

# The Passion

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (June 2023)



*Crucifixion*, Eugène Delacroix, 1846

*From a translation of Siege of Jerusalem, the anonymous  
14<sup>th</sup> c. Middle English epic.\**

**Behold.** When Judea dejectedly wore  
A disinterred corpse's cinereous skin,  
Religion was gross as a rowlock-less oar,  
And Pilate, the Governor, was (having been  
Equipped with a signet & policy-grey,  
    Extinction-apportioning quill)  
    Assigned to embody the will  
Of Caesar, whose seat was an epic away.

And Herod enjoyed his authority's weight  
By pedigree, sheltered in perfectly cool  
Recéssees assembling under the great  
Penumbra of Caesar's imperial rule.  
Though Caesar, whose name was intensely pursued  
    By Glory's legitimate greed,  
    Was innocent, Pilate decreed  
That Jesus be tortured and sent to the Rood. [\[†\]](#)

A pillar was set in municipal dust,  
And Jesus was tied to the pillar. And then,  
The scourging combined all the frenzy of lust  
With careful attention that disciplined men  
Display when they sew a lapel or a pleat.  
    With évéry thundering strike  
    His frame began shivering like  
A question. And homeless blood wandered the street.

So Jesus's form was arranged on a stool.  
A blindfold was folded fast over the eyes  
Whose simple regard was an excellent school  
For those who would know what a life may comprise.

“If you’re such a seer,” demanded a vast  
Barbarian over the jeer  
Of masses, “let all of us hear  
The name of the soldier that pounded you last.”

And after encompassing Jesus’s head  
With ziziphus thorns, he was crucified, and  
Encompassed with gore in a pallium’s stead.  
As Jesus’s blood slowly leavened the sand,  
He certainly was (notwithstanding his pains)  
Possessed of a heavenly tact,  
Not swollen with zeal to exact  
Revenge on those heathens who’d ruptured His veins.

This merciful Jesus awaited the day  
When those who undid him would finally ask  
Forgiveness’s grace of their erstwhile prey.  
This merciful Jesus extended the flask  
Of pure absolution until He could be  
Assured that these shortsighted men  
Desired no Grace. Only then,  
Delivering pain through a prince’s decree.

[\*] This sample corresponds to lines 1-24 of the original  
text, which can be found here:  
<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/livingston-siege-of-jerusalem>

[†] Rood] Crucifix.

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