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The Humiliation of Jesus Christ

John 19

Keywords: Humiliation, Crucifixion, Passion, Easter, Sacrifice

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. Today we consider what is know as the “humiliation of Jesus Christ.”
- B. This is actually only part of that humiliation, for that started at His conception, when the eternal God, the holy One of Heaven, the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present Lord and Creator became an unformed baby in the womb of a woman.
 - 1. Born in a scandalous manner, of a woman who claimed to be a virgin, yet pregnant before wedlock.
 - 2. A man who lived a pauper’s life, able to say that though the foxes have holes and birds have nests, that He has no where to call home.
 - 3. All over the place as He walked and talked the rumors flew. He became known as a man who was a friend of sinners, drunkards, and tax collectors.
 - 4. And throughout the time of His ministry on earth, a total of 3 years, He continuously showed the evidence that He was of God, yet would be accused as a madman and having a demon.
 - 5. This was the life of Jesus and it all moved inevitably to this critical time where the rejection by His people came to fulness.
- C. Quick background:
 - 1. He has been taken captive, but not against his will.
 - 2. He has been taken before the High Priest in an illegal trial where he was initially interrogated.
 - 3. Peter has denied knowing Christ three time and now Peter has abandoned him.
 - 4. The Jews have taken Christ to Pilate, the governor over the area seeking to have him condemn Jesus to death.
 - 5. Pilate has also done some interrogation. Here a little historical background might be of help.

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a. *Pax Romana.*

- (1) The Romans were seeking to extend their empire. But they also understood that creating hatred toward them by those they conquered was not a smart policy.
- (2) So they had a standing policy, called *Pax Romana*, or Roman peace.
- (3) The point of the policy was that they were not to be too harsh and tough on the people unless those people decided to be revolutionaries. Then they would come down hard.
- (4) Now, the people of Israel were a tough group to deal with. They would rise up in protest over what would seem by non-Jews to be silly minor things.
- (5) This has put Pilate in a difficult position. On one hand he is seeking to keep the Jews who have turned over Jesus happy. Yet on the other hand he is trying to maintain Roman law, which would be reluctant to have Jesus crucified unless he was a real trouble maker for the Romans.

b. In vs 38 Pilate goes out to announce that there is no fault found in Jesus.....why?

- (1) Because Jesus has admitted to being a King with a Kingdom, but it is not one of this world. Therefore, wherever He is king, it is not a concern for Rome because it is not here.
- (2) Therefore the people of Jesus' kingdom would not fight. In other words, Jesus did not represent any threat to Rome and therefore *Pax Romana* policy should allow Him to stay alive.

c. All appears to be good and hopeful, except for the hatred that the Jews had toward Christ. And it is here that we can begin to see the humiliation of our Lord.

D. We see this humiliation in several steps.

II. The Humiliation of Christ.

A. They chose Barrabas rather than Christ(18:38a-40).

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1. Mark and Luke tell us that Barrabas was a murderer and rebel. The word “robber” here in John means a bandit or highwayman. These are the types of people who lie in wait and then rob and kill you.
 2. He probably was doing it also against the Romans and trying to create up a rebellion.
 3. The Jews had developed up a custom by that time (vs 39). And though it looked nice on the outside, truly it was wrong to do. They prefer a murder and thief over One who has never done them wrong.
- B. Pilate has Him scourged and mocked yet still the Jews wanted death (19:1-6).
1. Now Pilate is still in a difficult position. He is trying to walk a tightrope and keep everyone happy. So He tries another ploy to see if he can stop short of killing a man in whom he has publically announced as having no guilt.
 2. He figures that if he beats Jesus then that might be enough to get this politically messy situation taken care of.
 3. And here again we see the humiliation of our Lord.
 4. 19:1 gives such a simple statement that is easy to read right over without a thought. “Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.” But understand what was happening to our Lord.
 5. It would have occurred at what was known as Fort Antonia in the Arch Tower. This fort was just north of the Temple.

Aspects of Scourging

Scourging entailed "forty stripes save one" by Jewish law, up to 100 stripes by Roman law, with the victim tied to a whipping post, carried out by one or two trained men called lictors, employing a whip (flagellum, fragrum) fabricated from a number of leather thongs weighed with pieces of bone, lead, iron or sharp metal. With the clothes stripped the victim was beaten on the bare back until the flesh was torn-open, producing bleeding and sometimes traumatic shock or death.¹

For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post. The back, buttocks and legs were flogged either by two soldiers (lictors) or by one who alternated positions. The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

¹<http://www.abcog.org/crucify.htm>

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Medical Aspects of Scourging

As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of the blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.²

History tells us that through the skilled hands of these two soldiers the deepest arteries and even the organs of a person would be showing. This act was so harsh and so destructive to the person that Roman law prohibited any Roman citizen from being scourged.

But the King of kings and Lord of lords had no protection.

6. After this horrid beating they then began to mock him with the crown of thorns and the royal robe (2-3).
 - a. There is good evidence that this type of activity was not just reserved for Jesus.
 - b. History shows us that the soldiers often would treat their prisoners in this was after a scourging. Matthew 27 tells us that they then beat his face and spit on him, the whole time mocking him.
 - c. The crown of thorns is not as we often see it, a rather small thing. The thorns possibly were of the great Date Palm. These thorns got to be up to 12 inches long though normally are 4-6 inches.
 7. So here after one of the most painful punishments you could have, is our Lord in a mockery of fine garments, having people who do not see who He is, bowing down in a crude game.
 8. And this was not the end of our Lord's sufferings. Rather, these were merely the beginnings, soon it was going to be even worse, if that can be imagined.
- C. Pilate shows that he feared man more than God (19:7-12).

²<http://members.aol.com/bradhprod/scourge.htm>

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1. When they mention that He made himself out to be the Son of God this cause Pilate to back away.
 2. Pilate was afraid because he knew the Jews and this was not going to go away. Jesus was a blasphemer in their eyes and only His death would silence them.
 3. Vss 9-10 has Pilate asking more questions.
 - a. Matt. 27:19 tells us that his wife had told him to have nothing to do with Christ, calling Him a righteous man, because she had had a very troubling dream.
 - b. Now he is hearing that Jesus may be a son of a god....not good for a Roman steeped in Roman religious beliefs.
 - c. But Jesus just looks at him.
 - d. So Pilate tries to flex his governmental muscle (10).
 - e. Here Christ speaks, and the reason is because it is not about Him, it is now about His Father. That is where his authority comes from...and all who are in authority must remember that truth.
 - f. The last part of this statement in vs 11 probably refers to Caiaphas, the High Priest
 4. But note this point, part of the humiliation of Christ was that though He was under control during this horrible time. Though He had not done anything bad to Pilate. Though Pilate knew that He was innocent.
 - a. Pilate looked at Him and he looked at the crowds and chose the crowds. (12)
 - b. This was a political threat that they were using, and it worked.
- D. The Jews chose Caesar as King rather than Christ (19:13-16).
1. He had Christ brought out again and this time tries a different tactic.
 2. He asks them if they want Jesus crucified, but note the way he phrases it (15a).
 3. And it is here that the final humiliation of Christ is seen.
 - a. Luke 13:34-35a O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather

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your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! 35 "Behold, your house is left to you desolate;

- b. Here are people who were healed by Him. Here were people who were taught by Him. Here were people who were loved by Him.
- c. They were the people of the covenant. They were people of God's nation. They had the Word of God given to them. Through them the Savior had come.
- d. And when it came right down to it, they claimed allegiance to Caesar.

4. Note how sin hardens the heart and makes you go where you thought you would never go.

- a. They hated Caesar, but not right now.
- b. They knew to claim allegiance to Caesar was really bowing before him as a god, but they did it here.
- c. What about you?

E. Transition:

- 1. Vs. 16 says it simply, the death sentence was given and Jesus was in their hands to kill.
- 2. Beloved, it is my hope that as I have spoken on this horrible event sadness and a sense of horror might be upon your hearts.
- 3. You might be saying, "this is wrong." But it is not.
- 4. Remember 1 Peter 2:21-25 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

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- a. Beloved, this is the cost of sin. The sin you committed yesterday or this morning. The sin you have loved and lived in for years.
 - b. Sin destroys. The bible says that the soul who sins must die. Yet Christ was there to bear the punishment of His own! Our sin deserved this punishment. Because of our sin we deserved this humiliation.
 - c. But instead it is our gracious, gentle Lord who is suffering. As John 10 says, he is our good (beautiful) Shepherd who lays down His life in our place.
- F. With those good words, let's continue.

III. The Culmination of Humiliation.

- A. Christ's humiliation as seen in the crucifixion (16-17).
 - 1. Vs 16. Nature of crucifixion.
 - a. Note the brevity of John's words here. Again, like the scourging, much can pass from our notice. It is my contention that the physical sufferings of Christ are not what was most agonizing.
 - (1) What was the most agonizing was what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - (2) And because our sin was laid upon Him there was a cost and an agony that we cannot fathom. There came a critical point where Jesus cries out from on the cross, ". . . My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"
 - (3) But understand that even the physical side was bad enough.

There was no more horrible death possible than death by crucifixion. Even the Romans regarded it as a horrible death. It is said that they even shuddered to talk about it. Cicero declared that it was "the most cruel and horrifying death." Tacitus said that it was a "despicable death." Crucifixion was invented by the Persians, picked up by the Carthaginians, and passed on to the Romans. The Romans never employed it for a Roman citizen, no matter how vile his crime. It was the dreaded death brought upon foreign slaves and foreign criminals. So Jesus Christ died the death of a foreign slave or criminal. John MacArthur, Jr. *Crucifixion & Resurrection*, p. 79.

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- b. “Led away.” (16)
 - (1) Not dragged which was normal.
 - (2) Christ went willingly to the Cross.
 - (3) I suspect that the other two going to their cross were not so willing.
 - (4) But in this little point is another prophecy fulfilled, In Isaiah 53:7 it says that our Lord will be led like a lamb to be slaughtered.
- c. “Went out” (17)
 - (1) Here again we have much more present than meets the eye.
 - (2) In Exodus 29:14 the bull that was sacrificed was to be offered as a sin offering outside the camp of Israel.
 - (3) Hebrews 13:11-14 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.
- B. Christ’s humiliation as seen in the company with whom He is crucified (18).
 - 1. Here again we see that Christ is being treated as a common criminal.
 - 2. But this is also fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah 53:12 said that He would be numbered with the transgressors.
 - 3. Two others, who have done things that are bad enough to warrant this type of death are now hanging there as well.
 - a. Luke 23 tells us that one of the men is hurling abuse at Him, mocking him.
 - b. And it is here that we see grace shining in the midst of horror. Here we again see our Lord rise above all of this filth and sin and continue to do the work of His Lord.

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- c. Luke 23:39-43 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
 - d. Cf. John 6:37-40. This man was one given by the Father, and even in this time of misery, Christ was faithful to His Father.
- C. Christ's humiliation as seen in the continued rejection by the leaders of Israel of their King (19-22).
- 1. Just make simple comments here, reminding them again of who Christ was, that the people had waited for their King, but could not accept Him as He came.
 - 2. Warn of the dangers of trying to make God into what we believe He ought to be. It is not His way, and it is a grievous sin.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. "Delivered" in verse 16.
- 1. In that passage we have a word that is simple and straightforward, yet filled with meaning.
 - 2. Pilate is the one who is delivering Christ over to be killed. But that word is used again in the NT to speak of another One doing the delivering:
 - 3. Romans 8:32.
 - a. Here we have the Father doing the work of delivering Christ to be slain.
 - b. Isaiah 53, "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and

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we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? 9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. 10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.”

- c. Here again is the great mystery of how God works in the lives and hearts of individuals and nations to accomplish His sovereign will.
 - d. We see this said a different way in Acts 2:22-24.
4. Yet there is more to this word “delivered.”
- a. Eph. 5:2, 25.
 - b. Heb. 9:24-28.
- B. So here in this passage, where the wrath and sinfulness of man is seen so starkly, we find that God is present and God is working.
- 1. For some of you who might be lacking hope right now due to your circumstances, are they greater than Christ’s?

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2. I beg you to turn from those problems and fears and look to the One who holds all of our lives in His hands.
3. He is at work, trust Him.

Small Group Questions

- As you prepare for Easter and the celebration of the resurrection, what stands out regarding the Crucifixion? Discuss this in the group and try to build off of each other to expand your sense of what is on display with it.
- Think about the correlation between Jesus and Paul in 2 Timothy. What similarities are present? What dissimilarities?