

John 19:5-6

- Here is the man! -

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Context

- ❖ Having questioned Jesus about the possible charges brought against him, Pontius Pilate tries to release him, because “I find no basis for a charge against him.” But at the same time he knows that there will be riots when he releases Jesus. And as a Roman governor, he cannot tolerate any riots or unrest among the Jewish people. Therefore he lets them choose between the criminal Barabbas and Jesus, hoping that the ordinary people will choose Jesus. This is a political move. However, at the instigation of their leaders they choose Barabbas instead of Jesus. Now Pontius Pilate has a problem. He cannot condemn nor crucify a man who is not guilty.
- ❖ He decides to humiliate Jesus and to mock the charge brought against this man, “king of the Jews.” Pontius Pilate is exposing the crushed and humiliated Jesus to the Jewish people. Does he want to arouse pity, mercy for this man?

Form and structure

- ❖ John 19:5-6 is part of the trial against 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 them to be crucified, under pressure of the Jews (John 13-16).

Technical notes

- ❖ A Roman writer (Cicero) called crucifixion the most extreme form of punishment. Josephus, a Jewish writer, witnessed men dying by crucifixion during Titus’s siege of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). He called it “the most wretched of deaths.” Death on the cross was limited to foreigners and people of the lower class and slaves. The Romans used crucifixion to bring rebellious troops under control, or to set a horrific example for conquered peoples. Dangerous criminals could be crucified. The Roman writer Quintillian thought that this form of execution had a better deterrent effect when crosses were set up along the busiest roads, “where the most people can see and be moved by this fear.”¹
- ❖ Pontius Pilate was Roman Governor of Judea (A.D. 26-36/37) during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. He is known to have treated Jewish customs with contempt. Josephus recorded some conflicts between Pilate and the Jews. The Jews didn’t like him.²
 - He had to keep order and peace under Roman power.
 - He had to uphold justice according Roman standards.

	power – politics	(in)justice
Vs. 18:28-38		“What charges are you bringing against this man?” “ I find no basis for a charge against him. ”
Vs. 18:38-40	“But it 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?’”	
Vs. 19:1-7	“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ... Pilate answered, ‘You take him and crucify him.’”	“As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him. ”
Vs. 19:8-12	“Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify	“Pilate tried to set Jesus free,”

¹ Collins, G. (1992). *Crucifixion*. In: *Anchor Bible Dictionary 1* (pp. 1207-1210). New York: Doubleday.

² Hoehner, H. (1992). *Pontius Pilate*. In: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (pp. 615-617). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

	you?”	
Vs. 19:12-16	<p>“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.’</p> <p>When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat.”</p>	“Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.”

Exposition

Verse 5

- ❖ “Here is the man!”
 - Pontius Pilate was prepared to sacrifice this man, first by unjustly flogging and humiliating him to safeguard his own position as governor and to keep order and peace in Jerusalem. Was he hoping for mercy and pity for Jesus, so that the people would be willing to let him be released? The fate of Jesus was in his hands. In vs. 10 he says: “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”
 - Pontius Pilate underscores these words by pointing at Jesus wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns: “Do you really believe that he a king? I don’t.”
 - The Jewish leaders saw a humiliated and bleeding fellow-Jew, whom they held for a blasphemer (John 19:7). They hated the man Jesus.
 - The people were probably very disappointed in Jesus. It was only a few days ago that many of them shouted joyfully, because Jesus entered Jerusalem (John 12.13):
 “Hosanna!”
 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
 “Blessed is the King of Israel!”
 - How did Jesus see himself as the man? He was fulfilling the prophecies (Isa. 50:6; Isa. 53:5). He was the one who healed the sick, raised the dead, preached the word of God (Isa. 61:1-3), forgave the sins of people. He was the man full of grace and mercy.
 - And God, the Father? Listen to his words spoken at the baptism of Jesus: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; cf. Matt. 17:5).
- ❖ Indeed, “Here is the MAN!” Philippians 2:6-8:

Who, being in very nature God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
 but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Verse 6

- ❖ The dramatic outcome:
 - Here is the man! <> Crucify! The people who were shouting for the crucifixion of Jesus didn't probe the gravity of the situation. Their shouts have far-reaching implications.
 - Jesus is not just a man among other men and women. He is the only ONE who really deserves the title MAN, man in the image of God (Col. 1:15; John 1:14; John 14:8-9), the second ADAM (1 Cor. 15:45).
 - They were asking for the crucifixion of:
 - The WORD of God (John 1:1-5);
 - The grace and mercy of God (John 1:18);
 - The truth of God (John 1:18; John 14:6);
 - The Son of Man (John 3:13-16);
 - The love of God (John 3:16; John 15:9-10);
 - The Son of God (John 19:7).
- ❖ This dramatic outcome would have been really dramatic if Jesus wasn't resurrected from death on the third day.
 - His resurrection proves that he really is:
 - The WORD of God;
 -
 - The Son of God.
 - The second Adam, who conquered sin and death, who defeated Satan, the serpent from old.

Application

- ❖ When somebody wants to uphold a position associated with power, then truth, justice and mercy are often the first victims, together with his political foes. There is a saying of Lord Acton, the 19th-century British historian: "Power tends to corrupt." And Abraham Lincoln, former president of the United States said: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." This is also true for Pontius Pilate. His character was tested and he failed.
- ❖ This is one of the most dramatic exclamations in world history. "Here is the man!" This is the outcome of the process which started when man wanted to take his life into his own hands (Gen. 3:1-6), which led to the first brutal murder in the history of mankind (Abel). A process

which led to war – how many people haven't been slaughtered because they were considered inferior? A process which led to abuse of children, women and slaves. It led to the humiliation and rejection of the MAN.

- ❖ It is like a mirror. How many people still reject the only true MAN and therefore reject God? Do I receive Jesus the Christ, the MAN, the beloved one of God (John 1:12)?
 - In some countries, Christians are facing the same fate as Jesus. They are humiliated, persecuted, imprisoned on the basis of false accusations. Jesus already foretold in John 15:18-28: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."
- ❖ Caveat. The history of the crucifixion often gave rise to feelings of anti-Semitism and to persecution of the Jews. In that case, the very same words are true: "here is the man," and the persecutors are standing next to Pontius Pilate!
- ❖ "Here is the man" leads to the glorification of Jesus the Christ:
 - Again Philippians 2:9-11:

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.

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