

## The Judgment Seat of God

*Tyler Velin | July 15, 2012 | John 19:1-16a*

My name is Tyler, I'm one of the pastors here at SHEC. And today if you have your Bibles with you I would like you to open up to John chapter 19.

For those of us who have been with us for the last month, we have been working through the final hours of Jesus' life here on earth. We saw Jesus arrested, Jesus before the high priest, last week we saw Jesus before Pilate, and this week we see Jesus sent to the cross.

Last week we finished with Pilate putting up two options to the people, they could either release the murderer Barabbas, or Jesus Christ. The crowds chose Barabbas.

Now there is some great narrative in this passage we will look at today. The story of Jesus is one of the greatest stories ever told. But it was more than a story, it was more than history, the cross of Christ is an event that supersedes time and space. The implications of the cross reach back to the creation of the world and extend towards the eternal future.

So we are going to cover that narrative, but then we are really going to dig into the last few verses of this passage. What I really want to do, and what I believe the apostle John is trying to do, is to connect for us the dots between the Old and New Testament.

As Christians there are three things we don't like, old age, old coffee, and the old testament. I was the same way, I would read the OT and pass out until my chapter was over. It was like theological cruise control. You read all of this stuff about purity laws, sacrificial laws, genealogies, and prophets and we act interested, but really what we are thinking is "Yeah, yeah, this stuff really doesn't matter anymore because of what the New Testament and the cross mean."

Yet we cannot separate the two. The whole scripture is God breathed. And when we learn how to read the Old testament, it becomes a springboard to worship. So we are going to look at some keys to that in this sermon as well. I hope we get the picture that the whole Bible points to Jesus

But first we have some great scripture to process through. Lets pray.

### **John 19:1-3**

There is a big theme of duality throughout this passage. Meaning that most of the language that the people use, and the words that John specifically uses to describe the events have double meanings.

Because like we just saw the Jews begin to mock Jesus here. They give him a makeshift crown, they take these long thorny vines and they weave them together and they press it down into the flesh of Jesus.

Then they put purple robes on him, and purple was the color of royalty. And after they have played a vulgar and hateful game of dress-up, they begin to yell “Hail, King of the Jews” as they strike the face Christ.

Yet the reality is, Jesus is a King. While the soldiers think they are mocking Jesus, and they are, they are also establishing Jesus as the King he truly is. They do not know the truth of the statements they are yelling. Right now they give worship to Jesus in a demeaning and sarcastic tone, but one day each and every one of those soldiers will stand before Christ, and they will see him as the true King he is.

### **John 19:4-5**

Pilate is still not convinced that Jesus needs to die. So Pilate allowed the flogging to happen, he allowed the soldiers to shame him. Then Pilate took Jesus and presented him to the crowd. Now you have to understand the impact the floggings had on his back. Because it wasn't just a rope or something they would whip you with, but it was a device called a cat o' nine tail.

What that was was nine pieces of leather, each containing bits of glass or bone or some sharp object. The soldier would then take that whip and throw it onto the prisoners back, causing the shards to sink in like barbs, and then rip the skin off of the back.

So Pilate presents this Jesus, back torn to shreds, blood from the crown of thorns running down his face, dressed in a blood drenched purple robe and he says to the people “Behold the man!” In other words look at this guy! Does he really look like a threat, hasn't he undergone enough? Pilate was expecting sympathy, but look at what he received from the crowd.

### **John 19:6-8**

There was no mercy for Jesus. The crowd had made up their mind. Pilate couldn't believe what was happening, this man was innocent. So Pilate starts to get sarcastic with the Jews. He says “I can't find any fault in him, so you go and crucify him.” Yet as we talked about last week the Jews were not allowed to crucify anyone, he had to be crucified on the order of Pilate.

Upon hearing this sarcasm from Pilate the Jews yell back to him, “We have a law that he must be put to death because he has made himself the son of God.” After that there is a phrase that I found very interesting. **“When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.”**

Now let's get a little more background on what is happening with Pilate here. We get some additional info from Matthew's account of the trial. Before Pilate offered the crowd the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, he was sitting in his house and his wife came up and said something to him, **Matthew 27:19**

So Pilate is scared out of his mind right now. He is realizing that he is in way over his head. There is something supernatural happening here. The more I looked at this verse, of Pilate being afraid, the only thing I could conclude was that in some way, Pilate was made aware of the spiritual implications of this trial. Pilate feared because he knew God was present in this working. Now I'm not saying Pilate became a Christian, I think history would argue against

that, but what I am saying is that Pilate was struck with a very tangible fear of the Lord.

So Pilate is shaken to the core at Jesus' claim to be the son of God, and so he panics and runs back into his headquarters to address Jesus. **John 19:10.**

Pilate wants to get to the bottom of this. He asks Jesus, "Where are you from? Are you the Son of God? Are you the King of the Jews? Why am I terrified?" And Jesus doesn't answer him. He remains quite, a fulfillment of a prophecy we will address next week. So Pilate becomes frustrated and threatens Jesus saying, "Why won't you speak to me. I have the authority to kill you or let you die, you had better speak up."

Then Jesus answered him: **John 19:11.** Now you can imagine the color draining from Pilate's face. Because not only does Pilate feel like things are out of control, not only is Pilate stressed as to how to make the right decision, not only is he terrified by a force he is totally unfamiliar with, but Jesus is claiming that he ultimately has no authority over this trial. But rather Pilate is being used for a higher purpose, he is a pawn in the grand plan of God.

Jesus is very clear here. The hearts and history of the trial of Christ belong to God. He is working, he is the ultimate authority. Jesus says that nothing happens here that is not the will of God.

The story continues: **John 19:12-14a**

So Pilate becomes an apologist for Jesus, but the people play the trump card. They threaten his job. If Pilate sides with Jesus, who claims to be King of the Jews, then Pilate stands at odds against Caesar, who himself claims to be king of the Jews. If Pilate took this stand the best that would happen is he would be fired and shamed, the worst that would happen is that he would be executed as a traitor.

The more I read this passage the more I feel for Pilate. He is being moved by some unseen force, he is set up to seek justice, yet is facing a riotous crowd and someone will die depending upon the verdict. It will either be Jesus or him. So he goes, and he sits on the judgment seat, ready to make his decision, and then John throws in this beautiful line. "Now it was the day of preparation of the passover. It was about the sixth hour."

What John was trying to say, was that around the middle of the day, on Friday before the passover, Pilate sat down on the judgment seat, when all around Jerusalem, at midday, those who were to celebrate passover were beginning to slaughter their passover lambs.

Now John is talking about the judgement seat and the passover on purpose. He is drawing themes from the Old Testament.

We discussed how Jesus is the ultimate passover lamb last week, so this week I really want to address this "judgement seat."

You see **2 Cor 5:10** says this, Romans 14:10 says almost the same thing, and in Revelation 20 we see that we all have to appear before the judgment seat of God.

But in the Old Testament people had to appear before a different seat. The mercy seat. In the days of the tabernacle, God told his people to make the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was a golden box which the presence of God dwelt in while the nation of Israel was wandering in the desert.

Now God told them to keep three things inside the ark of the covenant. He told them to keep stone tablets of the 10 commandments, a golden bowl of manna, and the staff of Aaron which budded. And on top of the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat.

When the Israelites would set up the tabernacle, they would place the ark of the covenant in the holy place, the holy of holies. And when placed in the Holy of Holies, God would dwell in a cloud above the mercy seat.

But you could not just run into the holy of holies, you could not just go in and visit the mercy seat. In **Leviticus 16:2-3**, we see you cannot enter into the presence of the mercy seat unless you have a sacrifice to atone for your sins. So what God told the people to do was to establish a system of sacrifices. There was a sacrifice to purify the temple, there was a sacrifice to purify the priests, and there was a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people, and only after all the proper sacrifices had been made, and all of the sin had been atoned for, or covered by sacrifices, could a priest come before the mercy seat.

**Exodus 25:22** tells us what then happens at the mercy seat. God spoke from above the mercy seat. God made himself present among his people and gave them the information they needed to know from above the mercy seat.

Now typically this wouldn't make sense. The New Testament has a judgment seat and the OT has a mercy seat that doesn't make sense. But this is because we don't know how to read the OT in light of the NT.

You see the mercy seat of the OT was looking forward the judgment seat of the NT. The sacrifices that the people offered in the OT never dealt with their reality of their sin, it only deferred it. Yet at the judgment seat, the sin was dealt with once and for all.

In the OT God spoke to his people from above the mercy seat. At Jesus' trial God spoke to his people from the judgment seat. Just as Jesus had told Pilate, it was by God's authority Jesus was going to die.

God sat on the judgment seat, above Jesus who is the fulfillment of the law and the ten commandments, above Jesus who is the ultimate manna, the bread from above which gives life, and above Jesus who is the ultimate priest from the line of Aaron, making intercession for the sins of the people.

You see on the judgment seat may have sat Pilate, by it was God who spoke. It was God who judged Jesus, and in so doing allowed mercy to flow onto his people.

You see Jesus is the key to interpreting the OT, it is the cross that defines the law and the prophets, and when we see the realization of Christ's fulfilling work on the cross, we worship through the pages of the old testament.

Look at how our passage closes. **John 19:14-16a**

So God, through Pilate condemned his son to be the ultimate sacrifice. God judged the world through his son. In Romans **3:23-25**, God says that he put up Jesus as our propitiation. In Hebrews 9:25, the author uses the same Greek word, yet it is interpreted as “mercy seat.”

Christ is both the just and the justifier. He is both the judgment seat, and the mercy seat.

And when he was present to the crowds, Pilate said “Behold your King!” The crowds responded with the chant, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him.” The crowds did not understand the implications of their response.

In the book of Revelation Christ is once more presented to the masses. Only this time his title is slightly different. In Revelation 5:5 the writer says “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered.”

This time, instead of jeers and cries for his murder, the crowd fell down and worshipped. Singing this song. **Rev 5:9-10,12**

Let’s rise and worship the God of the judgment seat.