

The Passion

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



Crucifixion, Eugène Delacroix, 1846

*From a translation of Siege of Jerusalem, the anonymous
14th 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
Recésés 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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currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey's book-length collections are available on [Amazon](#), and his website is www.jeffreyburghauser.com.

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