

John 19:19-22

- It is written! -

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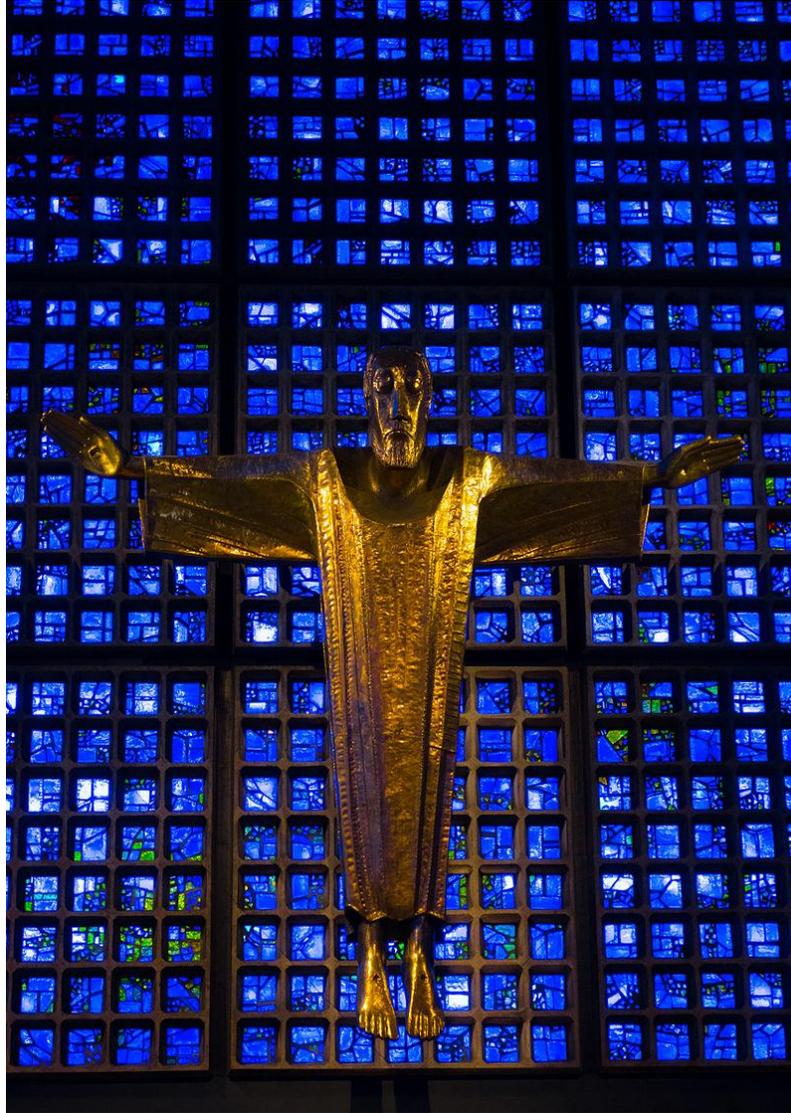
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Introduction

- ❖ It is written! “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” He is the messiah, who gave his life for his friends (Jn 15:13).
 - “The Passion story of John is indeed a story of tragedy, but it is not Jesus’ tragedy; it is a human tragedy as we witness the futile and tragic efforts of people blinded by darkness, unable to see the true king in their midst. Nevertheless, their reflexes (unknown to them) and their instincts still work. They are religious. They have spiritual fears and questions. “Where *do you come* from?” Pilate asks (19:9). But their life in the darkness has made them only intuit the light, not see it, recognize it, or submit to it.”¹
 - It is a story about human power and fears, and the control of God.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.
- ❖ Before continuing, look at the following image of the crucified and resurrected Christ, which was designed by Karl Hemmeter.² (See also Acts 1:9-11).
 - It shows the royal and resurrected Christ.
 - At the same time, he is the priestly Christ, spreading out his arms to bless.
 - And finally, he is the suffering and prophetic Christ, the man of sorrows.

¹ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 518).

² https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Kruzifix_in_der_neuen_Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche.JPG



Context, form and structure

- ❖ John 19:19-22 is part of the trial against Jesus of Nazareth resulting in the crucifixion and death of Jesus:
 - The first interrogation by Pontius Pilate (John 18:28-38).
 - First attempt to set Jesus free; Barabbas or Jesus (John 18:39-40).
 - Second attempt to set him free; the humiliation of Jesus (John 19:1-7).
 - The second interrogation by Pontius Pilate (John 19:8-11).
 - Third attempt to release Jesus (John 19:12).
 - Finally, Pilate handed him over to be crucified, under the pressure of the Jews (John 19:13-16).
 - The crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:17-27).
 - The death of Jesus (John 19:28-37).

- The burial of Jesus (John 19:38-42).

❖ The crucifixion of Jesus in detail (John 19:17-27):

The crucifixion	
<i>Initial scene (verse 17-18)</i>	So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.
Pilate and the chief priests of the Jews	
<i>Scene 1 (verse 19-22)</i>	<p>¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.</p> <p>²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”</p> <p>²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”</p>
The soldiers and the clothes of Jesus	
<i>Scene 2 (verse 23-24)</i>	<p>²³ When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.</p> <p>²⁴ “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”</p> <p>This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”</p> <p>So this is what the soldiers did.</p>
Jesus, his mother, and John	
<i>Scene 3 (verse 25-27)</i>	<p>²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.</p> <p>²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”</p>

	From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.
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- ❖ Each scene consists of three parts, although the divisions are not sharp.
 - A short description of the setting.
 - “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”
 - A very short discourse between two or more persons.
 - “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’”
 - A conclusion, and the resulting action.
 - “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”
 - The first scene (verse 19-22) can be divided into two parts. The answer of Pontius Pilatus serves also as a conclusion and a decisive action.

Technical notes and theological background

Crucifixion³

❖ A historical and geographical overview

- The Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BC) writes that the Persians practised crucifixion as a form of execution. King Darius (512-485 BC) had 3000 inhabitants of Babylon crucified. There are reports of mass crucifixion in the Greek-speaking world (4th century BC; Alexander the Great). The people of Carthago (3rd century BC) used crucifixion for execution. In 267 BC, Judea saw the crucifixion of men who remained faithful to Jewish law. Alexander Janneus (the Sadducean high priest, 103–76 BC), had 800 Pharisees crucified. Julius Ceasar (1st century BC) tells that the Numidians (Africa) practised this form of execution. Tacitus, the 1st-century Roman historian, writes about crucifixion among the Germans and Britons.
- According to the Old Testament law, the corpses of executed idolaters and blasphemers were hanged on a tree to show that they were accursed by God (Dt 21:22–23; Gal 3:13).

❖ B. The Romans and Crucifixion

- Cicero, a Roman statesman (1st century BC), calls crucifixion the most extreme form of execution. The Roman used it as a punishment for foreigners, people of the lower class, slaves and violent criminals. They also used crucifixion to terrify mutinous troops and

³ This paragraph is based on O’Collins, G. G. (1992, p. 1207-1210).

conquered people, and rebellious cities under siege. Sometimes large numbers of people were crucified (6000 slaves after a slave uprising against the Roman republic 71 BC). Josephus, who witnessed men dying by crucifixion during the siege of Jerusalem (70 CE), calls it “the most wretched of deaths”. Normally Roman citizens were safe from the possibility of crucifixion, no matter what their crimes.

- Quintilian (ca. 35–95 CE) thought that this form of execution had a better deterrent effect when the crosses were set up along the busiest roads. “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect.”
- There were almost no public protests against this cruel form of execution.

❖ C. The practice of Crucifixion

- Crucifixion normally included a flogging beforehand (Jn 19:1). There was a cross-piece attached either at the top of a vertical stake to give the shape of a “T” or just below the top, as in the form most familiar in Christian symbolism. (See also John 19:19.) The victims carried the cross or at least a transverse beam to the place of execution (Jn 19:17), where they were stripped (Jn 19:23) and bound or nailed to the beam (Jn 20:25), raised up, and seated on a small wooden peg in the upright beam. Ropes bound the shoulders or torso to the cross. The feet or heels of the victims were bound or nailed to the upright stake. John doesn’t mention nail marks in the feet or heels of Jesus, probably the feet of Jesus were bound. As crucifixion damaged no vital organs, death could come slowly, sometimes after several days of atrocious pain.

❖ D. Jesus’ Crucifixion

- Jesus foretold his own death (Mt 20:19; 26:2). Some of Jesus’ followers would suffer the same fate (Mt 23:34). According to the tradition, the apostle Peter was crucified in Rome hanging upside down when Nero was emperor (54-68 CE). Peter died probably 64 CE. The crucifixion of Jesus is told in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19.

❖ E. The crucifixion and the New Testament

- The apostle Peter:
“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).
- The apostle Paul:
“we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23, 24; see also Gal 3:1).

“No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:7, 8; see also Rev 11:8).

○ The (theological) meaning of the cross (summary):

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18).

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (Gal 3: 13).

“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (Rom 6:5-7; see also Gal 2:19, 20; 6:14).

“His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph 1:15, 16; see also Col 1:20).

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phill 2:8-11).

- The cross means salvation, reconciliation, and a new creation for all those who believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God, who appeared as a man and humbled himself and became obedient, even to death on a cross. The cross reveals the ultimate love of Jesus for sinners.

The cross of Christ is the paradox of the Christian faith, which can only be fully understood from the perspective of the resurrection and glorification of Christ otherwise:

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Cor 15:17-19).

Exposition

Verse 19

- ❖ To understand the import of verse 19, it is necessary to trace back what happened during the trial of Jesus. There are seven scenes. The central scene is the “coronation of Jesus as King of the Jews”:

John 18:29-31 – Jesus being handed over to Pilate (scene 1)	
Pilate	The Jews
<p>“What charges are you bringing against this man?”</p> <p>“Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”</p>	<p>“If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.”</p> <p>“But we have no right to execute anyone.”</p>
<p>❖ According to the Jews, Jesus was a criminal but they didn’t bring an actual charge against Jesus.</p>	
John 18:33-38 – The first interrogation (scene 2)	
Pilate	Jesus
<p>“Are you the king of the Jews?”</p> <p>“Am I a Jew? It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”</p> <p>“You are a king, then!”</p> <p>“What is truth?”</p>	<p>“Is that your own idea or did others talk to you about me?”</p> <p>“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”</p> <p>“You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”</p>
<p>❖ Pontius Pilate is not convinced. Jesus said that he didn’t resist while he was arrested. His Kingdom is from another place. He came to testify to the truth. Pilate is not interested in a discussion about truth.</p>	
John 18:38-40 – “I find no basis for a charge” (scene 3)	
Pilate	The Jews
<p><i>With this he went out again to the Jews.</i></p> <p>“I find no basis for a charge against him. But it</p>	

<p>is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?”</p>	<p>“No, not him! Give us Barabbas!”</p>
<p>❖ Pontius Pilate should have released Jesus without compromise.</p>	
<p>John 19:1-3 – Soldiers mock at Jesus (scene 4 – central section)</p>	
<p>Pilate, soldiers</p>	<p>Jesus</p>
<p><i>Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again.</i> “Hail, king of the Jews!” <i>And they struck him in the face.</i></p>	
<p>❖ Pilate doesn’t take the charge “King of the Jews” seriously. ❖ Burge comments: “While the word ‘king’ appears throughout the seven inverted sections, this central section could be deemed the ‘coronation’ of Jesus, as ironically, Jesus is now given his robe and crown.”⁴</p>	
<p>John 19:4-7 – “Here is the man!” (scene 5)</p>	
<p>Pilate</p>	<p>The Jews, chief priests and their officials</p>
<p><i>Once more Pilate came out.</i> “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.” <i>When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said:</i> “Here is the man!” “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”</p>	<p><i>As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted:</i> “Crucify! Crucify!” “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” (Lev 24:16)</p>

⁴ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 516).

❖ Notice the repeated: “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

John 19:8-11 – Final attempt to set Jesus free (scene 6)

Pilate	Jesus
<p><i>When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace.</i> “Where do you come from?” “Do you refuse to speak to me?” “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”</p>	<p><i>Jesus gave him no answer.</i> “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”</p>

❖ Pilate became afraid when he heard the following charge: “**Son of God**”.

- Look at the following sequence:
 - (18:37): “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. **In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.** Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”
 - (19:4, 5): Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.” When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “**Here is the man!**”
 - (19:7): The Jews insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, **because he claimed to be the Son of God.**”
 - (19:10, 11): “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “**You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.** Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” See also John 5:19-29! The judgment has been entrusted to Son of Man by the Father.
 - Jesus is consistent in what he says: “**and for this I came into the world**” “**if it were not given to you from above**”
 - Look at the following contrast: “**Here is the man!**” (Pilate) <> “**he claimed to be the Son of God**” (priests). The question “**What is truth?**” (18:38; Pilate) becomes very relevant.
 - Where do come from? Nazareth, heaven or earth?

John 19:12-16 – the judgment seat (scene 7)

Pilate	Jews, the chief priests
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From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free,

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

"Here is your king,"

"Shall I crucify your king?"

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

- ❖ The Jews were putting pressure on Pilate. It seemed to be that he had lost the "game." The Jews brought Jesus to Pilate. They choose Barabbas instead of Jesus. They called for his crucifixion. Up to thus far, he tried to release Jesus. But the priests were determined to have Jesus crucified. And finally, Pilate gave in.
- ❖ Suddenly, the whole situation changed. From the moment that the priests say: "We have no king but Caesar," (see below) Pilate as the representative of Caesar is back in control.
- ❖ Pilate sat down on the judgment seat to pass the final judgment.
- ❖ Jesus was crucified, together with two criminals, as a kind of escort.

Remember

- ❖ God is in control (Jn 19:11). Christ is not a victim but the victor. To believe Christ as the crucified King of Jews means life eternal.
 - Burge states: "John's theological message is that despite the darkness of the hour, this is in fact *the hour of glory*. Jesus will not be crucified, he will be "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34). He is not a victim, but a king assuming his throne, transforming death into a passage, a return, a celebration of his resumption of heavenly position. *And no matter what the world may think about or do to this glory, this regal glory cannot be suppressed.*"⁵

Verse 19

⁵ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 517)..

- ❖ **“Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross.”**
 - Pilate was the supreme judge and governor. He is back in charge and this was his judgment, as they, the Jews, wanted.
- ❖ **“It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews.”**
 - Pilate was consistent, even when he was afraid: **“your king” / “king of the Jews”** (18:33, 39; (19:3); 19: 14, 15).
 - The priests and the Jews didn’t protest at that moment.
 - At the same time, Pilate failed as a judge: **“I find no basis for a charge against him.”**
 - The crucifixion and the notice were politically motivated: to preserve order and peace among the Jews, and to make clear who is in charge: “Caesar.”
 - Jesus was the rejected king by the Jews: “we don’t have a king.”
 - When the priests replied to Pilate: “we don’t have a king, but Caesar,” they have broken the covenant and abandoned their messianic hopes. They have rejected the kingship of the Lord (1 Sam 8:7). Israel was called a kingdom of priests (Ex 3:5,6), serving the Lord God as their King.⁶
 - Earlier during the trial, they exchanged Jesus, the man with no guilt, against the criminal and sinner Barabbas.
 - Both are highly symbolic:
Sinner or Jesus?
Caesar or Son of God? The conflict between Caesar and Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world is already looming.
 - This notice indicates that Jesus will be a victor.

Verse 20

- ❖ **“Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city”**
 - See above “crucifixion.”
At that time, there were many Jews in Jerusalem, because of the Passover.
- ❖ **“Aramaic, Latin and Greek”**
 - The three main languages which were spoken in Palestine.
Aramaic the language of the Jews;
Latin, the language of the Roman government;
Greek, the international language.
 - Therefore Burge remarks: “It is not that he is merely king over Israel, but John notes that Jesus’ title is written for all of the major languages of the Mediterranean: Greek, Latin, and Aramaic.”⁷

Verse 21

⁶ Milne, B. (1993, p. 273).

⁷ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 541).

- ❖ **“The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate”**
 - Why? They felt being humiliated by Pilate. He took revenge.
 - They said: **“We have no king but Caesar”** (19:15).
 - Pilate wrote: **“The King of the Jews.”** Yes, you have a King, a crucified King.
- ❖ **“Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”**
 - The ESV translates: **“This man said, I am King of the Jews.”** It seems to be that chief priests suggested an abbreviated text: **“I am king of the Jews.”** This change in wording
 - But Jesus never claimed to be (an earthly) king of the Jews. There was no basis for a charge like this (18:36 and 6:15). He was not a rebel or a revolutionary. His disciples were not commando troopers. There was no attempt to overthrow the Roman government.
 - There is another slight difference. Pilate used a definite article: **“the King.”** The chief priests omitted the article: **“King.”** The use of the definite article emphasizes the title of Jesus: **“The King of the Jews.”**

Verse 22

- ❖ **“Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’”**
 - “The notice was the equivalent of a legal decision, and it could not be altered.”⁸
 - “Pilate’s malice serves God’s ends. The Lord Jesus is indeed the King of the Jews; the cross is the means of his exaltation and the very manner of his glorification.”⁹ It is written. And it became Word of God.
 - Did Pilate in a sense finally admit the truth?
 - “ ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me’ ” (Jn 18:37).

What happens next

- ❖ There are two ensuing scenes:
 - The soldiers are dividing the garments of Jesus among themselves.
 - Then John describes the presence of the women. He commends his mother to the care of John, the beloved disciple.
 - Is it far-fetched to state that his mother also stands for the church (Rev 12:13-17)?
 - This is the third exchange:
 - 1. Barabbas <> Jesus (Jn 18:40);
 - 2. Caesar <> Jesus (Jn 19:15);
 - 3. John, the disciple whom he loved <> Jesus, the son of his mother.

⁸ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 586).

⁹ Carson, D. A. (1991, p. 611).

Application

Praise

- ❖ Praise Christ, because he was crucified as king of the Jews, the messiah, the Saviour of this world.
 - Praise Christ, because of his great love for sinners, his friends, he died on the cross.
 - “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. **‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (Jn 3:14-19; also Jn 5:40; 12:37).
“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Reception

- ❖ It is important to tell the story vividly, so people become impressed and start thinking about the cross of Christ, his love, his kingship.
 - “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God”** (Jn 1:10-13; see also Jn 3:1-13).

Rejection

- ❖ Why do people reject the Gospel? Why did the Jews reject Jesus:
 - Burge aptly wrote: “This is a story about collusion, about secret agreements with some fraudulent purpose, about conniving and conspiring. This is a story about the betrayal of leadership, how Judaism’s high priests abandoned all pretense of devotion to God and decided instead to conspire with the military arm of Rome. Remarkably the leaders are willing to trade Barabbas for Jesus (18:40) and Caesar for God (19:16); their pursuit of pragmatic goals makes them unable to discern the difference between a terrorist and a good shepherd, a statue of Tiberius and the God of Abraham. All Judaism did not reject Jesus—the crowds cheering him on Palm Sunday bear testimony to his many followers—

but Judaism's leadership did everything in its power to sabotage his successes."¹⁰

The same is true today:

People admire the sinner.

People admire power.

People don't search for salvation and take this world as it is.

- "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:22-24).

Finally

- ❖ Burge: "The Passion story of John is indeed a story of tragedy, but it is not Jesus' tragedy; it is a human tragedy as we witness the futile and tragic efforts of people blinded by darkness, unable to see the true king in their midst. Nevertheless, their reflexes (unknown to them) and their instincts still work. They are religious. They have spiritual fears and questions. "Where *do you come* from?" Pilate asks (19:9). But their life in the darkness has made them only intuit the light, not see it, recognize it, or submit to it."¹¹

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¹⁰ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 513).

¹¹ Burge, G. M. (2000, p. 518).