

The Death of the Savior – John 19:28-37

Main Idea: Jesus' death changes everything because it has accomplished everything.

I. The Accomplishment | John 19:28-30

John 19 contains the most shocking, yet extraordinary event recorded in all history. John does not spend much time describing all the details of Jesus' crucifixion but focuses his attention on the identity of Christ as the Son of God who came "to take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). As the only eyewitness amongst the Gospel writers, John is the one who says the least about it. He merely states the act, the place, and the fact that two others shared the same fate as Christ. However, the execution of the promised Messiah fulfills a whole pattern of prophetic announcements in the OT, which all point to not only the fact that the Messiah would be despised, rejected, a man of sorrow, and tortured but also that He would die! John 19:28-37 contains John's eyewitness description of Jesus' death. At this point, Jesus had been on the cross for almost four hours in the middle of a hot and dry Judean day. The setting is outside Jerusalem at a place called Golgotha (place of the skull). Jesus is naked and completely exposed to public shame. In this setting, the lonely Savior consummates God's divine mission of making Himself man, living amongst men to die men's death to bring them back into an eternal relationship with the triune God (Luke 19:10). To be a true Christian, one must look at the death of Christ and believe in Him as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. **Faith in Christ is not fueled by myth or fantasy but informed by divine revelation!** It is only through divine revelation that true repentance can take place in the human heart. **The death of Christ tears down the false concept of self-salvation and teaches sinners that salvation comes by God, through God, and from God!** In Christ, the promises of salvation and justice in the OT reveal the King who is sovereign over all things (including His death).

As Jesus prepared to give up His life on the cross, He said, "I thirst" (v.28). Psalm 69 includes these words of affliction from David—words to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, "You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink" (Ps. 69:19-21). On the cross, the world has seen He who created water and the sea thirst for water in His flesh. Jesus indeed, as Isaiah prophesied, "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted" (Isa.53:4). Jesus' thirst on the cross represents the most grievous pain flesh and blood can experience. Jesus did not escape anything that is allotted to man to experience before death (Heb. 2:9). The thirst Jesus experienced was also a sign of fulfillment of Psalm 22, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And you lay me in the dust of death" (Ps. 22:15). It is the fact that Jesus indeed experienced our death that makes Him "Immanuel" (God with us) as described in Isaiah 7:14. **To save those whom He came to save, the One who never had a body made Himself human flesh to the point of thirsting for His life!** After having a sponge full of sour wine held to His mouth (v.29), the Lamb of God said, "Tetelestai" (It is finished)! **Jesus' final words before giving up His Spirit were not words of a wounded martyr but of a triumphant conqueror.** By screaming "Tetelestai," Jesus made known to the world that the full cup of divine wrath had been drunk through the shedding of every drop of His innocent blood (Heb.2:14-15). **Now that the good Shepherd has laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11,17), the fountain of forgiveness is open, and God's mission of saving sinners has been accomplished.**

To Ponder:

1. What aspects of Christ's death reveal both His humanity and deity?
2. Are there any areas in your life that you think you may have suffered/be suffering more than Christ did? If not, how should you respond in times of trials and tribulations?

II. The Necessity | John 19:31-34

Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation before the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover Friday). As the dark day drew on, not only was a Sabbath to begin at dusk, but this Sabbath would mark the beginning of a holy week of “sacred feasting” in Jerusalem. If the bodies of the condemned men hung on their crosses overnight, the land would be ceremonially defiled (Deut. 21:23). The Jews then asked Pilate to command the soldiers to break the men’s legs so that they could all eat the Passover lambs slaughtered on Friday. The Jews were not concerned with putting Jesus out of His misery; they were concerned about the purity of their feast. **How ironic it is to be concerned about eating the Passover lamb while having just killed the One for whom the Passover was established in the first place.** For the religious leaders of Israel, defending a legalistic religious system had become more important than submitting to God and living out their faith. This is religion at its worst! **The Jewish leaders possessed the Law but killed the Lawgiver. They memorized the Law but never lived under God’s revealed values.** It is because man cannot obey the Law that Christ had to come and live a sinless life so that, through Him, those who repent and believe in the Gospel might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

Pilate granted the Jews’ request, so the soldiers broke the legs of both robbers. But when they came to Jesus, they found He was already dead, having died much sooner than was normal in crucifixion. All that happened to Christ needed to happen exactly the way it happened. **By not having any of His bones broken, Jesus fulfilled the requirements of OT regulations regarding the validity of a sacrificial lamb** (Deut. 21:22-23), and the promise described in David’s Psalm, “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken” (Ps. 34:20). However, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was able to find much more significance in what followed, “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once came out blood and water” (v.34), and this happened to fulfill what was revealed through the Prophet Zechariah, “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a first born” (Zech.12:10). **To those who deny Jesus’ humanity, His death was attested by professional Roman soldiers who could easily identify a dead body! To those who deny Jesus’ deity, the fulfillment of OT prophecies confirms His divinity and power!** There is no way to fully believe in the Gospel without understanding and accepting that Jesus unquestionably died our death. And because He died our death, as He was pierced, “there came out blood and water” from His body (v.34b). Finally, when all divine wrath was spent and satisfied, the sign of the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ came out in the form of blood and water (1 John 5:6-8) to testify to the completion of His sacrifice so that the fountain of the Gospel could be open! Now, the same fountain that cleanses sinners and presents them blameless and holy before God is still open.

To Ponder:

1. How was God’s plan for salvation revealed throughout the OT?
2. Why was Jesus’ death necessary?

III. The Evidence | John 19:35-37

The salvation of sinners relies so completely on the sacrificial act of Christ that any claim against His death on the cross would shake our hope of eternity with Him. With the evidence set forth by John, neither believers nor unbelievers could ever say that Jesus did not really die. In emphasizing the accomplishment and the necessity of Jesus’ death, John directs our faith to Christ’s atoning death to fulfill what God has planned in eternity past and now revealed through the pages of Scripture, “He who saw it has born witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (v.35-36). Now, the fountain of grace is open through faith in His cross, looking at the Messiah who was pierced and stricken as God’s Shepherd (Zech. 13:7-9). As the gospel is preached, the fountain of blood and water from the savior flows anew so that whoever looks on Him, mourns for their sins, and places saving faith in Him alone will be forgiven, cleansed, and restored to God for eternal life. May we constantly remind ourselves that, as believers, we are now fruits of His death!

To Ponder:

1. How do we know that Christ’s death was sufficient to cover all of our sins (past, present, and future)?
2. As a believer, what does it practically mean to “pick up your cross and follow” (Matt. 16:24) Christ daily?