Pilate *had a great respect for justice* - and coupled with his fear of Jesus - he was able to hold off the Jews for a season.

Yet in the end, he breaks. When the Jews make the argument personal and questions his own loyalty to Rome he buckles under to the political pressure.

There is a legend that following Jesus' resurrection Pilate's wife Claudia became a Christian.

But Pilate's plight was just the opposite. He eventually fell into the trap he tried so hard to avoid. The Jews were able to force his removal from office.

Pilate's superior, Vitellius, ordered him back to Rome, but the disgraced governor never arrived. According to the fourth-century church historian, Eusebius, he committed suicide in route to Rome.

Verse 17, "And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha..." The Greek word is "Calvaria" or "Calvary." It's a derivative of our English term "*cranium*." Jesus was taken to "the place of the skull."

In Jerusalem, north of the Old City, just outside the Damascus Gate is a former quarry. (*We visit it on our tours.*) Solomon harvested granite from this site to use in the construction of the Temple. And there is a rock cliff which years ago looked eerily like a skull.

Today, the site is in front of a bus terminal, and the fumes from the buses are eroding the skull-shape - but you can still see it... And just beyond the cliff is a tomb, and that tomb is surrounded by a beautiful garden...

In 1883 a British General named Charles Gordon identified this rocky cliff as "**Golgotha**" of Bible times. Today, the hill is called "**Gordon's Calvary**."

The Romans crucified criminals in the public square for all to see. It was the same sort of atmosphere created by a public hanging in Wild West days.

Usually crucifixions occurred beside busy roads.

Golgotha is alongside the Road to Damascus. Either Jesus was crucified on the top of the mountain for everyone to see - or at its base, right next to the road.

When we think of the cross we imagine the traditional shape in the form of a lower case "t." But Roman crosses were configured in different ways.

Some were "Xs," "Ys," "Is" - even upper case "Ts."

We're not sure the actual shape of Jesus' cross.

He was though forced to carry His crossbeam. It would've weighed about 75 pounds. And He had to carry it quite a distance, from the Fortress at the heart of the city to Calvary, north of the city, outside its walls.

"Where they crucified Him..." And never skip over what this means... Crucifixion was the most heinous form of execution ever devised. CS Lewis noted, "**The crucifixion did not become common in art until all who had seen a real one had**

died off.” If you’d seen a live crucifixion you would’ve had nightmares for months.

The victim’s body was stretched out on a piece of timber. His ankles were coupled together and a single iron spike was driven through them into the wood. A large spike was also nailed through the victim’s wrists.

The wood was then lifted to an upright position where the weight of the victim’s body would press against the wounds causing searing pain.

Every breath required the crucified to press down on the wounds to hike up his torso, and expand his lungs. Some victims collapsed and suffocated to death...

Other men died of heart ruptures. Non-oxygenated blood gets sluggish - the blood pressure drops - the overworked heart literally explode in the man’s chest.

Who crucified Jesus? The Jews? Yes, they played a part. *The Romans?* Yes, they also played a role. *But who really crucified Jesus?* Whisper, “He did it for me.”

We drove the nails into Jesus’ hands and feet.

It’s said, “Every man is born with a fist full of nails, and he dies with his hands empty.” We’re all guilty!

“And two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.” Usually, the worst criminal was crucified in the middle. It seemed grossly inappropriate at the time, but since Jesus died for the sin of the whole world, it was right for Him to be the centerpiece.

Verse 19, “Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.” Jerusalem was, and is, a cosmopolitan city.

Jews from all over the world visit Jerusalem for Passover. Thus, this placard, describing the accusation against Jesus, could've been read in the three most common languages of the day - Hebrew, Greek, Latin.

Hebrew was the language of religion. *Greek* was the language of culture and philosophy. And *Latin* was the language of law and government. All three - *religion, culture, government* - had a hand in crucifying Jesus.

Verse 21, “Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews." ' "Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written.” This was Pilate's last dig at the Jews. He didn't like the fact they'd bullied him into a verdict he didn't want to issue.

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic.” The normal number of executioners dispatched to a crucifixion were four soldiers and one centurion. Like all Jewish men, Jesus wore five pieces of clothing: a turban or headband, sandals, a belt, an outer cloak, and an inner garment.

Thus, there was a piece of clothing for each of the four men - along with an inner tunic they all could split.

But “Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.” Jesus’ inner tunic, or undershirt, would’ve been knee-length. Like a woman’s nightshirt.

It was long and had no seams. It was a more expensive article of clothing - too valuable to tear.

Verse 24 “They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” (and John adds) that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.” It was all prophetic - details were foretold in advance. John quotes Psalm 22:18.

Here’s the ultimate irony. Jesus bears the sin of the world, while the soldiers are gambling away His shirt.

God’s back is torn and bleeding. His heart is breaking in pieces. The veil in the Temple has been torn in two from top to bottom - while the soldiers shoot craps for a cloak and try to avoid tearing Jesus’ tunic.

These men were so wrapped up in their materialism they were oblivious to the most heroic and consequential act in the history of the world. Which is exactly what describes millions of Americans today.

Here’s the materialist’s prayer, “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my Keurig machine to keep. I pray my stocks are on the rise, and that my analyst is wise.

That all the wine I sip is white, and that my hot tub is watertight. That racquetball won't get too tough, and that all

my sushi's fresh enough. I pray my smartphone upgrade works, and my career path won't lose its perks. My microwave won't radiate, and my condo won't depreciate. I pray my health club doesn't close, and my money market grows. And if I go broke before I wake, I pray my Volvo they don't take." I hope none of us gets caught in the trap of materialism. *Just earning a living doesn't make a life.* There's more to living...

We need to heed Pilate's words, "**Behold the Man.**"

Our everyday dealings pale in comparison to what Jesus did on the cross. He died to demonstrate how much He loves us, and He has a better way for us. This is a good time to whisper again, "**He did it for me.**"

Verse 25, "**Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.**" Three Mary's stood by Jesus as He hung from the cross. They showed more devotion and courage than most of the male disciples.

It's interesting, from **1880 to 1950** more American parents named their baby girl "**Mary**" than any other name... In the 1950s the most popular name was "**Linda.**" "**Mary**" was second... In the 60s "**Mary**" once more took the top spot. *But that's no longer the case...*

"**Jennifer**" was the most popular name in the 70s and 80s. In the 90s it was "**Ashley.**" In the new century it's been "**Emily,**" "**Isabella,**" and "**Sophia.**" In 2015 "**Emma**" was the most popular girl's name, while **Maria** finished in 109th place, and **Mary** came in at 124 on the list.

Here's my point, for 80 years American parents were so steeped in the Bible it was second nature to give their girls a

biblical name. Not so recently. It's another small indicator of how secular our society has become.

Check out the other three Gospels and you'll find another name mentioned among the ladies at the cross, "Salome" - the mother of James and John.

It's possible she was there in addition to the four women mentioned here in verse 25 - or she could've been "*His mother's sister*" - which is provocative...

If Salome was Mary of Nazareth's sister it would mean Jesus, James, and John were cousins - and Jesus' mother Mary was John's aunt... This family connection might help explain what happens next...

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (this the way John referred to himself) standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." Usually, a widow was taken in by her relatives. It could be that John and Mary were family.

It's appalling what Roman Catholicism has done to Mary of Nazareth. They've made her Co-redemptrix. Not only does Jesus give salvation, so does Mary.

According to Roman Catholicism *she's the Mother of God... she's sinless... she ascended to heaven... she was a perpetual virgin...* yet none of these doctrines are true. Mary was a good girl, but she wasn't divine.

Mary was a sinner. After Jesus' birth she had sexual relations with Joseph. She birthed other kids. She eventually

died and her body was buried. She has no more clout with God than any other believer...

Yet don't be guilty of the Mary backlash. She followed Jesus and showed an exemplary devotion.

Of all His disciples it's possible Mary made the greatest sacrifice to follow Jesus. Three decades earlier, her whole world was turned upside down by the news that she would miraculously birth a child.

Now at the foot of the cross Mary watches that child brutally tortured and executed. Her sacrifice had no atoning effects, but it was significant in God's sight, and an example to us of a whole-hearted surrender.

Think of what must've gone through Mary's mind as she stood at the cross... Did she remember the myrrh, the embalming fluid the wise men brought to her baby? Did the purpose of the present finally dawn on Mary?

Perhaps the words of old Simeon in the Temple were still ringing in Mary's ears, "Yes, a sword will pierce through you own soul also." Now she feels the stab!

Mary had surrendered all her dreams to the will of God and now Jesus rewards her sacrifice by insuring her future. He turns her care over to the Apostle John.

She would spend the rest of her life under his roof.

Verse 28, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put

it to His mouth.” This was the cheap vinegar-wine that the soldiers drank.

Earlier in his ordeal, Jesus had rejected the narcotic He was offered. This drink was not to deaden the pain. It moistened His lips so He could utter His final words.

Hyssop is a leafy, spongy, absorbent plant. Jesus must've been several feet off the ground since they needed a branch to reach His lips with the sponge.

“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” The phrase, “*It is finished*” is actually just one word in the original Greek language, “*Tetelestai.*” And it was used in a number of ways...

A **servant** finishing an assignment would say, “*Tetelestai...*” A **priest** after inspecting a sacrifice and finding it faultless would declare it, “*Tetelestai...*”

An **artist** upon putting the finishing touches on a painting, might sigh, “*Tetelestai...*” And after a **customer** paid the balance of his bill, the merchant would write across the ledger, “*Tetelestai*” (*paid in full.*)

And on the cross Jesus did all this and more...

The Servant of God **completed the task** He was sent to do... God’s High Priest **initiated the flawless, sinless sacrifice**... The Artist of God’s poema **put the finishing touches on the portrait of redemption**, the painting He had been working on from creation... And Our Accountant **paid in full the penalty for our sin**...

Jesus tied up all the loose ends that had been dangling since the beginning of time. He finished the puzzle. He filled

up what had been lacking. Jesus invaded an imperfect world and made everything of eternal value finally, and totally, and beautifully perfect.

On the cross Jesus finished His work of redemption. All that comes afterward is the realization of that work.

An eccentric old evangelist named, Alexander Wooten, was once working in the shop behind his house. He was visited by a exasperated young man, with an eager look on his face.

The young man asked him, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" Wooten responded, "*It's too late!*"

The man became desperate, "Please, isn't there anything I can do to be saved?" The evangelist explained, "*It's too late for you to do anything. The work has already been done. All you have to do is believe!*" This is the glorious hope of the Gospel.

Here again is the rallying cry of saints throughout the ages, "**Tetelestai - it is finished.**" Once you trust in Jesus' work on the cross all that needs to be done has been done for you to be saved and made victorious.

When Jesus returned to heaven He sat down on the right hand of the Father. Today, His work is finished!

That's why *He's sitting down!* He's resting - and we need to rest with Him. Let's trust in His finished work. Here's where we can whisper again, "**He did it for me.**"

Again verse 30, "**And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.**" The word translated " **bowed** " literally means "**to recline**

your head on a pillow." Jesus finished His work on earth. He's laying His head in the Father's lap.

Notice too the expression, *"He gave up his spirit."*

Jesus' life wasn't taken from Him. He wasn't a *victim*, but the *victor*. Jesus called the shots from beginning to the end. He voluntarily laid down His life for us.

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." John says this was a special Sabbath, *"a high day."* The normal Sabbath was on Saturday, but during Passover week Judaism inserted a second Sabbath on Friday. John says Jesus was crucified prior to this special Friday Sabbath.

Thus, the Day of Preparation was Thursday.

This is one reason many Bible teachers, including myself, believe Jesus was NOT crucified on Friday, but Thursday. In the big picture it doesn't matter, but I think we should celebrate *Good Thursday*, not *Good Friday*.

Remember too, Jesus predicted in Matthew 12:40, *"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

It's hard to account for 3 days and 3 nights - or 72 hours - if Jesus was only in the grave from Friday until Sunday morning... Some folks count partial days, but the phrase *"days and nights"* seems to imply 24 hours.

The Jewish day was reckoned from sunset to sunset.

Since Jesus' crucifixion ended late in the afternoon, the women hurried up the burial so they could observe the special Friday Sabbath that started at sundown.

I believe Jesus' was crucified on a Thursday - but do your own research and draw your own conclusion!

“Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him.”

This was Rome's sole act of mercy. For once the victim's legs were broken it was impossible for him to push himself up, expand his lungs, and take a breath.

The crucified quickly died of asphyxiation. Thus, breaking the victim's legs put him out of his misery.

“But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.” Jesus was an exception to the Roman custom. The soldiers didn't need to break His legs since Jesus was already dead.

“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”

Medical doctors tell us the only time the blood breaks down into water and plasma is in the case of a heart that ruptures. Jesus literally died of a broken heart.

There's also intriguing symbolism on display here.

When God created a bride for Adam He opened his side and removed a rib. Now God opens up the side of *the last Adam, Jesus* - and removes blood and water that He uses to fashion for Jesus a bride, the Church.

Verse 35, “And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.” John was the eyewitness. He reports these events to stir up our faith.

If John were here tonight I think he would tell us to close our eyes and whisper, “He did it for me.”

“For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.” This was the fulfillment of Exodus 12:46.

The Law of Moses forbid the bones of the Passover lamb from being broken. And Jesus is our Passover.

Verse 37 points out another fulfillment of prophecy. “And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” This is from Zechariah 12:10.

At Jesus’ second coming, last day’s Israel will look upon Jesus, and realize the mistake of rejecting Him.

In the end they’ll repent and believe.

Verse 38, “After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews...”

This Joseph had been a *secret saint*, an *undercover Christian*... now he comes out of the closet.

In a day when anybody and everybody with a twisted perversion feels free to “*come out*” and flaunt their sin, it’s high time we who love Jesus also came out, and went public with our faith. *Be vocal about your faith!*

Joseph “asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus.” There's an ancient record of the conversation between these two men...

Pilate said, *"Joe, you're usually a pretty stingy fellow. Are you sure you want to give away a perfectly good tomb?"* Joseph answers, *"Oy vey Governor, but Jesus only needs it for the weekend!"* It was a 3-day lease.

Verse 39, “And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.” Nic should've saved his money. Here's the biggest waste of money in history... *the burial spices used on the body of Jesus!*

It's interesting too, the amount of spices Nicodemus supplies... One-hundred pounds were the preparations for a king. I'm sure this revealed Nicodemus' feelings about Jesus. Nic had embraced Jesus as *his* King!

Verse 40, “Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” When Jesus came into the world He was bound in swaddling clothes - now He exits this world bound up with strips of linen cloth.

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.”

Jesus was laid in *“a new tomb”* - an unused tomb

Do you know why the lily is associated with Easter? It's because its blossom is shaped like a trumpet.

In Bible times the trumpet was used to announce big events. Well, in his final two chapters, John blows his trumpet, and sounds the good news - *Jesus is risen!*