

The Crucifixion of Jesus – John 19:16-27

Main Idea: The crucifixion of Jesus clearly displays the beautiful character of Christ and the evil nature of man.

I. The Sacrificial Lamb | John 19:16-18

This event in history is what John has been building up to, which is why he spends one-third of his Gospel account in the hours surrounding the crucifixion. In fact, the crucifixion of Jesus is the most important event in all of human history. Everything in the Old Testament points ahead to it, and everything in the New Testament looks back to it. Midway through John 19, Pilate has finally given into the will of the chief priests and hands Jesus over to be crucified (v.16). **While it seems like Pilate and the chief priests are forcing Jesus to the cross, it's important to remember that Jesus is going to the cross willingly (Hebrews 12:2).** Jesus goes outside the gates of the city carrying his own cross about one-third of a mile to Golgatha (Calvary in Latin) and is nailed to the cross. Jesus' carrying of his own cross is a parallel to Isaac carrying his own wood to be sacrificed in Genesis 22:6-8, in which Abraham promises God will provide a lamb. At that time he provided a ram in Isaac's place, but **at the cross God provides the lamb who is the final sin sacrifice (Isaiah 53:7).** Jesus not only took on gruesome and horrible physical torment at the cross, but he also endured the full wrath of God which should have been poured out on sinful men and women (Romans 5:9, 2 Corinthians 5:21). This is a beautiful act of obedience on the part of the Lord Jesus.

It's significant that Jesus was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem (v.17) from both an Old and New Testament perspective. Doing a survey of the law, you would find that outside the camp or city was the home of the unclean. Lepers were kept outside the camp, stoning of criminals happened outside the camp, the burning of sacrificed sin offerings was done outside the camp (Leviticus 13:45-46, Numbers 15:35, Exodus 29:14). The author of Hebrews references this practice to rearticulate Jesus as the final sin sacrifice, "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured" (Hebrews 13:11-13). **The law sent the unclean outside the camp and city, but Jesus, the holy one, went outside the city to make his people clean.** We are called to go outside the camp and bear with him the cross, suffering, and shame he endured. **If you have trusted in the work of the sacrificial lamb, you are called to take up your own cross and follow Jesus (John 9:23; 12:24-26).** You take up the cross of self-denial, you take up the cross of killing sin, you take up the cross of submitting to Jesus, and you follow him every day of your life in everything that he commands.

John again points out another prophecy fulfilled by Jesus at the crucifixion. On either side of Jesus at the cross are two thieves being crucified (v.18). This is not mere coincidence, this is Isaiah 53:12 on display, "he was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." Pilate probably hoped to shame Jesus by lumping him in with common criminals, but John shows us that the lamb who was willingly slain does a glorious work in associating with sinners, bearing their sin, and interceding for them. **That sacrificial lamb associates with his own, bears the sins of his own, and makes intercession for his own to the Father so that they might be made right with God.** No one who does not take up their cross and meet Jesus outside the camp will be in Heaven. You are either counted with him and he is making intercession for you, or you stand apart from him, in which he is your judge.

To Ponder:

1. How should your study of the cross look different than your study of other historical events?
2. Does knowing that Jesus is the final sin sacrifice affect the way you view/feel about sin? How/why?
3. How do you know if you are taking up your cross and meeting Jesus outside the camp?

II. The King | John 19:19-24

To try and get another shot at the Jews that Pilate so despised, the placard that described Jesus' crime was inscribed "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (v.19). **Pilate, a man who had authority on the earth to govern and rule, seeks to mock Jesus and insult the chief priests, but by God's providence ends up declaring Jesus' glory displayed on the cross as the true king.** Pilate's hand, in his sin, wrote the inscription, but God's providence provided a true statement. Not only was Jesus rightly declared as king, but he was declared as king in multiple languages, Aramaic (the primary language of the Jews), Latin (the primary language of the

Romans), and Greek (the primary language of the gentiles) (v.20). Thousands of men and women would have passed by the road near Golgatha, and God ensured that all people would be drawn to himself (John 12:32). **God is sovereignly fulfilling his plan for the salvation of the world on the cross.**

In frustration, the chief priests demanded that Pilate change the inscription, but Pilate was done giving in them (v.21-22). Pilate's inscription was infuriating because he had just declared, in the religious leader's eyes, a dirty Nazarene, blasphemer, and criminal their king. Their rejection of Pilate's inscription continues to show us their rejection of God and his authority. The messiah is fulfilling their scriptures right before their eyes, and not only do they miss it, but they reject it. The zealous religiosity of the chief priests causes them to miss the messiah being declared king as he fulfills prophecies from their scriptures. **The spiritually dead person is blind to the goodness of God's authority and therefore rejects it (John 12:39-40).**

The authority of God continues to be on display through a group of Roman soldiers casting lots and dividing Jesus' garments (v.23-24). It was customary practice for Romans to divide up the garments of the crucified, but rather than tear Jesus' outer garment, they gambled for it. These verses simultaneously display the greedy nature of men and the sovereignty of God. John quotes a Psalm from David, Psalm 22:18, but if you read the Psalm in its entirety you will see the cross and the events surrounding it almost word for word. Matthew 27:46 quotes Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:39-43 are in line with Psalm 22:6-8, John 19:30 parallels the words from Psalm 22:31. William Hendriksen says, "by means of that shameful deed God's eternal plan (hence, also prophecy) was fulfilled."¹ **This is not an accident of history, this is the King's eternal sovereignty on display.** If we want Christ to be our savior, he must also be our king. This King became a sacrificial lamb to save and forgive those he would call his own, but we must submit to his reign.

To Ponder:

1. Why does God's good authority frustrate humanity?
2. In what ways do you find yourself trying to have Jesus as your savior but not your King?

III. The Tender Lord | John 19:25-27

As John continues to point out the events around the cross, he compares the greedy and sinful Roman soldiers to a group of five of Jesus' followers. John, as an eyewitness testimony, records that only Mary (Jesus' mother), her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, and John remain during Jesus' time on the cross (v.25). Out of the remaining eleven disciples, only John remains alongside four women. Both Mary and John were experiencing great loss here... Mary was losing her son, and John his loving teacher and master. But **in their loss they would experience the greatest gain of the atonement for their sins.** And they would be a part of a new spiritual family established by Christ, the church. The presence of these five followers also shows their love for Jesus in their willingness to be counted with him outside the city during his crucifixion.

Jesus, at the sight of his mother, calls out to her firstly to tend to her faith, but secondly to tend to her earthly care (v.26-27). He entrusts his mother into the care of John in the absence of Joseph and, now, himself. Jesus calling her "Woman" instead of "mother" is a call to Mary to have faith in him as Lord and Savior, not to hold onto her position as the mother of Jesus. **This act is more importantly a display of a savior's love for his own than it is a display of a son's love for his mother.** The tender heart of our Lord Jesus is on display even in the midst of the greatest physical and spiritual suffering a human could ever endure. He took on our pain and our suffering (Isaiah 53:4). Jesus' demonstration of care towards his mother is evidence that he cares for all who belong to him. **Jesus has great tenderness and care for those who are a part of his family (Mark 3:35).** Jesus cares deeply for those who love him. The tenderness of the Lord that is shown to his followers is the reason Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:7, "cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Here, the love of God is clearly demonstrated on the cross.

To Ponder:

1. Do you live as if God is more concerned with your spiritual well-being than your physical? How/why?
2. What in your life keeps you from resting in the tender care of our Lord?
3. What things in your life do you try to tend to on your own rather than allowing Christ to tend to them?

¹ Hendriksen, William, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002), 430-431.