

JOHN 19

Behold, Your King

The “hour” has come. Jesus is flogged and crucified. In these few hours, his mission is fulfilled. He suffers and dies alone with the weight of our sin on his crucified shoulders.

It begins with a flogging – a severe punishment especially for modern readers (vs. 1). With the so-called “cat of night tails” the whip was weaponized with broken bone and glass so that the lacerations would tear into his body and rip apart anything in its path. So severe the punishment, some victims died from the flogging alone.

To add a literal insult to injury, the soldiers twist a crown of thorns and place it on his head while arraying him with a purple robe – a clear signal of royalty (vs. 2). This is for the purpose of mockery (see vs. 3). Some King! Nevertheless, Pilate hoped the humiliating torture would be enough to satisfy the wrath of the crowd, but it was not. They want his blood and not enough has been spilt.

Jesus is then marched to the place of his execution. Bearing his own cross, he hangs between two unnamed thieves who undoubtedly were Barabbas’s partners (vs. 18). Most crucifixion victims would have the sentence of death having hanged above their head (with the tradition “t” cross) or around their neck (with the “tau” cross which was the shape of a capital “T”). Jesus’s inscription read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (vs. 19). The Jews rejected this sentence for they knew they were being mocked. Behold your king, indeed!

After three hours of agony (following hours of betrayal, sleeplessness, abuse, and torture), Jesus announces his triumph, “It is finished” (vs. 29). To verify his death, the soldiers pieced Jesus’s side. Normally, crucifixions lasted for hours or even days. Jesus laid down his life, it was not taken from him. His hour had come, and he had triumphed. “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe” (vs. 35)

Jesus is taken off the cross, buried in a borrowed tomb. He would leave the tomb empty three days later. Nicodemus (remember him?) returns in the daytime and provides the oil necessary to anoint his body. The chapter ends noting that Jesus is buried in a garden bringing us full circle. The story of mankind began in a garden whereby death came into the world. It will end, in a garden, whereby death will be conquered by the “seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15).

But the story doesn’t end here.