

THE KING CRUCIFIED AND BURIED

John 19:16-42

When the apostle John wrote his gospel, He wrote it with the desire to emphasize **the deity of Jesus Christ** – the fact that Jesus is God. And in referencing His deity, he highlights Jesus' Kingship in chapters 18 & 19. In these two chapters which cover His arrest and trials and crucifixion, there is talk about kingdoms and kings. Jesus Kingship is the central topic because the fact that Jesus is a King is the main accusation that gets Him crucified. So this Easter, what we've been focusing on is the Kingship of Christ from the writings of the apostle John. We want to do as John 19:14 states and *behold our King*.

And when you behold something, it's one of those things where you have to stop and stare for a bit. You have to gaze upon something for a while to really behold it. As Christians we should be living every day in light of the cross, constantly preaching the cross to ourselves – but there are times when, like at Easter or communion, we just need to stop and consider Christ's work on the cross for us a little closer – a little more contemplatively. And there is quite possibly no greater way to behold our King's glory than to stop and gaze upon His wondrous work on the cross because in everything God does, He is revealing His glory somehow and it could be argued that the cross is greatest revelation of His glory.¹ If you remember John 13:31-32, at the Last Supper (one of His final moments), Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately." Shortly after in John 17 Jesus also prayed, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You. . . . I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." So all of this which we are about to look at tonight is an agreement between the Father and the Son to bring glory to God. The cross is the way of glory. So through the betrayal, through the interrogation, and through the crucifixion and resurrection, **we are beholding the glory of our King**.

And tonight we want to pick up this evening where we left off on Sunday in 19:16. Jesus has just been handed over to be crucified. Verses 16-22 say, "So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified. They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus between. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose shall it be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

The first we see is that the King carries His cross.

I. **THE KING CARRIES HIS CROSS. (V. 17)**

Remember that Jesus, at this point, is already in excruciating pain. He has undergone a severe beating from mockers at two trials with six interrogations. He has been scourged with that horrifying flagrum whip that made pulp out of His back. Some of those Roman scourgings were so awful that many men didn't survive it alone, and now Jesus, having gone through all of that, is now having to carry the tree that He will die on in this severe pain and severe exhaustion. And I think John wants to emphasize that Jesus carried His own cross to make the point that it is Jesus who alone accomplishes our salvation. It reminds us of **Isaac** from clear back in Genesis 22 when he carried his own wood up the hill to go and be a sacrifice, but God provided the ram instead. And this is the fulfilled picture of what that picture was pointing too – here you have the Lamb of God taking up His own wood to go and be the sacrifice.

We do find out though from Matthew 27:32 that the exhausted Jesus received help from a man named Simon, of Cyrene in North Africa, who was pressed into the service of helping Him carry the cross to the place that is called **The Place of the Skull**. We don't know exactly why it was called that – if it's because the landmark or formation of the hill actually looked like a skull or if there was an accumulation of skulls there. Most think, according to early church fathers, it is because of the formation of the rock. If you look up the traditional place for the crucifixion there is a skull shaped indent in the hill that you can go look at today. In **Hebrew** the Place of the Skull is called **Golgotha** but in **Latin** it is called **Calvariae**, which is where we get term **Calvary**.

But it is here that He is crucified in verses 18-27.

II. **THE KING CRUCIFIED. (VV. 18-27)**

And there are four observations from His time on the cross in John's account.

A. **Jesus is identified with sinners (v. 18)**

When Jesus was crucified, He was crucified between two other men and this is why you'll sometimes see three crosses on a hill. One in the middle for Him and two were for the criminals on each side who deserved to be there. Jesus, however, did not. And the reason I think why God would bring about such a circumstance, having Him placed between two sinful men, is because He wants us to know **Jesus took our place**. He was right there between two criminals, taking the wrath of God that they deserve and we deserve. He was innocent, but here **He is between the sinners, identifying with them**. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The second observation we see is...

B. **Jesus' title as King is clarified. (vv. 19-22)**

Roman crucifixions weren't like executions today. Today they have electric chairs and gas chambers and it's all done privately. But crucifixions were as public as possible and designed that way to deter anyone else from doing whatever the person did to deserve it. So they would make up these placard signs which said what they were guilty of and hung them around their neck while they carried their cross and then nailed them to the top of the cross at the actual place where they were crucified. And when Pilate makes up a placard sign which gives the reason why Jesus is being crucified, so that everyone knows, he writes on it, "**Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews**." And many of the Jews were upset about this because they wanted it to say that *He said He was the King of the Jews*. And I think this is just another example of the irony continuing that we saw last Sunday. **The**

most ironic thing is the life that Jesus brings through death and using a cross of defeat to bring victory! But in the last message we saw a lot of irony in that Pilate kept calling Jesus the Jewish leaders' King. He said, "Behold your King!" and "Shall I crucify your King?" And they hated that but that's Pilate's way of getting revenge for how they're blackmailed him into this situation. **It's a divine ironic circumstance from the Lord to reveal to them and to everybody that Jesus is King.**

One of the neat things about this inscription is that it's written in the three most common languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek. The religious language, the governing language, and the language of the common people. You get the sense that God wants the world to know the universality of Christ's Kingship. **He is the King of the world.** And the fact that the King of the world was crucified for our sins is a message that is going to be taken to the whole world. It's for everyone! No matter the race or social status or location or whatever.

Then we see this sort of literary contrast with those who were at the foot of the cross: You have 4 soldiers who could care less about Jesus at the moment, who are dividing His clothing. And then you have these 4 women who are weeping over Him, along with John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

C. Jesus' clothing divided. (vv. 23-25a)

That was a typical practice in crucifixion. The victim's clothes become spoils for the executioners.² But as they were dividing Jesus' clothes, when it came to His coat, or His **tunic**, they decided not to divide it but to cast lots for it because it was of one piece and didn't have seams – that made it valuable. This casting of lots for it fulfilled prophecy from Psalm 22, a psalm written before Rome even existed or before crucifixion existed and yet it mentions crucifixion! It says, "For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing cast lots." That's an amazing prophecy fulfilled that was written by David 10 centuries before this.

D. Jesus' provision for His mother. (vv. 25b-27)

Jesus shows concern for His mother Mary, who is clearly widowed by now, and He sees to it that she had someone who will protect and provide for her with the love of Jesus. He tells Mary to behold her *new son*, John. And to John, who will be taking her in, he says to behold his *new mother* that he must care for. It seems interesting to us that Jesus didn't call on His half-brothers to care for her but at this point they didn't believe in Him. It was until after His resurrection and ascension that His brothers believed. But John would take good care of her with the love of Jesus. What this tells us is that God is serious about taking care of widows. There are plenty of verses about providing for widows and orphans and foreigners in contrast to oppressing them – and **Jesus, who is God, sees to it according to His very nature that His mother, whom He loves, is provided for.** And we are commanded to do the same with the widows in our life. That is a BIG deal in the eyes of God. Mary, at this point, has a sword piercing her soul by watching her firstborn Son die, something Simeon told her clear back when her and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple as a baby in Luke 2. She is weeping over her the loss of her miraculous Son.

In verse 28 through 37 we see now the death of the King. And this is big. This is where we see our first main gospel truth. Remember Paul said in **1 Cor. 15:1-4** that the gospel is that Jesus did three things for

us: **He died for our sins, was buried, and raised to life 3 days later so that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.** Here we study His death for our sins.

III. THE DEATH OF THE KING. (VV. 28-37)

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.” What I love about this portion of text is how aware Jesus is of the plan of God being fulfilled.

A. Jesus’ awareness of God’s plan. (vv. 28-29)

Jesus knew the Scriptures, He knew the prophecies, He knew what had to take place to fulfill it. So he asks for some of the **sour wine/vinegar** that was there. And what they did was take the hyssop branch with a sponge on it and lift it up to His mouth and He drinks that way. And anyone who sees that word hyssop and knows about the Passover will go right back to that night in Exodus. Israel ate the Passover with this bitter herb to signify it was a bitter moment. The sour wine here adds to the bitterness. Just before Jesus was crucified they offered Him **gall** to drink to deaden the pain but He denied it because He wanted to feel the full wrath of God and He wanted to think as clearly as possible. But now that He is close to death, **He asks for the sour wine so that He can speak His final words loud and clear.** And it’s the words, “It is finished!” which reveals a couple things for us:

❖ **“It is finished” reveals God’s control the entire time.**

The Jews were not in control. Pilate was not in control. The soldiers were not in control. God was. Just like Sunday when we saw that this is the reason He was born and this is the reason He came into this world. He came to die on the cross. In Acts 2:23 Peter preached to the men of Israel, saying, “This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men.” They are still held accountable but Peter says God clearly predetermined and foreknew all of this. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was an appointed time set by God at the fullness of times.

Luke also tells us after this that He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” And with that, He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. And I want us to be careful to note about this is that Jesus, who is God, who holds the keys of death and life, gives up His own Spirit. He is in control of His own Spirit. The way it is written reveals it as though Jesus does this voluntarily and as He wants, which is what He said in John 10:17, “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” Only God can decide when to give up His own spirit from His body. At death, the spirit (immaterial) separates from the body (material). Peter says, “He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit” (1

Peter 3:18). This is something He did as God because it's something only God can control. It's something we can't do but He does for us at His appointed time for us.

The second thing it reveals is that His sacrifice is sufficient to pay for sins.

❖ **“It is finished” also reveals that our sin has been paid in full.**

It is not a cry of defeat but of victory. The word He cried out was *tetelestai*, an accounting term that means “paid in full!” – something they'd stamp on your receipt after you paid your taxes. What this is saying is that Jesus completely paid for your salvation. He is the author and finisher of our faith and you can't add to that. You can't add to the work on the cross because “it is finished” and what we are called to do is trust in what He did for us.

In verses 31-37 we see His physical death proven.

B. Jesus' death is proven. (vv. 31-37)

And this is important because there are many skeptics out there who want to say that He didn't really die – that He just swooned – and later woke up in the tomb. But anyone who went through this torture wouldn't be able to get up and just walk around in a few days. They would be hospitalized for weeks. So His death was real. And in light of the false teachers called the gnostics that John faced in his day, this is something he wanted to make clear. **Jesus really did die.** Typically, to speed up the deaths of the victims, the executioners would break their legs with a heavy mallet. With their legs broken, they could no longer push themselves up by their feet and grasp for more air but Jesus is dead already so they didn't break His legs, which John points out was also prophetic. No bones of the Passover lambs were to be broken and no bones were broken on Jesus. Instead, they make sure He is dead by sticking Him with a spear and John makes the observation that water and blood came out of Him, signifying His blood had coagulated. He was in fact dead.

The last bit of our text takes us then to His burial. The second major gospel truth.

IV. THE BURIAL OF THE KING. (VV. 38-42)

“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.” This part about Jesus' burial is so refreshing because throughout the trials you had these Jewish leaders who were just full of hypocrisy and deceit and were out to see Jesus crucified... but now, John introduces us to *2 Jewish leaders who weren't like the rest*. They were actually secretly disciples of Christ – Joseph & Nicodemus.

A. Joseph makes arrangements. (v. 38)

Joseph of Arimathea is the first man mentioned. Arimathea is a town which would have been located approximately 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem and other gospels note that he was a fairly rich man and a good and righteous man. He was a member of the Council who was looking for the kingdom of God. Matthew says He made arrangements boldly and courageously by going to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. While all the other disciples split, surprisingly, here is a member of the Council who offers what he can to honor Jesus now in what seems to him like it may be his last opportunity.

A second surprise is an honest Pharisee.

B. Nicodemus prepares the body for burial. (vv. 39-40)

Nicodemus is the Pharisee and a prominent teacher in Israel who came to Jesus at night back in John 3. He was told no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again by believing in the Son. He wasn't like the rest of the Pharisees. He was open and honest and was weighing the evidence. Seems like he personally investigated everything going on and studied hard and prayed hard about who Jesus was. And here, he brings a ton of spices to honor Jesus. I think John points this large amount of **spices** out and the **new empty tomb** to tell us once again that this Jesus is royalty. **He is a King and He received royal treatment in His burial, having His own new tomb and many spices.**

The last observation we make today is that...

C. They lay His body in a new tomb nearby, in haste. (vv. 41-42)

John says in the place where He was crucified there was a garden and Joseph had a tomb in that garden, which was divinely convenient because it was close by and they needed to get to making Passover preparations. But it was also perfect because it was a new tomb for Jesus alone to be buried. It's the perfect place to demonstrate only one body went in, and in 3 days, that one body will not be there anymore. It will have risen!

And now what we want to do is we want to celebrate that **"It is finished"** through taking communion together. Jesus gave us this wonderful ordinance the night before His crucifixion to remind us of His death for our sins on a regular basis as a body of believers. Again this is something only for believers who have trusted only in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Scripture says, "And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood," (Luke 22:19-20). 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." And all the people said "Amen".

¹ Thabiti Anyabwile, *Captivated: Beholding the Mystery of Jesus' Death and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 238.

² Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 808.