



John 19
By Chuck Smith

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him (19:1).

The scourging by the Roman government was a method by which they elicited confessions from accused criminals, usually from convicted criminals. It was a very torturous thing, a prisoner was tied to a post in such a way that his back was extended. And then they would lay across the back this whip that had little bits of glass and lead embedded in it that was designed to sort of rip the flesh as it was pulled off. Very painful and it was used by the Romans, as I said, to elicit confessions. The idea being that if a person would confess of a crime, they would be a little more lenient on the next time they brought the whip on his back. There would be a scribe standing by to write down the confessions of the crimes and this way, they were able to clear the books on many of the unsolved crimes in the community.

It was a common practice to scourge the prisoners before they were crucified. Again, clearing up a lot of the unsolved crimes. It was unlawful to scourge a Roman citizen without his being already condemned but they would use it as sort of a third degree torture to get the prisoners to confess to crimes.

In ordering Jesus scourged, it was no doubt to get Him to the confession of His guilt concerning the charges that were brought against Him by the Jews. The interesting thing is that Pilate was convinced of His innocence and yet had Him scourged. But when we read in the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter fifty, that “He would give His back to the smiters” (Isaiah 50:6), and as we read in Isaiah 53, “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we were healed” (Isaiah 53:5), we realize that even though it was inconsistent with Roman justice, to subject an innocent man to this kind of torture, it was something that was designed and planned by God that not only should His Son suffer death upon the cross but that His Son should also be scourged. But Isaiah in speaking of this scourging, in prophesying it, said, “And as a lamb before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). He had nothing to confess. And thus, there is cause to believe that He received the full brunt of the whipping because the idea was, if they did not confess the next lash would be harder. And continually harder until a person would be forced by the pain to cry out the confessions of his crimes. Jesus bore that suffering but as Isaiah said, “By His stripes, we are healed.”

He was suffering for us. One of the consequences of sin in the world is suffering. All of the suffering of the world can be traced back to the introduction of sin. It is sin that brings suffering to humanity and Jesus is there suffering for us because of the sin, that we might be healed.

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And they said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands (19:2,3).

Jesus is now being mocked. Jesus is now being abused by the Roman soldiers. They made a crown of thorns and pressed it on His head. Interesting. Where did the thorns come from? Going back to the garden of Eden when man disobeyed God, and God was announcing to man the results of sin and disobedience, He said, “Cursed be the ground. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth” (Genesis 1:17,18). The thorns are the result of the curse. They say that a thorn is an undeveloped blossom. When the curse is removed, can you imagine how beautiful the desert will be? When every thorn becomes a blossom once again. But the thorns came from the curse of sin. And thus, quite appropriate. He came to suffer for sin. To take the curse of sin. And thus, thorns caused by the curse are placed upon His brow as the soldiers mockingly hail Him the King of the Jews, as they put on a purple robe and do feigned obeisance and then they smite Him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and said to them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him (19:4).

Quite a confession because if he found no fault in Him, then why would he have Him scourged? It is thought that Pilate felt that the scourging would placate their bloodthirsty desire for His death. That they would be satisfied if He were subjected to this horrible torture of the scourging. According to the historians, many times the prisoners would not even survive the scourging. Many times they would bleed

to death or die during this torture. He said, I'm bringing Him forth to declare to you, I find no fault in Him. Again God protecting the innocence of Jesus. Making sure that we know that He was innocent. That He was the innocent one suffering for the guilty. Judas said, "I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). Pilate said, I find no fault in Him. Pilate's wife sent a message to him and said, "Have nothing to do with this just man: I've suffered many things in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19). And the thief on the cross said, He has done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41).

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the man (19:5)!

A man like Pilate had never met before. It's interesting as you read this story of Jesus before Pilate, it is more or less like Pilate is the one that is on trial here rather than Jesus. Jesus has sort of taken control. It says, Though He is in control which indeed He was of the events, Pilate was the helpless one. Pilate was the puppet. He was the one that was caught up in this whole movement and he was the helpless one. Jesus was the one who was in control.

When the chief priests therefore and the officers saw Jesus, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. Then the Jews answered him and they said, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God (19:6,7).

According to Jewish tradition, the Messiah would be the Son of God. Because the prophecy said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: the government will be upon his shoulders: his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). A scripture that they recognized as prophetic of the Messiah. A Son is given. God is giving His Son.

When Peter responded to the question of Jesus, "Who do you say that I am? He said, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15,16). When Jesus was being interrogated by the high priest, He said, Are you the Messiah? Jesus answered, You said it. He said, Are you then the Son of God? Because the Messiah according to their belief would indeed be the Son of God. And Jesus again answered, You've said it. The priest tore his robe and said, Why do we need any further witnesses? You've heard himself. You've heard from his own mouth the blasphemy. What do you say? They said, He is worthy of death" (Matthew 26:63-66).

When Pilate though heard the claim of Jesus, he was even more afraid (19:8);

He was fearful of Jesus. He never had a man quite like this before. Behold the man! I believe he really admired Jesus.

And so he went again into the judgment hall (19:9),

Took Jesus back inside for further interrogation.

and he said unto Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus did not answer him. Then Pilate said unto him, Don't you speak to me? don't you know that I have the power to crucify you, and I have the power to release you (19:9,10)?

Here Pilate is really inditing himself because he's acknowledging, I have the power. I can have you crucified or I can release you. He's acknowledging that he possessed that power. Thus in allowing Jesus to be crucified, he has to take responsibility because he had the power to release Him.

But Jesus answered [and His answer wasn't very comforting to Pilate], You could have no power at all against me, except it were given to you from above: therefore he that delivered me unto you has the greater sin (19:11).

You're sinning but they have the greater sin. Theirs is a sin against knowledge. Pilate really doesn't know quite what's going on. And theirs is the greater sin.

And from that time Pilate sought to release Jesus: but the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend: whosoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar (19:12).

They're pulling out their trump card. They had already made complaints against Pilate. There had been official complaints against him. There wasn't any real love lost between the Jews and Pilate. There was a lot of irritation there. And another complaint to Caesar would put Pilate in bad light. They knew it. They knew that they had Pilate more or less over the barrel. They were playing their cards out well as they bring up the issue of Caesar. You will not be looked upon as Caesar's friend if you allow a man to claim Himself the King.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat

in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and it was about the sixth hour: and he said to the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar (19:13-15).

Quite a statement for the religious leader of the people. Quite a statement. Quite a confession. You see, the chief priests were not really spiritual men. They were using religion for their own profit and their own gain. They were extremely wealthy men because they had learned a way to profit off of religion. Their king really was their desire for power, for money. Pilate realized that the charges against Jesus were just trumped up charges. They were fearful that if Jesus were allowed to continue to minister, that all people would go after Him. They would lose their power. They would lose their position. And so this acknowledgment, "We have no king but Caesar."

It's interesting that in the subsequent years, there did develop in Rome the deifying of the Caesar. Every year, a person would have to offer incense to the image of Caesar and declare that Caesar is lord. It was required of those in the Roman community. The Christians would refuse to acknowledge that Caesar was lord. It was a capital offense not to acknowledge Caesar as lord. Thus when the Christians would refuse to acknowledge that Caesar is lord, they would be put to death in very cruel and torturous ways.

There's a very interesting book called *Fox's Book of Martyrs* and he lists in his book the martyrs for Jesus Christ in the first few centuries of the church and many of the accounts tell of how that the executioner pleaded with the person to just say Caesar is lord because the executioner had pity on them and did not want to execute them. But the Christians would refuse to do so and millions of them actually went to their death for refusing to say that Caesar is lord.

But here the chief of the Jews' religious system were saying, We have no king but Caesar. They refused to acknowledge the kingdom of God in their lives.

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away (19:16).

The custom was, there were four soldiers that were given the duty of crucifying the person. The person was required to carry his own cross and there would be a soldier that would go in front of him holding a sign which was the accusation and the charge for which he was being crucified. They would go outside of the city because under the law they could not crucify them within the city but they would usually take sort of a circuitous route through the city to go outside so that more people could see the prisoner and see the charges against him to put the fear of the law in the hearts of the people. Three soldiers would march behind the prisoner and they would make their way through the streets of Jerusalem and then out to the place called Golgotha, the place of the skull, where they would then nail him to the cross that they had carried and put the cross in the ground and the prisoner would hang there until he died.

The Romans would let the prisoner just hang there until they died of suffocation ultimately. And sometimes they would hang there for days before they would die. It was a horrible, torturous method of putting people to death. But the Jews had a law, interestingly enough, a law that dealt with hanging on a tree.

In Deuteronomy, chapter twenty-two, there was this law given that if a person was hanged that they should not allow them to stay overnight. In other words, they were to see that death came and they weren't to keep them overnight. Twenty-one, twenty-two: "And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and you hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for if he is hanged on a tree he is accursed of God;) that the land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deuteronomy 21:22,23). So if they hung a person on a tree, they were not to allow him to be there overnight and they were to bury him that day. It's interesting that the Jews to the present day have the custom of burying the person the day they die. Rabin was sort of a special case as they were waiting for all the dignitaries to get there. but it is traditional in the Jewish culture to bury the person, because of this scripture, the day they die.

Paul makes mention of this particular verse in Galatians as he is saying that "Christ suffered the curse for us: because it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon the tree" (Galatians 3:13).

So they led Him away to be crucified. Now the sign that the soldier would carry in front of the cross

was then nailed on top of the cross above the prisoner's head so that everybody that saw them hanging there would know the charges against them.

So Jesus bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha (19:17):

In Latin, it is Calvary.

Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the middle (19:18).

Greek, it's Calvary. Latin, this would be Cranium.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was [and this is the accusation], JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then one of the chief priests of the Jews came to Pilate and said, Don't write, The King of the Jews; but that he said he was the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written (19:19-22).

It's interesting, Pilate is real adamant in this, in a minor thing. The major thing was he gave in on the major thing and that was the crucifixion. Here on the minor thing, he's holding tough. And it's an inconsistency that we often see in life. People can allow major. Like Jesus said, "You strain at a gnat, but you swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). And that's quite often the case with people. They hold tight on little non-consequential issues but on major issues, they cave in. So "Pilate declared, What I have written, I have written."

The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and they made four parts, to every soldier a part (19:23);

As I said, there were four soldiers involved in getting the prisoner from the judgment hall out to the place of crucifixion. And thus, there were five parts to the Jewish garment and each one threw dice for which part he would get. But then they came to the tunic, the robe and it was special. Now generally, they just cut it in four pieces and the guy would get a fourth of it. But they said, This is too nice to cut. Let's go ahead and throw dice to see who gets the robe. And so they cast lots to see who would get the robe and the interesting thing is that this again was the fulfillment of prophecy in Psalm 22. It declared, "They will part my garments among them, but for my vesture they will cast lots" (Psalm 22:18). That was written a thousand years before the crucifixion of Jesus.

A note here, the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city. Today in Jerusalem, across from the wall of the city that goes between the Damascus gate and Herod's gate, there is across the valley there a short distance of maybe two hundred feet, the side of the mountain which was Mount Moriah. Because the temple was built on the site of Mount Moriah. It is the top really of Mount Moriah, the valley has been formed because of a quarry, the stones there are just naturally sort of in stratum and they made great building stones because they were flat and lying in strata. So all they had to do is drill holes, put the wooden pegs in and soak the wooden pegs until they swelled and they could split these rocks. They used them for Solomon's temple and they used them for much of the building in Jerusalem. Herod used the stones and there was this large quarry in this particular area on the north side of the city of Jerusalem because it did lend so well to making building blocks. And thus this valley was formed.

Originally, Abraham's time, it was just a straight mountainside up to the top but when Jerusalem became then a city, this was the area where the stone was quarried for the city and it's quite easy to see when you are there. On the wall, as you look at the wall from the street side, the modern street side, you see that the bedrock goes way on up. You can see that the actual natural hillside, the wall was built on top. And then you can look over the other side where the top of Mount Moriah is and you see the same thing that the cliff there has been formed as a result of the quarry. The side of the mountain has the appearance of a skull. It looks like the eyes and the nose, the bridge of a skull and many believe that that is the place of the skull or Golgotha because of the appearance of a skull there on the side of the mountain. Very possibly the actual site of the crucifixion of Jesus. If so, then people on the wall of the city of Jerusalem, looking across could see Him hanging there and of course, could hear Him as He uttered His seven sayings from the cross.

The place there is right next to an ancient garden, a garden that was replete with cisterns and all for the watering of the plants and the garden was also a place where in the rock wall they had hewn out certain tombs. I say that because as we get to the end of the chapter it says, "Now in the place where He

was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein never man had been laid. And they laid Jesus therefore because the Jews' preparation day; and the sepulcher was close at hand" (19:41,42). Many believe that what is today called the garden tomb is indeed the garden that was near the place where Jesus was crucified and that that is actually the site of Golgotha, it does have a lot of merit to that.

So the prophecy was fulfilled as they did not tear His robe but they cast lots,

And thus the scripture fulfilled, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and also his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene (19:24,25).

Four ladies standing by the cross. First of all, His mother Mary. You remember when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the temple to present Him to the Lord and this godly man who served the Lord was promised by God that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's salvation, the Messiah. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus then, he lifted Jesus up and he said, Now Father, let Thy servant depart in peace for I have Your salvation. And then he turned to Mary and he prophesied to her of the greatness of her child but he said, A sword shall pierce also through your heart (Luke 2:25-35). And I'm certain that as Mary was standing there watching her Son being abused and crucified that a sword pierced her heart as she stood there watching Him.

Mary's sister was there. From the other gospels we know that it was Salome. Salome happened to be the mother of James and John which means that James and John were cousins to Jesus. Their mother was the sister of Mary. So they had known Jesus probably then from childhood because they were cousins to Jesus. She was there plus Mary, the wife of Cleopas. We know that one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus when Jesus appeared after His resurrection, one of them was named Cleopas and so this perhaps was his wife. And of course, Mary Magdalene and what we know about her is that Jesus had cast seven devils out of her. She was from Magdala, that little village on the shores of the Galilee. Her life was miserable, she was tortured prior to meeting Jesus and she was devoted completely to Him because He had set her free. And she just followed Him and was totally devoted to Him. So the four women and we know that John, the disciple, was there.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother [standing there, no doubt weeping], and the disciple standing by her, whom He loved (19:26),

Again, it's interesting, John is talking about himself but he doesn't call himself by name, he just refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And we get this distinction concerning John. He's called John the beloved and we are told that he is the disciple that Jesus loved but we are told that only by John. We're not told that in any of the gospels. It was just John sets that up for himself and says, I'm the disciple that Jesus loved. I believe that John no doubt felt that Jesus loved Him more than the others. And I believe that Peter probably felt that he was loved by Jesus more than the others, as did Matthew and the rest of them. I believe that Jesus had a way of dealing with people that every one of them felt special. They every one of them felt that Jesus was going to make them one of the chiefs in the kingdom. Because they were always arguing over that. Why would they argue over that but what they all felt that I'm special to Jesus. But the truth of the matter is they were all right. They are all special. And you are special. It's important though that you know it. To refer to yourself, I'm the one that Jesus loved. You're right. He loves you. You're special to Him and He wants you to know that you're special to Him. The important thing is that you do know that. You're very special to the Lord. There's no one in the world like you, as far as He is concerned. You're very special to Him. He loves you and He wants you to know that. John came to that recognition. I'm the disciple that Jesus loved.

He said to his mother, Woman, behold thy son (19:26)!

He's not saying, Look at Me! But He is indicating John at this point.

And He said to the disciple, Behold your mother (19:27)!

In other words, He is saying, Okay John, take care of her. Watch over her. The relationships that we have in Christ are often far closer than the human relationships that we have in our family. The brothers of Jesus at this point did not believe in Him. They did not believe until after His resurrection. And so there was a closer bond between John and Mary because of their common belief in Jesus as the Messiah. So John is commissioned by Jesus to take care of Mary. And John tells us,

from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home (19:27).

He took the commission of Jesus to take care of Mary.

After this (19:28),

That is, after taking care of the final filial relationships, taking care of His mother, now He enters into the spiritual dimension and aspects of the cross. "After this,"

Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished (19:28),

The purposes of God are being fulfilled.

that the scripture might be fulfilled, He said, I thirst (19:28).

In Psalm 69:21, it declares that "They gave me vinegar to drink in my thirst." That was the prophecy concerning the Messiah and so in order that it might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst."

Now there was a vessel full of vinegar that was set there: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished (19:29,30):

There was one little item of prophecy that had not yet been fulfilled and so Jesus said, I thirst, get that final item set and now that that's accomplished, now that He tasted the vinegar, that scripture is fulfilled and so He said, It's finished. It's completed. It's done. The prophecies are fulfilled.

and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (19:30).

Or gave up the spirit. It's a definition of death that is accepted today. When a person no longer has any brain activity, the heart can still keep pumping artificially but when the brain goes flat, the spirit is departed and a person is considered dead. And so He gave up His spirit. Luke's gospel tells us that He said, Father, into Your hands, I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). And "He bowed his head and dismissed His spirit." Jesus had said, "No man takes my life from me, I give my life. For I have the power to lay down my life, and I have the power to take it up again" (John 10:18). No man takes my life from me. That sort of puts an end to that debate that's been going on through the years as who is truly responsible for the death of Jesus: the Romans or the Jews? Jesus said, No man takes my life from me. I give my life. I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it up again. And so Jesus dismissed His spirit.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (19:31),

We already looked in Deuteronomy twenty-one there, and saw that it was the Jewish law that they weren't to leave them hanging but were to bury them the same day. "That the body should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day,"

(for that sabbath day was a high day (19:31),)

The first day after passover was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. And the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, whatever day it fell on, was a sabbath day and was to be treated as a sabbath day in that all of the laws that pertain to the sabbath day were fulfilled on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. And thus it was a high sabbath day. It is my belief that Jesus was crucified on a Thursday, rather than on the traditional Friday. That, that Friday was the first day of unleavened bread, thus the high sabbath day or the holiday of unleavened bread. The following day, Saturday, was the common weekly sabbath day so that His body then remained in the grave for three days and three nights, according to His own prediction. I think that the fact that John points out that that sabbath day was a high day, he points out that it was a special sabbath day, not the regular weekly sabbath but the sabbath of the feast of unleavened bread.

In the Jewish calendar, the day begins at sundown. So Jesus had the feast of the passover with His disciples on Wednesday night. The passover would go until Thursday night sundown. Then as I pointed out, Saturday would be the sabbath day and then Sunday He rose from the dead, the first day of the week. That's just my opinion and you can take it or leave it.

So in order to hasten the death, they would take a mallet and they would break the legs of the prisoners. They would crush the bones and it would just bring on death. And because they didn't want the bodies hanging there on the sabbath day, they came with the mallets and they broke the bones of the thieves that were crucified with Jesus.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was already dead, they did not brake his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and there came forth blood and water (19:33,34).

There is a sac around the heart and when the heart ruptures, it fills with fluid and with blood. And there are doctors who have ascertained that Jesus died actually of a ruptured heart and that when the soldier pierced His heart, the idea was to make sure that He was dead. He appeared to be dead. Make sure,

thrust the spear through His heart. And as he hit the little sac around the heart, the watery fluid with blood came forth and it's perhaps a good hint to us of His cause of death, a ruptured heart.

This is all a part of God's plan, because these things were done that

Because these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken (19:36).

That was prophesied in Psalm 34:20 and in Numbers 9:12.

And there is another scripture that says, They shall look on him whom they have pierced (19:37).

That's in Zechariah chapter twelve. So these things were not just done happenstance. This was just not the capricious action of a Roman soldier. This is a part of God's divine, ordained plan that God wrote about over five hundred years and over a thousand years in advance of the actual happening. It's like us sitting down and writing about something that's going to happen to a man who will be on the earth a thousand years from now or five hundred years from now and start giving details of how this person is going to be put to death. And add all of these little extra interesting kind of details and then have it come to pass five hundred years later. You see how impossible that would be. It proves that the scriptures are divinely inspired by God and it proves that Jesus indeed was the promised Messiah. No one else could fulfill these prophecies or have fulfilled them, only Jesus.

Now after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews (19:38),

We were told earlier that there were many among the Pharisees who believed in Jesus but secretly because they feared the Jews because the Jews had already decided that if anybody believed that Jesus was the Messiah, they would not be allowed in the synagogue. And so there were these secret disciples and it's interesting how that His disciples had forsaken and fled, that the scripture might be fulfilled. "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). So they had fled. But here now, the secret disciples step forward.

Again that's interesting and it's a lot like human nature. There are some people who in minor things fall apart but in major things, they really stand out. My dad was that way. He could take any kind of a major catastrophe and handle it well. But the little things would drive him buggy. He could get irritated over the smallest things. But let something really major happen and man, he was just the man of the hour. He was cool, he was collected, he was able to just handle things and direct traffic and everything else. But it was just the little things that he couldn't handle in life.

Here's Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple because of the fear of the Jews. But here at this time, he steps forward. He goes to Pilate and,

Asks permission to take away the body of Jesus (19:38):

Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. He inquired of the centurion and he was confirmed by the centurion to be dead and so,

he gave Joseph the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus (19:38,39),

We know that name back in John chapter three. He was a ruler of the Jews, he was among the Jewish religious leaders. And he was of the Sanhedrin, that is the religious ruling class. He came out also. He was the one, John tells us,

who came to Jesus by night, and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight (19:39).

That would not be a hundred pounds our pounds, but this was a measure of weight that was translated pounds.

Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury (19:40).

They would take this linen cloth and they would wrap it around the body. Around and around and around. And they would put the spices in between the wrappings. They would wrap it and then lay spices and wrap it and all. That was their traditional way of embalming a body, so to speak, before they put it in the sarcophagus or the tombs, which were of limestone. The reason why they were called sarcophagus is that the limestone does cause the flesh to disintegrate very quickly. Sarcophagus in Latin is flesh eater. So a sarcophagus would be used over and over again because they would eat up the flesh very rapidly and so you could put the next generation in the same sarcophagus. So they were quite handy burial places. And so they "wound it in the linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." And then John tells us,

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, in which was never a man yet laid. There they laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand (19:41,42).

I trust that you'll be able to go to Jerusalem with us. We're going again in February. It's very graphic to sit there in the garden and to look on the hill above you, see the red poppies there on the hillside and realize that that is very possibly the site where the cross was and the garden tomb that you see down in front of you is quite possibly the tomb in which Jesus was laid for the three days. We describe it as best we can with words but one picture is worth a thousand words and I think just sitting there is worth ten thousand words as you just can get the whole picture of the place where He was crucified, the garden nearby and in the garden, the tomb where He was laid. So let's pray that God will provide for you. It's a trip of a lifetime. One that will leave lasting impressions. It's worth a year of seminary, at least, just to be there.

Father, we thank You again for the love that You manifested towards us when You allowed Your Son; in fact, You sent Him to fulfill all of the prophecies knowing that He would be despised and rejected, knowing that He would be physically abused, knowing that He would be submitted to the tortures of the scourging and the tortures of the cross. And yet Lord, Your love for us is so great that You were willing to give Your only begotten Son in order that He might make possible our coming to You and fellowshiping. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent in Your name in all the earth! How marvellous are Your works, how infinite Your love. Lord, we love You and we thank You that You first loved us and gave Your Son for our redemption. Thank You, Jesus, that You were willing to obey the Father, go to the cross and make the way to eternal life. Lord, help us that we might adequately express our love to You by our deeds and by our actions. Not hoping that through them we can be saved but Lord, just letting them be expressions of appreciation for what You have done. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.