

Lighthouse Bible Studies

Topic 1: Jesus' Final Day
Session 2: Passion Narrative



Luke 22:39

- Even though it's only a throwaway comment here, we are given a glimpse into the prayer life of Jesus
 - Luke tells us that Jesus was in the habit of going to the garden and praying
 - Our habits are so important in life
 - It's our habits that tell us who we really are and it's our habits that tell us where we are heading
 - In many ways our habits define the life that we are living
 - And prayer, is intended by God to be a habit we hold
 - Not something that we do on occasions, not something we do when we have some spare time, not something we only do when we need something, but prayer should be a habit that is consistent day in, day out
 - But it's easier said than done isn't it
 - Habits can be hard things to form at the best of times, and prayer can be a daunting thing to think about anyway can't it
 - I've recently read through the book 'the hour that changes the world, it's a really short book and it provides a way to pray intentionally into twelve different areas for five minutes each - that method of praying is incredibly helpful because it makes prayer less daunting
 - You might think that an hour might be too much to start with, but the great thing about it is that you could start by just praying into each area for one minute, only twelve minutes of your day to start a habit of prayer
 - We often think don't we that we are too busy to pray but I think Jesus was probably more qualified to use that excuse than any of us are
 - I mean, Jesus had three years to teach enough people enough about God so that after his death and resurrection his Disciples would be equipped to spread the message of Christ across the entire world and the people of Israel would have heard enough for it to make sense
 - But even still, as this verse tells us, he was in the custom of praying

Luke 22:40-42

- Here we see amazingly that even Jesus didn't have all of his prayers answered
 - God didn't answer all of God's prayers, think about that one for a minute - remember last week when we said that there were some things about the trinity which are just too complicated for our minds to comprehend, here's one of them
- But I've always found this verse a great encouragement, it shows the humanity of Jesus and it shows that unanswered prayer isn't a reflection on the one who's praying
 - Sometimes we think that if our prayers haven't been answered then we've done something wrong or that God is angry don't we
 - But this passage shows us that even Jesus, even the perfect, sinless personification of God himself didn't always have his prayers answered in the way that He may like

- I think it's amazing how even when it comes to his crucifixion, even when it comes to one of the most painful death's known to man, Jesus can still say to the Father ***not my will, but yours, be done***
 - I think this is the key to praying like Jesus
 - This total dependance on God's wisdom, this complete trust in His goodness and sovereignty
 - If we could only train ourselves to submit to God like this then I believe our prayer lives would be completely transformed

Luke 22:43-44

- Amazingly, the appearance of this Angel only makes Jesus more troubled and desperate in his prayers
 - That's because it's a sign that God isn't going to answer this prayer the way Jesus wants him to
 - If Jesus was going to be spared crucifixion after all then he wouldn't need comforting, but the presence of this angel was proof of what was to come
 - Seeing it must have been like having a chaplain come to see you on death row, it was becoming more real now
- We read in the passage that Jesus sweats blood. That's a known rare condition called Hematidrosis, which causes blood to ooze out from the forehead, fingernails, and other parts of the skin. It usually comes about following severe headaches and stomach pains as blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture causing them to exude blood. It's caused by severe physical or emotional stress or anxiety attacks
 - This horrific condition shows the fear and anguish that Jesus was carrying before his trial and death

Luke 22:45-46

- It must've been horrible for Jesus, that in his hour of need his closest friends were distracted by their own fear and asleep when he needed them most
- The temptation that Jesus speaks of is the temptation to give in to the weakness of the flesh and sleep rather than pray with him, but it also points forward to the coming temptation to deny partnership with Christ after his arrest

Following Jesus' time of prayer, the moment of his arrest comes.

John 18:2-4

- Judas comes to the garden with the Priests and the Pharisees as well as a band of soldiers
 - As we will look closer at later, the fact that Judas comes with the priests and pharisees shows not only that it's them who want him dead, but also that Jesus hadn't actually broken any Roman laws meaning that the lower authorities had to take matters into their own hands before they could bring Rome into it
 - The presence of the Soldiers was incase a Riot broke out and resistance had to be subdued
- As he often does, Jesus asks an obvious question for the benefit of those around him

- Jesus knew who they were here for, but so that the disciples would fully understand what Judas had done, he makes them spell it out

John 18:5-6

- Last week I mentioned in passing the 'I Am' statements contained in John's gospel, statements that Jesus makes using the name of God I AM and a way to describe his personality and mission
 - His reply here acts almost like a conclusion to the statements
 - He is the bread of life, the light of the world, the true vine and all the other things we'll look at later on in the year, but beyond all of those things Jesus can say I Am He. In other words, Jesus says 'I Am God himself'
 - This is shown also by the reaction of Judas and the Soldiers
 - Throughout the bible from Ezekiel through to Revelation falling to the ground is a common reaction to the divine revelation
 - In this passage, when Jesus says those words the power of God hits the people and they fall to the ground - If that was me, it would kind of put me off trying to kill him but apparently not

John 18:7-9

- We heard Jesus say those words last week in his high priestly prayer
- One of the big themes throughout Jesus trial and crucifixion, particularly in John is that Jesus is really in control of the whole thing. This goes to show that
 - Jesus isn't willing for his disciples to be taken with him so they are let go and he is taken alone

John 18:10-11

- The Roman short sword that Peter would've used to attack Malchus was made for stabbing rather than slicing so it's likely that Peter was trying to kill him, but ended up only cutting his ear, which Jesus heals immediately
- The significance of the man's name is most likely that it's a gentile name
 - Although the other Gospels, focus more on Jesus love towards the gentiles (particularly Luke), throughout John's gospel doesn't consider the Gentiles all that much. In fact the only two references to non-Jews up to this point have been the Samaritan woman who Jesus talks to (who isn't fully a gentile), and the Greek men who want to ask Jesus a question in chapter 12 (Jesus refuses to see them)
- It's interesting that for John it's at the time of Jesus death that the gentiles become important and even favourable characters in the gospel
 - There's another significant event involving a gentile which we shall see later on
- As well as healing Malchus, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach Peter a lesson about suffering for the Gospel

So this brings us to Jesus' first trial which comes from the Jewish chief priest and Pharisees. I want to look at the version we find in Matthew in a moment, but before we do, John gives us an interesting prologue to Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish leaders. So turn to John 18 and reading from verse 12

John 18:12-14

- The reason that I wanted to draw attention to this is that it is a perfect example of the irony which John uses in his gospel to demonstrate how little the people knew about what was really going on
 - We'll see some examples of it later through the passion narrative and later in the year we'll look at some earlier examples of it, but here Caiaphas speak about one man being a sacrifice for all the people
 - Now he was talking naturally and reasoning that if the Jewish people gave Rome someone who they could accuse as a traitor to the emperor then it would soften Rome's oppression over the people
 - But of course we know that indeed one man died for all the people, but to save us from death not Israel from Rome

Matthew 26:57-64

- Jesus' reply here to the question of are you the Messiah is to quote from Daniel 7
 - Before Jesus nobody really held the opinion that the coming Messiah would be God, in Jesus answer he claims to be two of the OT prophesied characters in one
 - Firstly, the Messiah - The great king who the people of Israel awaited to Liberate them from slavery
 - And secondly the Son of Man
 - In Daniel 7 we read this about the son of man
 - ***I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.***
 - The Son of Man was thought by rabbis at the time of Jesus to be a human representation of God who would come to rule over the world forever, but a separate person to the Messiah who they didn't think would be God
 - In this passage, When asked by Caiaphas if he was the Messiah, Jesus response was 'yes and then some'
 - This is another one of those verse Jehovah's Witnesses don't like that proves that Jesus was God and he knew it
 - Caiaphas' response to this shows that this is indeed what was going on

Matthew 26:64-68

- Caiaphas responds in rage to what he perceives as the blasphemy of man making himself equal with God
- Not believing Jesus, the Jewish council decide that he deserves death, but they can't simply stone him because the Jewish people were always getting into trouble from Rome for practicing their own law
 - So for Caiaphas' plan of calming rome's anger towards the nation they had to convince the Roman governor that Jesus was guilty of a crime worthy of death under Roman law

- And heresy against a god Rome didn't even believe in wasn't one of them

So after this, The priests take Jesus to Pilate in order to stand trial against Rome

- Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea at the time of Jesus' crucifixion
 - As Governor it was his responsibility to represent the emperor in the region - keeping the peace, solving disputes and making sure any rebellious groups are destroyed
 - It can be tempting to feel sorry for Pilate in the passion narrative because of the pressure he faces from the Jews
 - We shouldn't worry about that though, because history teaches us that Pilate was not a nice man
 - Being posted by Rome in Judea was one of the worst things to happen to a Roman official
 - The Jewish people were some of the most troublesome people to Rome and being their governor was a job that was impossible to succeed in
 - Pilate had made enough enemies in Rome for him to be posted to Judea and while working in the land he was well known for being a cruel persecutor of the Jewish people
 - A time before Jesus' trial, Pilate had viciously murdered a group of innocent Jewish civilians in cold blood and largely the reason that the Jewish leaders were able to pressure him as much as they were was because if they reported him to Rome he would've stood trial himself and likely been imprisoned or killed. Best case scenario, he would've lost his position and power within the Roman army

John 18:28

- The Jews weren't allowed, by the laws of the Pharisees, to enter a Gentile building that had a roof before the passover - Although they could stand in the courtyard because it didn't have a roof
- It's worth noting that from here on, the discussion between Pilate and Jesus isn't heard by the Jews and the discussion between Pilate and the Jews isn't heard by Jesus

John 18:29-30

- So it seems that at this point, the Jewish leaders had not decided what they were going to accuse Jesus of and sidestep the question of what crime he's committed by essentially saying 'he's just a bad person'

John 18:31-32

- Technically, under Jewish law Jesus could be killed for blasphemy - but the Romans had revoked the Jews' right to use capital punishment in their own courts. Meaning, that if the Jews wanted Jesus dead he would have to be tried by the Romans
 - Now sometimes this did happen anyway, as we can see with Stephen's stoning in Acts. But these events weren't official and were actions of a mob
- The type of death spoke of here is of course Crucifixion
 - Crucifixion was a truly horrific way to kill somebody, as we'll discuss later, - it was considered by the Jews to be the same as hanging, which Mosaic law held came with a curse from God

- If Jesus was to be put to death by the Jews he would've been stoned, which was the sentence for heresy. So for Jesus to be crucified he would have to stand trial for treason against Caesar

John 18:33-38a

- The phrase 'King of the Jews' that Pilate uses when questioning Jesus was a very political title and anybody in the Roman Empire calling themselves a king besides Caesar presented a problem. So for Jesus to be called King of the Jews would be seen by Rome as a challenge to their authority
- Jesus' description of his Kingdom being heavenly and not natural would've suggested to Pilate that Jesus wasn't a rebel wanting to take away power from Caesar
- Pilate's question 'what is truth' most likely isn't an honest question where he's trying to find the truth. In the ancient world the same type of philosophy we know today of there being no universal truth was popular and Pilate's comment probably came from this perspective

John 18:38b-40

- Pilate thought that only the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead so is hoping that the crowd would solve the problem for him, but the crowd shout that they want Barabbas to be freed rather than Jesus
- That's a big change from the shouts of the crowd when Jesus rode into the city seven days earlier as we heard this morning, but it's most likely that this isn't an organic crowd. Jesus trial is going on in the early hours of the morning when everybody would be asleep, most biblical commentators suggest that this crowd was a mob hired by the pharisees to put more pressure on Pilate
- There's a bit of irony going on here - The name Barabbas means son of the father, and the Jews choose him over Jesus, the real Son of the Father

After this, Pilate tries to fob the case off onto King Herod.

Luke 23:6-12

- So Pilate tries to shift the problem onto Herod. Herod was King of Israel at the time
 - He didn't really have any power, but to keep the Jewish people happy Rome agreed to allow a King to still be in Israel, although he was king in name only and had to do what the Romans told him to do or else he'd be replaced with a king of their choosing
- Herod doesn't take Jesus seriously and simply wants some entertainment and Jesus doesn't take Herod seriously, refusing to speak to him because he has no real power or authority
- After seeing no guilt, Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate

So now turn with me back to John 19 and verse 1

John 19:1-3

- Jesus was flogged twice during his trial, once before being sentenced and once after
 - The flogging after his sentencing was to weaken him before he was nailed to the cross, but this first flogging was most likely to try and appease Jesus' accusers in the hopes that seeing some form of punishment given to Jesus would soften their stance of seeing him put to death

- The crown of thorns and purple robe was a form of mockery to Jesus' claims of being a king and the phrase "Hail, King of the Jews" is reminiscent of the phrase Hail Caesar that was said as a greeting within the Roman army
- We see more of the irony used by John here in this passage as Jesus stands before them in a robe and wearing a crown being sarcastically hailed by the soldiers - a similar scenario will be played out when those soldiers die and stand before the judgment seat seeing Jesus in a real crown and robe to judge them for their sins

John 19:4-5

- It could be that Pilate hopes that seeing Jesus in this humiliated state would cause the Jews to see him as less of a threat and not insist on his death

John 19:6

- This is a bit of a slap in the face from Pilate because they know that the Jews can't crucify Jesus without being arrested and tried themselves

John 19:7-8

- Now this is the statement that makes Pilate realize that he's running out of options
 - The Jews used the phrase 'Son of God' which was a name for the Emperor making it abundantly clear that the Jews knew that Jesus could be seen as an anti-imperial figure and that if Pilate didn't kill him they could report Pilate for being sympathetic to a rebel leader which of course could end up with Pilate on a cross himself

John 19:9-11

- Jesus' silence was prophesied in Isa. 53:7, which reads ***He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.***
- 'He who delivered me over to you' probably refers to Caiaphas, or potentially but less likely Judas

John 19:12-16

- The Jews make it difficult for Pilate to free Jesus and still keep his position or his life so eventually he has to give in to the people's pressure and sentence Jesus to death by crucifixion
- Now with regards to the judgment seat, it was a throne that worked a little like a judge's bench where the official would sit to sentence a criminal, it's the image used for the final judgment of God
 - But what's interesting is that the greek wording is a little ambiguous about how this scene played out, the phrasing could be translated as Pilate brought Jesus out and he sat on the judgment seat which is how it will appear in most bibles since this makes the most sense with how a trial would've been carried out but the words could also be translated as Pilate brought Jesus out and sat him on the judgment seat
 - Now, while that isn't what would happen at a typical roman trial, there's a part of me that wonders if John, fan of irony that he was, was depicting a final sarcastic humiliation of Jesus where he is sat by Pilate, wearing the robe of imperial colours and a crown, looking out over crowds of both Jew and Gentile in the position to judge all who stood before him. Unbeknown to the crowds that one day this would be played out again, only this time Jesus would be clothed with the glory of the father, sitting on the white throne of judgment and judging all people from all nations

- Again that's only something that we could speculate on, but it's a nice idea I think.
- John makes sure to note here that this trial was taking place on the day of preparation for the passover
 - Now obviously this isn't the passover that Jesus had eaten with his disciples the night before, but often a mini repeat of the passover would be had on the following sabbath, which of course was to start the following day
 - John here is painting a clear similarity between the trial of Jesus and the preparation of the passover lamb
 - If you remember, last week we spoke about how the deliverance of the people from Egypt in the Old Testament that the Passover remembers acts as a metaphor of the ultimate salvation we have through Christ's sacrifice
 - Here is an example of that being used
- Finally, here is where Jesus would have received his second beating in preparation for his crucifixion
 - Prisoners would be whipped with whips containing shards of bone so that the skin on their back would be cut open ensuring that they would suffer as painful a time on the rough, splintered cross as was possible for the Romans to give
- And Jesus was prepared to be crucified

Now in a moment we're going to look at the account of Jesus crucifixion and I'd like us to look at a few different perspectives because each of the gospel writers recount Jesus' death with slightly different emphasis

But before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to just discuss crucifixion in general

Thankfully it's something that in our lives we are so far removed from that sometimes when reading the bible we can miss the horrors of what the execution involved

Crucifixion didn't start with the Romans, but they very much made it their own

The sentence of Crucifixion in Ancient Rome was the manner in which Rebels and traitors against the Empire would be executed

The point of crucifixion wasn't just to kill someone, but to completely and utterly shame and mock them before doing so

Crucifixions would be done often outside city walls along the road into the city to act as an example to travelers of what Rome does to those who are against it

When Spartacus famously led a rebellion against Rome, after the final battle had been won, the Roman general Crassus captured and crucified 6000 prisoners along the road to Rome simply to make a statement

In a way, crucifixion acted as an ironic fulfilment of a rebels desires

A rebel would want to overthrow Rome and rule over its people, so in crucifixion they would literally be lifted above the normal people for everyone to look upon

A crucified prisoner would very often take days to die and there are even accounts of people being hung on a cross for over a week before they died and often before they fully died, a prisoner would have experienced most of their organs shutting down, their bowels emptying and insanity begin to take hold of their mind

The process could be so long that there are even accounts of people being crucified, their friends appealing against the decision, having it granted and then being able to take their friends down from their cross in time to make a partial recovery

A crucified prisoner didn't have the right to be buried, so unless a Roman official granted friends or family to take them down from the cross then they would very often simply be left for vultures and vermin to eat away

It is perhaps the most disgusting and dreadful way to die

The people of Jesus' day would have lived in fear of crucifixion. They would have seen all of these things happen and the cross would be a shameful terror for everyone in Jerusalem.

Luke 23:26-31

- Because of the beating that prisoners would receive it was common for them to struggle carrying a cross on their back and often they would need to be helped
- In the confusing conversation that Jesus has with the women following him, he quotes from Zechariah 12 a warning that points back to his earlier words of warning in Luke 19
 - In Luke 19 Jesus tells his followers that a time of intense persecution is coming from Rome when the city would be destroyed and the people scattered
 - This happened in AD 70, when the Roman Emperor Vespasian (angered by a rebellion from the Jewish people) sieged the city and destroyed the temple

John 19:16b-22

- Jesus is crucified along with two other criminals, as prophesied in Psa. 22:16 and Isa. 53:12
- It was common for the boastful statements of rebels to be written on boards above their heads when they were crucified to mock their illusions of grandeur, but for John it's also another instance of irony that see's Pilate unknowingly being the first to proclaim the gospel to Jew and Gentile
- The chief priests now can't threaten Pilate and so he stops doing what they tell him

Then we turn back to Luke 23:34 to read Jesus first words on the cross

Luke 23:34

- I don't know if you remember last week when we spoke about how Jesus showed love towards his enemies even in situations of great pain, here he does exactly the same and of course his words of forgiveness alludes to how his death provides the way by which we are forgiven

Now we read about the priests and the soldiers around the cross mocking Jesus and if we drop down to 39 we read this

Luke 23:39-43

- This account is unique to Luke, the other gospels either don't mention it or say that both criminals mocked Jesus
- The importance of this conversation is that it shows that salvation doesn't depend on being 'good enough' - both criminals besides Jesus would've been rebels so they were both guilty of the same crime but because one admits his evil and puts his faith in Jesus to save him - he is saved
- Paradise is a word used in the greek translation of the OT for the garden of Eden, Jesus here points towards the restored fellowship that his people will share with God when they die and are resurrected with Jesus

Now we're going to go back over to John 19 for Jesus next statement from the cross

John 19:25-27

- Here we see more of the kindness and Love of Jesus
 - Despite being naked and in agony on the cross, Jesus is concerned with the welfare of his mother

Jesus next statement is found in Matthew

Matthew 27:46

- We often think don't we that this statement from Jesus means that because of the sin that Jesus is carrying, God has forsaken him
- But I'm not convinced that's what's going on at all
- Firstly, all of Jesus statements from the cross are statements of victory, love or forgiveness - if this statement from Jesus is to be understood the way we often think, then it is in contrast to the rest of his words
- Secondly, the idea of God forsaking his Son (who is also in a way Himself) doesn't quite make sense either.
 - If God loved us so much that he wouldn't forsake us, but rather find a way to redeem us then why would He not show such love to His Son
 - And if God did indeed forsake Jesus then at what point did God stop forsaking Him?
- There is another interpretation to this statement that I think makes a lot of sense
 - If you turn with me to Psalm 22, then you'll see that this phrase actually comes from the beginning of this Psalm and, as with so many of David's Psalms, during the song the words

gradually move from a place of desperation to a prophecy of the goodness of God that is yet to come

- In verse 27, the Psalm begins to reach its climax with these words '**All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.'**
- Rather than God actually forsaking Jesus upon the cross, I think it's a far more likely possibility that Jesus is seeking to quote this Psalm
 - In Jewish debate at the time it was common for teachers to only say the first line of a Psalm in order to refer to the whole song and it would certainly make sense for Jesus to want to save his energy while hanging on the cross

Moving on from this statement, we go back to John 19

John 19:28-30

- Now the sponge here isn't just a thing the Romans would have in case someone needed a drink, most people would've been given the sedative drink to begin with and wouldn't be given more to drink again, the sponges were present at the cross because, as we mentioned earlier - before dying on the cross a person's bowls would empty and when crucifixions were done near a city like Jerusalem it would have to be cleaned up with sponges
 - Now we know that Jesus died at around 3pm so he certainly wasn't the first person to have died meaning that the sponge offered to Jesus wouldn't have been something you'd want to put into your mouth
- The thing that amazes me most about this passage is that while the other gospel writers just mention a branch, John specifies that the sponge is attached to a branch of Hyssop
 - The relevance of that is that in Exodus 12:22, God specifically tells the people of Israel in Egypt to spread the blood of a lamb over their door so that the plague of death doesn't come on them
 - There's a beautiful image there of the true fulfilment of passover
 - As the branch is held up to Jesus and his blood drips down onto it, once more the hyssop branch bears the blood of the sacrificial lamb that saves God's people from the curse of death

Luke 23:44-46

- Something that's important to pick up on here is that Jesus' chose when he would die, he didn't hang on the cross until crucifixion killed him but rather he said and did what was needed before choosing to die
- We just read that Jesus **Called out with a loud voice**, that would have been physically impossible to do if he was anywhere near dying naturally from crucifixion

- Over several hours of crucifixion the body would slowly shut down and for the last few hours of his life, a crucified prisoner would hardly be able to whisper. For Jesus to shout in a loud voice means that he wasn't so far along the process of crucifixion that he was near death.
- This is confirmed later on when Pilate is surprised to hear that Jesus was dead so soon

Luke 23:47

- Further confirmation that Jesus didn't die a natural death is the response of the Centurion who sees it as confirmation of Jesus' claims to be God
- Matthew and Mark's account of this records the Centurion saying ***Surely this man was the Son of God***
- For a Roman Centurion to utter those words is astounding
 - The Son of Gods was of the title the emperor used for himself
 - It's amazing that not only the first person to Believe in Jesus deity following his crucifixion is a Centurion, but that as well as saying Jesus is the Son of God, he is effectively saying Caesar isn't

So finally, we read about Jesus' burial.

Mark 15:42-47

- As I mentioned earlier, Burial wasn't something that a crucified prisoner had a right to and often they would be left on their cross for months, for Pilate to grant Joseph the right to bury Jesus would've been seen as a kindness at the time
- This ends the passion narrative

