

**John 19:17 – 42**

<sup>19:17</sup> They took Jesus, therefore, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. <sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ <sup>20</sup> Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. <sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that he said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’’ <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’ <sup>23</sup> Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. <sup>24</sup> So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be’; this was to fulfill the Scripture: ‘They divided my outer garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ <sup>25</sup> Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus then saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. <sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty.’ <sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished!’ And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. <sup>31</sup> Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with him; <sup>33</sup> but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup> And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, ‘Not a bone of him shall be broken.’ <sup>37</sup> And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on him who they pierced.’ <sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had first come to him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

**Historical and Cultural Background**

- *God’s Deliverance and Deliverer*: There is a literary pattern here.

<b>Scripture</b>	<b>A Suffering Hero, A Passover Lamb</b>	<b>Suffers on Behalf of</b>	<b>To Be Free (i.e. via an Exodus Deliverance) From</b>
Ex.12:46	Passover Lamb	Israel+	Bad king: Slavery in Egypt
Ps.2, 22, 34, 69 (cf. 1 Sam.16 – 2 Sam.5)	David	Nation-State	Bad king: Saul
Isa.53, Jer.23 – 31, Zech.12:10	Messiah	All humanity	Corrupted human nature

Part One: How Do Others Use Their Authority?

Part Two: How Does Jesus Use His Authority?

Part One: How Do Others Use Their Authority?

1. Leader: beforehand, read *Does John Quote the Old Testament Out of Context? An Examination of John 19:17 – 42*. Decide if you want to hand that out at some point during the study or afterwards.
2. Jesus is now in the hands of the authority figures of his day. How do the various characters use their authority?
  - a. *Pilate* probably wanted to mock the Jews through Jesus, and broadcast Roman superiority over the Jews through Jesus; therefore he wanted the mockery written in the 3 major languages of the region, to make it known that no one can stand up against the might of Rome. To him, Jesus is a pawn.
  - b. *The Jewish leaders* wanted to get rid of Jesus. They were jealous of his popularity. They felt Jesus threatened their careers and their positions. To them, Pilate is a pawn.
  - c. *The Roman soldiers* are using police brutality. Legally, they are able to take Jesus' possessions, which means they have an economic incentive to seize people! This is like the U.S.: police in the so-called 'war on drugs' are able to keep cash and property for their department. At least American policemen aren't supposed to profit *personally*. The Roman soldiers did. They use their authority to profit off a Jew sentenced to die by higher authorities.
  - d. *The women and the disciple John* have no real authority. We will return to their story later.
  - e. *Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus* use their authority as Jewish leaders by going to Pilate and asking for Jesus' body. By doing this, they publicly identify with Jesus, and when Jesus rises from the dead, they will be one of the first people that the other authorities confront.
3. Who are you most like?
  - a. Pilate: Mocking Jesus in order to mock the people he represents? Like people who believe in traditions, or people who believe in the supernatural, or people in the global South who weren't educated at Western universities, or people who hold to a morality received by the divine?
  - b. Jewish leaders: Wanting to get rid of Jesus? Using other people to try to get rid of him? Like secular professors who can do away with him for you? Or the Communist Party who does away with him for you so you don't have to think about it personally?
  - c. Roman soldiers: Profiting off of Jesus? Maybe even making a career off of taking things from him? Like the guy who faked the 'Jesus' Wife' manuscript?
  - d. Joseph and Nicodemus: Finally identifying with Jesus more out of pity than conviction? You have weak good intentions?
  - e. The amazing and ironic twist is that Jesus will engage with each of these motivations and postures, and draw them into a testimony about himself.
4. How does Jesus use his authority?
  - a. With Pilate, he allows himself to be mocked
    - i. But he signals to the (Roman) world that Jesus is king of the Jews, and king of the world. He signals it in the 3 major languages of the region. Pilate tells the truth about Jesus, though ironically.
    - ii. Even mockery of Jesus is an opportunity to talk about him. Jesus still makes a way through the mockery.
  - b. With the Jewish leaders, he identifies with them in their exile and frustration.
    - i. Jesus comes crowned in exile, as they are in exile. Jesus is crucified as some of their revolutionaries are crucified. If ever they wanted God to show them He cared, this is it. Jesus experiences it all with them.
  - c. With the soldiers, he suffers for them, even as they steal from him.
    - i. Jesus is allowing Pilate and the soldiers to speak their own language – politics and violence – in order to call out to them. They pretended to bow down to him and honor him. Perhaps when they heard rumors of him rising from the dead, they will remember that he claimed to be a king, a vulnerable king. In that memory, he will be saying to them, 'Yes, this is who I am.' Do you think people are more hostile to Jesus than to Buddha or other figures?
    - ii. Ironically, they upheld the symbolism of King David in Psalm 22 by not breaking any of Jesus' bones. They also invoke the 'suffering King' paradigm of Zechariah 12:10.

- iii. Violence done against Jesus always vindicates him in the end.
- d. With the women and the disciple John, he is a king who takes our suffering and transforms it:
  - i. *The women* felt hopeless. They were under the oppression of Rome, and now Jesus joins them, going to the uttermost of that oppression. They stood by him thinking that they could do nothing. But ironically, they completed the symbolism of the bitter herbs around the Passover lamb, as their names were all 'Mary' which means 'bitter.'
  - ii. If you are suffering and the only way you feel close to God is by looking to Jesus on the cross, Jesus draws us into something much bigger than we thought. Although our suffering shall one day melt into resurrection, while it lasts, our suffering joins us to Jesus and testifies to who he is. For he entered our world to join himself with our suffering. The bitterness of our suffering is just a garnish to his. He transforms our suffering.
  - iii. In that light, we can see how Jesus provides people with a new spiritual community. Jesus entrusts his mother and John (his disciple) to one another as a new spiritual family, which is now something of heaven on earth. Normally, Mary would have been entrusted to a blood relative, the next oldest son (James, the half-brother of Jesus, and second son of Mary). It is a hint of things to come, as Jesus' followers will join together in intimate, radical community that can be likened only to a new family. Jesus transforms human community.
  - iv. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: What is the next step for you in discovering (not creating, because Jesus has already done that) the new spiritual community around Jesus?
  - v. Jesus also turns them into witnesses to the fact that the crucifixion didn't actually kill Jesus. Jesus gave up his life of his own accord. Just as he said he would in John 10:17 – 18: 'For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.' Victims of crucifixion normally died of suffocation and exhaustion, because it became too difficult to breathe. Or, the Romans break their legs so they can't push up, and then they suffocate more quickly. Jesus doesn't die because of those things.
  - vi. Jesus also turns them into witnesses to the fact that blood and water came out of his side. Those are the elements of life. Water flowed from Eden, giving life. Blood flowed from the tabernacle/temple of Israel, which was a new Eden, giving life because animal blood was uncorrupted blood, and it gave a kind of life to that which human beings had touched, since human beings were corrupted. Now, water and blood pour out of Jesus, and John sees great significance symbolically in that. It's not just that Jesus is really dead. It's that out of him comes new life for all of us.
- e. With Joseph and Nicodemus, he uses his authority to a king who still calls for our public allegiance
  - i. Joseph and Nicodemus wanted to honor Jesus' body and make some kind of public gesture now that it was all over – it was embarrassing and awkward but relatively safe for them to do this now. Perhaps they thought that Jesus was simply dead, and their public identification with Jesus was an awkward but now token gesture. What ironically happens for them now?
  - ii. They are ceremonially unclean, because they touched a dead body. So they cannot participate in the Jewish Passover. This is symbolic, and will have huge repercussions, because Jesus is going to make them 'unclean' in the eyes of the Jewish community in a bigger way.
  - iii. They have socially identified themselves with Jesus. Since Jesus is going to rise, their gesture is going to take on an ironic new meaning, though a positive one. There is no turning back for them. They have unwittingly just 'died to themselves' and their careers with Jesus. Have we died with Jesus? Have we identified ourselves with Jesus despite the public cost that carries?
  - iv. All these are hints of things to come. The fullness will come when the full meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection are shown.
  - v. An Orthodox liturgy says:
    - The noble Joseph, when he had taken down thy spotless body from the tree, wrapped it in fine linen and spices, and sorrowing placed it in a new tomb.

In the grave with the body, but in Hades with the soul, as God; in Paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and Spirit wast thou, O Christ, filling all things, thyself uncircumscribed.

As giving life, as more splendid than Paradise, and more radiant than any royal chamber, O Christ, is shown forth thy tomb, the fountain of our resurrection.

- f. So, with the sense of irony, Jesus appears to be incorporating everyone's human response and using it to accomplish his own purpose. In fact, that is part of his purpose: to honor human choices – stubborn, even violent, resistance; suffering and confusion; weak good intentions – and turn them to his good purposes, drawing them into a plan that is much bigger than what they knew or intended at the time. Even when they were outright set against him like Pilate, the soldiers, or the Jewish leaders, or 'hidden disciples' like Joseph and Nicodemus, Jesus is reaching out to them and calling them back to himself. This is how he redeems humanity *from ourselves*.
5. In John 19:17 – 42, there are quotes and quotes of quotes. Try to understand how John is quoting from the Old Testament. Look at the original passages noted.
- a. <sup>19:24</sup> So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be'; this was to fulfill the Scripture: 'They divided my outer garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.'
    - i. Psalm 22:18: *Is this an experience of David being hunted, or a prediction of Jesus?*
  - b. <sup>19:28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished!'
    - i. Psalm 69:21b: *Jesus triggers the sour wine being given to him, alluding by this to Psalm 69:21b – 'and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink' – but David's anger – 'May they be blotted out of the book of life' in 69:28 – does not correspond with Jesus' forgiveness. Is Psalm 69 a prophecy of Jesus or an experience of David? And if it is a prophecy, can Jesus intentionally 'fulfill' part of it? What's going on here?*
  - c. <sup>19:34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup> And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, 'Not a bone of him shall be broken.'
    - i. Exodus 12:46: *But Exodus 12:46 is not a prediction!* It is just a description of the Passover Lamb to be sacrificed by Jews so they could go free in the Exodus.
    - ii. Psalm 34:20, alluding to Exodus 12:46: *But Psalm 34:20 is not a prediction either!* During his suffering, David poetically described himself using Passover lamb language: 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.' Notice that David saw himself as a Passover Lamb whose bones are not broken, because he was watching people transfer their allegiance from Saul to him. It was like an Exodus deliverance from Pharaoh to God.
  - d. <sup>19:37</sup> And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on him who they pierced.'
    - i. Zechariah 12:10 *This is Zechariah's prediction of the Messiah.*
6. God used Passover Lambs to deliver Israel from Pharaoh's rule to His rule in the first Exodus. Later, King David viewed himself as a Passover Lamb (Ps.34:20) bringing about a new Exodus from Saul's rule to his rule. Even later, Jesus viewed himself as a Passover Lamb (Jn.1:29) bringing about the deepest Exodus, from the rule of sin to his rule.

Scripture	A Suffering Hero, A Passover Lamb	Suffers on Behalf of	To Be Free (i.e. via an Exodus Deliverance) From
Exodus 12:46	Passover Lamb	Israel+	Bad king: Slavery in Egypt
Psalms 2, 22, 34, 69 (cf. 1 Sam.16 – 2 Sam.5)	David	Nation-State	Bad king: Saul
Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 23 – 31, Zechariah 12:10	Messiah	All humanity	Corrupted human nature

7. How does Jesus ‘fill to the full’ the symbolism of ‘the Passover lamb’ and the Exodus deliverance?
  - a. Jesus the Messiah was the firstborn Son of God (a title), slain so that his people could go free. This is why John the Baptist said early on, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn.1:29). The Passover Lamb was identified with the ‘firstborn’ of Israel (Ex.12:12). This identification is not a clever word-play happening suddenly with Jesus. It is built on the pre-existing identification of the King institutionally being called the ‘firstborn son of God’ in Psalm 2:7 and 89:27.
  - b. He is killed on the day of Passover.
  - c. Not one of his bones is broken, as he is pierced.
  - d. He is surrounded by ‘bitter herbs,’ as there are 3 women named Mary there and the name Mary means ‘bitter.’
  - e. Jesus is the means by which God delivers us out of the kingdom of sin, just as God delivered Israel out of kingdom of Egypt.
  - f. He is connected with hyssop. The hyssop touches him, and in the previous Passover, the hyssop touches the doorway. Is Jesus a door? He did say in John 10:7, ‘I am the door.’ We’ll come back to this.
  - g. He will emerge on the other side of death in his resurrection as a new, fresh, purified, cleansed, healed and transformed kind of humanity. His humanity will be fully joined to the pure, holy, loving God.
8. (optional) Discuss: ‘fulfilled’ or ‘filled to the full’
  - a. ‘Fulfilled’ means that each quotation from the Old Testament was prophetic in an explicit sense.
  - b. ‘Filled to the full’ means that the Old Testament as a whole was prophetic. Aspects of key stories at pivotal moments take on a significance that goes far beyond what it originally was. So the Exodus – Passover story is ‘filled to the full.’ David’s story, which is a variation of the Exodus – Passover story, is also ‘filled to the full.’
  - a. **Passover Lamb as firstborn:** When Israel was in Egypt around ~1400 BC, the Passover Lamb was a representation of the ‘firstborn’ of Israel. Its suffering delivered *the people* from bondage in Egypt.
  - b. **King David as firstborn:** David suffered under Saul while he waited for the whole nation to finally agree to his leadership. People transferred their allegiance from Saul to David, as they once did from Pharaoh to God. David’s suffering delivered *the nation-state* from their own disunity and sin, along with idolatry since the king was supposed to eliminate idol worship.
  - c. **Messiah as firstborn:** The suffering Messiah delivered all humanity from ourselves. The deepest enemy of humanity is the corruption of our own human nature. Jesus is delivering people out of sinfulness, by taking on fallen human nature (the flesh, John 1:14), fighting against it his whole life by never sinning, killing it by crucifixion, and being raised as a new kind of humanity, God’s true humanity, and giving us his Spirit so God could heal our corrupted human nature, too.
9. (optional) A parallel: Look at how these statements are inter-related; the second quotes from the first, the third quotes from the first and the second. There is a developing, building effect.

Quote	Source	Circumstance
‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...’	U.S. Declaration of Independence	Founding of the U.S. and its stated ideals, although slavery was still a vexing problem, women’s suffrage had not been extended, and property ownership was required for voting.
‘Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.’	Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, 11/19/1863	The States could not resolve the issue of slavery, which contributed to the Civil War. Lincoln saw that the struggle was not just for the Union, but for the triumph of individual rights over states’ rights. He later issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and then the U.S. passed the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> Amendments, which granted political equality for blacks.
‘I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech at the Lincoln	After the Civil War, Jim Crow segregation in the South and racism in the North made the Civil Rights Movement necessary. MLK expressed this hope for true political equality.

are created equal.’	Memorial 8/28/1963	
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These are all political speeches that are very significant in U.S. history because they affirm the equal dignity of all people as an ideal for the United States. They are part of a *canonical story*. Notice how Lincoln quotes the U.S. Declaration of Independence, and MLK quotes both? In fact, MLK was standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. From time to time they are repeated by politicians and public as a declaration of what makes the U.S. special, but also the long way we still have to go to fill that ideal to the full. Those words are not ‘predictive’ in a flat sense but they are very special markers of hope in a story that is still unfolding. Because of a meaningful story and continuity of hope, those quotes can be ‘filled to the full.’ We need to understand how the Jews expected their story and words from the past to be ‘filled to the full.’

10. What is Jesus communicating through his very last moment, saying, ‘It is finished’? What is finished?
- a. The Passover imagery is finished. The hyssop is the finishing touch. It’s not just that Jesus is intentionally triggering Psalm 69:21. He is marking himself out as the hyssop-touched doorway of the Passover. That finishes the symbolism and triggers the association. Jesus is a doorway through our sinful human nature. In the first Passover, the hyssop marked the doorway. Earlier in John 10:7, Jesus had said, ‘I am the door.’ Here, Jesus has the hyssop touch himself, evoking the sense that he is a door. In what sense is Jesus a door? As Jesus puts his own ‘flesh’ (1:14) to death in the wrath of God, he calls us to believe in him, join ourselves to him, and follow him through it. Hence, he is a door through our own corrupted, damaged, sinful humanity – through its death in the wrath of God into new resurrection life, a new humanity.
  - b. His life of conquering human flesh and sin is finished. Jesus has refused to sin throughout his entire life, so he has poured the wrath of God upon his ‘flesh’ (*sarx*, 1:14). By refusing to sin, he has defeated its resistance to God. He has conquered it.
  - c. Jesus’ preparation for the Spirit of his new humanity. He’s ready to pour out his Spirit, like the blood and water from his body were poured out. He is now the source of spiritual life, because only in him and through him does God make a resurrected new humanity.
    - i. Jesus is the retelling of Eden itself. From Mount Eden flowed four rivers of life-giving water. Then from Israel’s Tabernacle flowed a river of life-giving blood, the uncorrupted blood of animals given by God as a gift to men and women with corruption running in our blood. King David and King Solomon built the Temple in stone and gold, and the river of life flowed from Mount Zion, like rivers of life once ran from Mount Eden. But now, Jesus is lifted high on Mount Calvary, and a river of water and blood begins from him. That is why John is so profoundly affected by the otherwise simple biological confirmation that Jesus was speared and authentically dead.
  - d. The drama of Israel’s story is finished. Israel and the Messiah were meant to bring about redemption for the whole world. Now, it has happened.
  - e. Sin is finished. The literary device of irony is finished in John’s Gospel. Because in John, sin is an irony, the defeat of sin triggers the end of the irony as a literary device.
    - i. STATE: Psychologist Carl Jung, in a BBC interview in 1959, said, “*We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself... We know nothing of man, far too little. His psyche should be studied because we are the origin of all coming evil.*” Israel’s story teaches us the same thing. It’s not enough for people to be removed from bad circumstances and bad government. Israel’s story was one of deliverance from bad circumstances into good circumstances, from slavery in Egypt to life in the Promised Land. But that external change was not enough to solve the internal human problem. Then the story turned to a deliverance from a bad dynasty and government to a good dynasty and government, from Saul to David. But that external change was not enough to solve the internal human problem. People need their human nature healed and transformed. That’s why the deepest deliverance is Jesus’ deliverance. Jesus changed human nature itself. God took on the ‘flesh’ (John 1:14, compare with Romans 7:14 – 25) – that is, the corrupted human nature – in the human person of Jesus and fought against it all his life without sinning. Here he is at his death, in this passage, killing it, saying ‘It is finished’ to the corruption of sin. He will rise again in his

resurrection as a new kind of human being, wearing a humanity that has been totally purified by the love of God, healed, and transformed. Then he gives the Spirit of his new humanity to anyone who asks. It's as if God took a diseased human body, fought the disease in that body in order to defeat it, crushed the disease and worked out the antibodies so he could share his own antibodies with us, if we only receive him.

- ii. ILLUSTRATE this using a personal illustration
  - iii. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: What do you think of the Christian story? Do you think that human nature itself needs to be healed and transformed? If so, who else can do this?
  - iv. God is delivering you out of your sinful, damaged human nature through Jesus the new Passover Lamb. How have you experienced release or freedom from sin in your life because of Jesus' death and resurrection? From what do you need to be delivered/set free?
11. How is Jesus accomplishing his redemption of your...
- a. Stubborn resistance (Pilate, soldiers)? Jesus can in fact draw people to himself through your unbelief and mockery. But he still calls you to take very seriously the real question, 'What is truth?' Don't just discard that question lightly and mockingly. There are real answers.
  - b. Suffering and confusion (women, John)?
  - c. Weak good intentions (Joseph, Nicodemus)? Are you struggling with fear about your career, your public reputation? If you have even a small willingness to testify about the truth of Jesus, Jesus will take that and catapult it into the sky to shine brilliantly. It may cost you your career or public reputation. Just as Joseph and Nicodemus would have been in a very precarious situation after Jesus rose from the dead. But it is the path of love, devotion, truth, and integrity, and Jesus beckons us to take that journey with him.