

# Gospel of John - episode 41

## Chapter 19 part 2

Welcome to our sharing on John's Gospel. We're looking at the scene 6 which concerns Jesus's origins in 19:9-11. Pilate went back to Jesus and said, "where do you come from?" Pilate belongs to the unbelieving world, so 'where do you come from' doesn't mean 'do you come from heaven?' He wouldn't understand that at all. Luke 23 tells us that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod thinking that 'your origin' means your geographical origins, and Jesus came from Galilee. John does not stay at this low level; he wants to go deeper into Jesus' origins. Those of us who have travelled through the Gospel and the final discourse up to now know where Jesus came from. We also know **where we come from** because we have been born again in baptism, but for this idle question Jesus simply keeps silent. He doesn't respond.

Next we look at the fact that Pilate thinks he has power over Jesus. Back in the final discourse Jesus said that the evil one had no power over him; neither has Pilate any power over him. Jesus reveals to him that power resides only in God. **God alone has power**. When God moves in power, no one can counteract it. If God permits what is happening now, that is why it is happening. It just so happens that Pilate is the governor. There could have been somebody else. Pilate is not central to this event at all. When you look at the devious political struggle going on between Pilate and the Sanhedrin you see that he has no power at this point. He knows he should set Jesus free; he also knows that the Sanhedrin have got the better of him, and they will act on their advantage. Jesus proclaims the truth to Pilate, who wanted to know what truth was earlier. Maybe this man's soul could open a little? So, Jesus tells him that this is God's doing, and if God permitted this, it will happen.

So, it's not Rome or Jerusalem which has the power in this Passover. It is the Father and the Son working in tandem to bring about the redemption of the world. This is why throughout the Gospel in chapters 2, 7, 8, 12 and 13, this time has been called **Jesus's Hour**. Back in chapter 2, when our blessed mother wanted to intervene at Cana of Galilee, Jesus told her, **"My hour has not yet come"**. We will see what happens between Jesus and his Mother now that the hour has come. So, Jesus reminds Pilate that God is in control, and he is the true Emperor of the universe. Caesar is only a small cog in the wheel. **The true judge then judges his human judge** if I can put it that way. Theoretically Pilate is the judge here but Jesus is the true judge. Pilate doesn't know at this point that **Jesus has the last word on his life** just as he has the last word on everyone's life.

When Jesus returns in his final coming in Revelation 19, he comes back as a judge to the human race. In Revelation 20 everyone who has ever lived must stand before **The Great White**

**Throne.** Books will be opened and everything about us will be revealed. Jesus is the one who pronounced judgement on Pilate, Caiaphas and on Judas: “the one who handed me over to you has the greatest guilt”. The one in the singular is Caiaphas because he is the chief priest. He is the one who made the decision in chapter 11 to kill Jesus. The Sanhedrin work with him and the people follow the Sanhedrin. Jesus passes judgement on them all.

Scene number 7 is in 19:12-16: this is the death sentence given to one who has been declared innocent three times. “From that moment, Pilate was anxious to set him free, but the chief priests said, ‘If you set him free, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who makes himself king is defying Caesar’. Hearing these words, Pilate had Jesus brought out, seated himself on the chair of Judgement at a place called the Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. It was Passover preparation day, the sixth hour. ‘Here is your king’. ‘Take him away, crucify him’, they said, ‘Do you want me to crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, **‘We have no king but Caesar.’** So, in the end, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified”.

There's just an enormous amount in these words. I have only read the main words. Pilate has just received a merciful judgement from Jesus - that the one who handed me over to you has greater guilt, but then immediately we see that he has no power over Jesus. The Sanhedrin, though, has almost achieved its goal and will force Pilate's hand. They have admitted that **the true accusation** was one of blasphemy, but the only way they can get Pilate to kill Jesus legally is to keep up the ‘pretender king’ game. All Roman governors wore a ring on their finger stamped with ‘Friend of Caesar’. It was used to sign documents. The stamp, ‘Friend of Caesar’ confirmed the authority of the Roman government.

The Sanhedrin want to unseat Pilate so, they declare: **‘you are no Friend of Caesar’**. In God’s Kingdom Jesus revealed in the final discourse that the beloved disciples **are all friends of God** and prophets. Wouldn't you prefer to be a friend of God than a friend of Caesar? They pressure Pilate to kill Jesus as a pretender king. Even the chief priests don't seem to know what they're doing. It was a fact that the Sanhedrin hated the Emperor and anything to do with him, but at this moment this is a useful, cynical tool to use. They all knew that Pilate wouldn't risk the ire of Caesar because he wouldn't survive an investigation into his conduct in office. That would mean all his misdemeanours would be brought into the light and he would be thrown out.

Tiberius was the reigning Caesar at the time, and he lived like a recluse on the island of Capri. He was paranoid about those who represented him in the various parts of the Empire. He demanded absolute personal loyalty to himself, so, if he got a negative report about Pilate, he would be completely ruthless. Pilate would simply receive a message either to commit suicide or go into exile - which happened sometime later. At this point in the proceedings Pilate realises

that either he or Jesus is going to die - and It's not going to be him. The insight that John gives us is that Jesus dies for Pilate; He dies for the Sanhedrin; Jesus dies for his enemies, for everyone including Barabbas. He dies also for Judas and all those who will reject him throughout history even though they don't want him. The amazing thing is that none of them cared about Jesus at all, and yet he dies for them, manifesting the ultimate in divine/human love.

So, in 19:13 Pilate capitulates. He reveals who he really is by handing over an innocent man to be crucified – to be given the worst death imaginable. Having decided to give the Sanhedrin what they wanted Pilate then takes revenge on them by demanding the highest price for Jesus' life. At the beginning of this terrible drama the Sanhedrin merely paid the price of a slave to Judas for Jesus. **Now they will pay with their temple, their city, and their nation!** They will have to pay with permanent exile. They must pay because the cosmos is under the power of the evil one. Pilate makes them renounce their nationalistic expectation of a Davidic Jewish Messiah. They will have to choose Caesar, the representative of the kingdom of this world and his rule over them. Doesn't Satan know how to make you pay? They have to give up the very things they were fighting to preserve.

We now come to a point where we have a bit of a dispute as to the translation. The text says that Pilate had Jesus brought out. Most of the translations will say that **Pilate sat himself** on the chair of judgement. However, a better translation says that Pilate sees **Jesus on the chair of judgement**. This is what makes sense of the text. The crowned, robed and acclaimed King of the Jews is now going to sit in the **Chair of Judgement** (not literally) listening to his own people reject him and everything to do with God. But of course, if Pilate is in the Chair of Judgement, it doesn't make the same sense at all. Jesus, the real judge now witnesses his own people choose the world. This is the awesome moment when the chosen people of God, the people of the Covenant, those who have been blessed by God's presence all these years, publicly, before the powers of the world, **reject their God, their Messiah, and their King**. **“We have no king but Caesar”**. This is a frightful decision which will have terrifying consequences, costing millions of lives.

Remember that the Passover commemorated **God's judgement on the cosmos**, represented by the superpower of Egypt at the time, in favour of his chosen people in the Exodus. **Now you have the reverse**: the chosen people choose the cosmos repudiating their call. On this Passover, **it is the judgement of Israel with their Messianic Davidic King on the judgement seat in the capital city of Jerusalem**. In order to kill Jesus, they renounced God as their King. The Old Testament teaches that God was their true King. When they chose kings to rule over them they understood that the king was a servant of God whose main duty was to ensure that the

covenant of God was lived. Other nations had earthly kings, **but their King was God**. This is clear from Judges 8, first Samuel 8, second Samuel 7, Isaiah 26, etc. So, the only person who could rule over God's people was one raised up by God himself, as is very clear in the choice of King David.

Here, at this very solemn moment of Passover, the greatest feast of Israel, with all the people present celebrating their deliverance from the cosmos, and their covenant with God, the Sanhedrin - their supreme religious body - now **break the covenant publicly and solemnly** thus putting the nation back into slavery of the cosmos, as they declare Caesar, the very symbol of the realm of below, to be their chosen king! Truly, their hatred of Jesus has taken them way beyond anything even they could have imagined. Their renunciation of the Messiah is done with the crowned, robed, Messiah King seated in judgement in front of them, silent, peaceful, forgiving, loving, as always. You couldn't have a drama greater than this! For the Sanhedrin, for the chosen people of God, this is **the ultimate blasphemy**. They brought Jesus here on a charge of blasphemy, but now they commit one much greater than what they accuse Jesus of!

Yet the amazing thing is that if you shift from this lower level where all of this dreadful stuff is going on, and go to the level of above, you will see that God transcends all this. God will use all this terrible stuff. He will transform it. **Jesus, all alone**, unaided by the chosen people or by the Sanhedrin, will **take on the evil spirit** which is destroying everyone - that enemy which rules the cosmos, and **he will war against that spirit, and prevail**. He will do it in a very short time, all by himself. The silence of the Lamb is incredible. But of course, if you read Isaiah 53, you will find there that Jesus was like a silent lamb before his shears - exactly as you see him here. So, in spite of the present events; in spite of the fact that it looks as if everything is being destroyed by human beings, **Jesus will create a new covenant in his own blood**. **He will still create a new era of grace and mercy for the whole human race**.

He will inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom of God. He will usher in the new covenant, and he will make his precious blood available to heal the sin and rebellion of the world. However, it is necessary to understand that all the rebellion of the cosmos **cannot prevent God from carrying out his Will on earth as he has decided in heaven**. In spite of them all, everything that Jesus promised in the final discourse will happen. This shows that we needed the teaching in the final discourse to make sense of all this. Without that knowledge we would probably read it on the level of below as a disaster, not understanding that **every single point is a victory for Jesus**. We need to know that this final breaking of the covenant of Moses is at 12 noon on Passover. This is terribly important because the Lamb of God will die at three o'clock in the afternoon. Matthew's Gospel relates the fact that at the moment the Lamb dies, the veil of the temple is torn in two, but not by a human hand. This signifies the end of the covenant of Moses, and of

the Old Testament era - and the end of all that the Sanhedrin stood for! In fact, the Sanhedrin will go on for a few years, a bit like ivy growing on a wall, not knowing that the roots have been destroyed. But it's all over for them, and it's all beginning for the rest of us. Thank you for listening. God bless you.

## **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our sharing on John's Gospel. We are now in Chapter 19:17 dealing with the execution of the King of the Jews, the Messianic Davidic King. "Then the (Roman soldiers) took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross, he went out of the city to the place of the skull called Golgotha. There they crucified him with two others, one on the right and one on the left, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross. It ran, **Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews**. This notice was read by many of the Jews because the place where Jesus was crucified was not very far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, the three main languages of the day. So, the Jewish chief priest said to Pilate, You should not write 'King of the Jews', but this man said, 'I am the King of the Jews'. Pilate answered, Quad scripsi, Scripsi. What I have written, I have written". He said this in Latin, his own language.

We need to contemplate this great mystery. The first thing I want to point out, of course, is that John deals with the whole subject very differently to the Synoptic Gospels. In them you read about a lot of noise, accusations and insults thrown at the dying Saviour. This is not so in John's Gospel. He wrote this text 60 years after Christianity came into existence, so everyone knew who Jesus really is so he put an atmosphere of silence and awe into the whole thing. He doesn't allow insults or the terrible noise that would have been there in the actual event. He wants you to see that Jesus is silent, controlled and very loving. **He is who he is** no matter what circumstances he finds himself in. We can see the sheer heroism of the One who loves us beyond measure.

John wants you to know, of course, that Jesus is not a helpless victim. He told us from the beginning that Jesus is in charge of these events. **It is HIS HOUR**. Back in the supper room in 13:27, he gave permission to his betrayer to go and do whatever he was going to do. In chapter 18, we saw him control his own arrest. He wouldn't surrender until his disciples were free, and the people arresting him actually knew who he was. When you look at the trial under Pilate, it turned out to be a proclamation of his kingship.

Now Jesus carries his own cross like a royal banner, and he will be enthroned on the altar of the cross as his royal enthronement. John wants you to hear that this is **the lifting up of the Son of**

**Man** that we talked about from the beginning of the Gospel. John wants you to remember Genesis 22 when Isaac went to Mount Moriah with his father, Abraham. Isaac carried the wood of the sacrifice on his shoulders also. John emphasises the fact that Jesus carries the wood of the cross on his shoulders. That means that he is cooperating with what is happening, because for him, he is doing this out of absolute 100% obedience to his Father and love for his beloved disciples and all who will believe in him. So, John keeps emphasising that Jesus is the victim sacrifice for sin, and that he is **expressing love that has no limits**. He does acknowledge that Jesus died between two malefactors, but gives no details - that you will find in Luke's Gospel. I want to remind you of something I brought out in the supper room, that is that Jesus dies between the two types of children that you find on the Earth - those who cooperate with the Lord and those who rebel, those who open up as the so-called good thief opened up to the grace of Jesus, and those who close themselves off like Judas and the other thief in this mysterious closing of the heart to God, because human beings have free will. That mystery continues right up to the last moment of Jesus's life. The two types of children are in the crowd also because there are friends and foes present. There are those who believe and those who reject him. John emphasises the fact that Pilate is very anxious to make this **look as if it was a legal event**, so, he himself wrote out the statement to be put over the cross of Jesus to justify his decision to execute. He announced that **Jesus of Nazareth is the King of the Jews!** Not only that, but he wrote it in the three main languages of the Roman Empire, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, making it a universal proclamation.

Now, Pilate, as a pagan lost in the unbelieving world, would have no idea that God was using him because of his position to make the world realise that **this was a cosmic event**. This proclamation does that. The Sanhedrin object because they tried to get Pilate to accept that Jesus was a 'pretender king', a fake, so, he must not make the proclamation that he is **a real king**. But Pilate has a great need to get revenge on the Sanhedrin also. Pilate doesn't understand part of the proclamation: **here is the last king of the dynasty of David dying on a cross**. This means that the dynasty of David is finished. There will be no more Kings of David's line. Jesus was the only living person in Israel who could continue the dynasty. John wants you to see something else: Jesus is leaving the human dynasty of David to pick up **His Eternal Kingship**.

Here is one last reminder about Daniel 7:13-14. This time I'll read it for you because the human Davidic King is dying. The dynasty is over, but the eternal kingship of Christ has begun. "I gazed into the visions of the night, and I saw coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man". (that was the identity that Jesus gave himself". He came to the one of great age, (that is God the Father), and was led into his presence. (This is shown very clearly in chapter 4 and 5 of the Book of Revelation). On him was conferred sovereignty, glory, and kinship. (Nothing to do with

any human, ephemeral stuff or anything that would pass away. This is eternal). On him was conferred sovereignty, glory, and kinship. Then all people's nations and languages became his servants". We will see in chapter 20 that a completely new era has begun, where Jesus will be worshipped, believed, praised and served by people worldwide. **It is, in fact, a cosmic event.**

"His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which will never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed". That's interesting in the present context because the Roman Empire was eventually destroyed. All the other empires Daniel spoke about rose and fell also. **But Jesus's empire lasts forever.** When we go through the drama of the Book of Revelation, we see him returning as **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**, but now we see him being nailed to a cross. This is the only throne Jesus will get on the earth. Remember John 3:14-16: "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself". Hence, the emphasis on the cosmic event is very important. So, let's read two more verses for you. "When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus, they took his clothing and divided it into four parts, one for each soldier. So, there are four men in charge of killing Jesus. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem, of course, made by his mother. So, they said to one another, instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who will have it. And in this way, the words of scripture were fulfilled. They shared out my clothing among them, and they cast lots for my clothes." This is exactly what the soldiers did.

When we come to Golgotha, everything is in silence. All the noise of the praetorium and the flurry of events is over. Jesus is stripped a second and final time because men were crucified naked, and they hung on the cross with every dignity removed from them. It was total humiliation. I will show you more about this further on. I only want to say it as John says it. As they were stripping Jesus, they found that his undergarment was seamless. The seamless garment was worn by the high priest, showing his consecration. John wants you to see that as they strip Jesus they discover he is dressed as a high priest. This is how John reminds us that **Jesus is the High Priest of the New Covenant.** This is his sacrifice, on his altar; this is the first Mass!

It was customary to share out the prisoner's clothing with the soldiers who were executing them. It must have been an awful thing for a dying man to realise he didn't even have clothes! He has nothing, absolutely nothing. Everything is taken away. Psalm 22:18 said, "they have divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes. You might wonder why the Psalm said "they cast lots for my clothes". John explains that it is because Jesus is wearing the high priest's garment. He wants us to remember what Jesus said in his priestly prayer in 17:19, that he was consecrating himself as a victim for the sake of his disciples and for the sake of the church. This was to be the way he would release Satan's captives which we read about in Isaiah 61;1-4.

In 19:25 we come to another very interesting incident, which is only mentioned by John; it is not in the Synoptics. It is the conversation, brief but very deep, between Jesus and his mother. “Near the cross stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. And seeing his mother (that means concentrating upon her as distinct from the other women) and seeing the disciple that he loved near her (because John was standing there protecting Jesus's mother and consoling her, trying to help her). Jesus said to his mother, Woman, this is your son. Then to the disciple, he said, This is your mother, and from that moment, the disciple made a place for her in his home”. Now, this is a much bigger event than just the few words might indicate. The scholars have great fun with the statement as to who these women actually are. Depending on how you translate it, there are either 3 or 4 women at the foot of the cross. I'm just going to accept that there was three. First, there was Mary, the mother of Jesus the faithful co-redeemer in this great event. Second, you have Mary, the wife of Clopas, who was a sister-in-law of Jesus's mother. She was a lifelong friend of Jesus's mother, and she was her mainstay and support through everything. Almost nothing is said of her in the Gospels. The third person is Mary of Magdala, the great symbol of spiritual resurrection. You only have to look at her to see what is offered to all other sinners.

In these 3 women we have Jesus's mother, the greatest person who ever lived apart from her son; you have a faithful friend and sister-in-law, and a symbol of resurrection. These women are **with Jesus**. You remember that Peter was with Jesus during his trial before the Sanhedrin but not with him in the right way. He was merely present. These women are with Jesus in the mystery which is a different subject altogether. They are not only with him in the mystery, but they form the **first adorers of the Lamb at the foot of the cross**. They are the first adoration group. They represent everyone who gathers around the cross of Christ or the Eucharist to adore the Lamb of God. These women witness everything. They witness his crucifixion, his death, his burial, and also his resurrection. They are extremely important in the Gospel narrative and in the witness of the church. They stand in total contrast to the Roman soldiers and the chief priests and all the others who are simply oozing hatred, rejection, violence and scorn at Jesus.

When we look at the words of Jesus to his mother, ‘Woman, behold your son’. We have to look at that from two different aspects. I don't mean the level of above and below. I mean from a family and a church standpoint. From a family standpoint, we have very important evidence given to us here. Jesus was an only child without siblings. It was his duty before he died to take care of his mother because he was living in a society where widows and orphans had no help. It was essential for Jesus to hand his mother over into the hands of someone who would care for her. Now, if he had brothers and sisters, it would be inexplicable that he would hand his mother



over to someone who was not in the family. This is one of the proofs that people don't see that Jesus did not have siblings.

The other matter that we have to look at is that Jesus's mother represents the church in this incident. She represents the church anyway. John also represents the church. Jesus says to his mother, 'I'm giving my church to you: there is your son'. He says to John, 'I am giving you the mother you need. Take care of her and she will take care of you, young church, in the same way as she took care of me when I was an infant and growing up. Mary's function in the church is seen clearly here. Now, we know from the tradition of the early church that John did, in fact, take Mary to his home, and he took care of her up to the time that she departed the earth in her Assumption.

He did take care of her, and he did take her to Ephesus. John was in charge of the church in Ephesus and during that time, she lived in the same place as John. The other side of this commission is that the church represented by John, is told **to take blessed mother on board**, that the church for all time was going to need the mothering that our blessed mother would give them. They needed her guidance, wisdom and help. And we need it very badly right now.

Thank you for listening. God bless you.