

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 19:16-42 | THE KING'S LAST MARCH

KEY TERMS

Crucified - Crucifixion was Rome's most brutal and humiliating form of execution, reserved for slaves, criminals, and political threats. The victim was stripped, nailed to a wooden cross, and left to die slowly in full public view. For Jews, crucifixion carried an additional negative because Deuteronomy 21:23 says that anyone hung on a tree was cursed by God.

Day of Preparation - John notes that Jesus was crucified on the *day of Preparation of the Passover* (19:14, 31, 42). This was the day when the Passover lambs were slaughtered at the temple in preparation for the Passover meal, meaning as the lambs are being killed, Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, is being put to death on the cross (see 1:29).

DID YOU KNOW?

Pilate's inscription—*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*—was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (19:20), which were the three dominant languages of the ancient world. Aramaic was the local language of the Jewish people, Latin was the language of Rome's government, and Greek was the common language of commerce and culture.

SYNOPSIS

Jesus is led away and crucified at a place called Golgotha, along with two others (vv. 17-18). Above him is an inscription that reads, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* (v. 19). However, this only angers the chief priests who want Pilate to change the inscription to say, *This man said, I am King of the Jews*, but Pilate refuses (v. 21). As Jesus hangs on the cross, soldiers divide his garments and cast lots for his tunic, fulfilling the words of Psalm 22:18 (vv. 23-24). While this takes place, Jesus' mother and *the disciple whom he loved* (likely John) are standing nearby and Jesus entrusts his mother into John's care (vv. 26-27). Jesus then says, *I thirst*, and, after receiving sour wine, says *It is finished*, and dies (vv. 28-29). These last words point to the completion of the mission Jesus came to do. Because the bodies cannot remain on the cross during the Sabbath, the soldiers come to break the legs of those crucified. The two men on either side of Jesus have their legs broken, but when they come to Jesus, he is already dead (vv. 31-33). A soldier pierces his side, and blood and water flow out (v. 34), and John highlights the fulfillment of two Old Testament texts: *Not one of his bones will be broken* (v. 36; see Exodus 12:46), and *They will look on him whom they have pierced* (v. 37; see Zechariah 12:10). John wants his readers to see that none of this has caught God by surprise. On the contrary, Jesus' death is the event to which all of Israel's story has been pointing. The passage closes with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus coming forward to bury Jesus (vv. 38-42). Nicodemus the same man who first came to Jesus under cover of night (3:1-2)—now brings seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes to prepare his body, an amount befitting a king. Together they lay Jesus in a new tomb in a nearby garden.

GOING DEEPER

Read Exodus 12:46 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. How do these passages shape the way you understand Jesus' death not as an accident or tragedy, but as the fulfillment of something God had been pointing to all along? How does knowing you were ransomed *with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish* change how you see your own life?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 19:16-42. Make 5 or so quick observations. What details surprise you on this reading?
2. Read Psalm 22. What aspects of Jesus crucifixion can you find in David's psalm (for example, see verses 1, 7-8, 16-18)? How does this psalm help you to better understand Jesus' crucifixion and fulfill this prophesy of David?
3. Even as he is dying, for whom is Jesus caring (verses 25-27)? What does this tell you about Jesus?
4. Read Exodus 12:21-27. What analogy is John drawing by his mention of hyssop in John 19:29? What is the function of the blood on the hyssop (see also Ps. 51:7)? How is Jesus like the Passover lamb?

LIVING THE WORD

5. In what kinds of ways do people in our world cope the prospect of death? How do you feel about the prospect of your own death? About the death of family members? What does Christ's death give you?
6. When did the death of Christ begin to make sense to you? How would you explain the necessity of the Crucifixion to a non-Christian friend?
7. How difficult is it for you to believe that Jesus died for your sins? Why?
8. Who can you tell about Jesus and / or invite to church this week as you prepare to celebrate the resurrection this Easter? Spend a few minutes praying for your lost friends and family members to trust Jesus.