

The King Laid Down His Life (John 19:28–42)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/13/2022)

Introduction

1. Last week we considered the crucifixion of Christ (John 19:16–27) and why the Romans carried out the will of the Jews, which was actually the will of God (Acts 2:23). Jesus must be crucified (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53:10–12).
2. Jesus was fully in charge of every detail of His execution, and as He suffered, He showed compassion for those closest to Him, particularly His mother. The crucifixion ended Jesus' natural tie to His mother when, at the cross, her status was officially altered (2 Corinthians 5:16, 17). She, like all believers, entered a spiritual relationship that transcended any earthly one.
3. The Gospels are not biographical accounts of Jesus, nor were they intended to be. John reveals Jesus as the Son of God incarnate—the Word made flesh, tabernacling among men (John 1:18)—focuses on His *divine glories* and the dignity and majesty of His person. One would never expect to find such majesty in death, particularly dying on the cross. John focuses on the glory of Jesus' death.
4. In this message, we wish to consider two things. But first note:
 - a. Was Jesus crucified on Good Friday? The time of His execution best fits Thursday of Passion Week (vv. 31, 42). This approaching Passover, also a Sabbath, overruled normal procedure as God had prescribed through Moses (Deuteronomy 21:22, 23).
 - b. John's eyewitness account (v. 35) becomes important when one understands the error of Docetism, which arose at the end of the first century. This doctrine taught that Jesus did not come in the flesh; He only *appeared* to be a physical and tangible being. Therefore, if Jesus was only spirit, He did not really die since spirits are not subject to death. Two things in John's text counter the error. First, John notes that Jesus cried, "*I thirst*," showing He had real physical needs. Only one who is truly *human* suffers thirst. Second, when He was pierced, blood and water flowed from the wound. Only flesh bleeds. John began his Gospel asserting this verity: "*The Word was made flesh ... and we have seen his glory*" (John 1:14). Our salvation depends on this.

I. Jesus Surrendered His Life; It Was Not Taken From Him

1. "*After this [placing Mary into John's care], Jesus, knowing that all was now finished,*" Jesus said, "*I thirst*" (v. 28). This expressed Jesus' physical condition after six hours of suffering under the wrath of God to fully satisfy divine justice and complete the work God gave Him to do (John 17:4).
 - a. This word from the cross, "*I thirst*," was said to fulfill Psalm 69:21: "*for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*" This confirms Christ's perfect submission. He suffered in order that, as the smitten Rock in wilderness, His own might drink the water of life.
 - b. One must be careful to distinguish two occasions when drink is mentioned at the crucifixion. The first is in Matthew 27:34 where the soldiers offered sour wine (vinegar) mixed with gall. Jesus refused that offering because the *gall* in this drink would have dulled the pain of His suffering. Jesus needed to experience the full brunt of God's wrath. However, later (Matthew 27:48), He was offered only vinegar, which He took to fulfill Scripture. Note also that *hyssop* was used to convey the sour wine to His mouth, a reference to the Passover (Exodus 12:22). As Pink states, "He thirsted on the cross that we might drink the water of life and thirst no more forever!"
2. Jesus' last conscious determination was to drink to the full the cup of God's wrath (John 18:11).

- a. Thus, after He received the vinegar, He cried, “*It is finished.*” All that the penalty the law of God required, all that redemptive promised prophecy predicted, all that the types foreshadowed, and all that was needed for the salvation of His people was accomplished. Finished! (The Greek term *tetelestai*, was used in financial transactions to indicate an account was “*paid in full.*”) Jesus settled the sin account of every one of those given Him from the foundation of the world.
2. Jesus “handed over” His own spirit to the Father. His life was not taken from Him, but He voluntarily surrendered His life to the Father (John 10:17, 18). His conduct to the very end of His life provoked the centurion to declare, “*Truly this was the Son of God*” (Matthew 25:54).

What is the alternative (Revelation 14:10)? The Lamb of God drank the full strength of the wine of God’s wrath from the cup of His anger. He did in six hours what could never be satisfied, even in eternity, by Christ-rejecting sinners. They themselves will be forced to drink God’s wrath forever.

II. The *Proof of the King’s Death*

1. The timing of the Savior’s death was divinely monitored to fulfill the promise of resurrection in three days.
 - a. Being the day of preparation, bodies of those executed were forbidden by God to remain on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:22, 23). Thus, the Jews asked that the crucified criminals be removed before evening since it was a Sabbath day. This was a problem because six hours of suffering was insufficient to bring about death. Thus, in order to hasten death, the Jews requested the legs be broken (v. 31).
 - b. Here again, the overruling hand of God is evident. In normal instances, Pilate would have insisted that Jesus’ body remain on the cross for several days, even if He were dead. God’s plan was that He would be in the grave before sundown to await His resurrection three days later.
2. The timing of the Savior’s death was divinely monitored by what was *not* done to Him: His legs were not broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12).
3. The timing of the Savior’s death was divinely monitored by what *was* done to Christ: He was *pierced* in the side; blood and water flowed out—a miracle. But note that Jesus does not receive witness from men. It was God who bore witness in the water and blood (1 John 5:6; Psalm 34:20; Zechariah 12:10).

Lessons

1. The death of Christ is the salvation of His people. Jesus did not die merely to make men savable; His death saved them.
2. The Scripture was important and essential in every detail of Christ’s mission. It is also of supreme importance to the follower of Christ. Ignorance of Scripture is a grievous error in the lives of many saints, and that omission is often by thoughtless neglect.
3. When Scripture and the grace of God work in the believer, timid hearts are transformed into fearless and bold witnesses for Christ and the gospel. Is your life thus transformed?