

Session 5

April 2, 2023

JESUS DIED FOR ME

John 19:16-19, 28-30, 38-42

The focal point of all history is the *redemptive work of Christ*. And the focal point of the redemptive work of Christ is *the cross*. But it is not enough to see Christ dying for the sins of the world; we must also see that He died for *me*. John helps us to see the context of that sacrificial, substitutionary death. Three key words come to mind.

Crucifixion (vv. 16-19). The act of crucifixion was cruel and efficient. Thought to be devised by the Romans around 600 BC, the Old Testament described its effects vividly hundreds of years before it was invented (see Ps. 22). The body of the condemned was normally scourged with a whip to open the flesh, then suspended in public on a cross by the arms. A slight bend was made in the knees allowing a limited “pushing up” with the legs to catch one’s breath. Death occurred as a result of exposure, shock, and asphyxiation as the victim slowly suffocated under his own weight. To speed the process, the legs of the person could be broken. While research brings all this to light (and preachers often focus on the brutality of it all), it’s noteworthy that the Bible offers very little in terms of gory details. Basically, it summarizes the event as “they crucified Him.” I believe the reason for this is not an aversion to the bloody suffering that Christ endured (see Is. 52:14, for example), but rather so that we would not be distracted from the sacrifice Christ made. How easy it would be to *pity* Jesus for what He endured, rather than *celebrate* the forgiveness of sins that resulted! It was for this reason that Paul *gloried* in the cross (see Gal. 6:14). For reflection: *Read 1 Peter 2:24. What do you think Peter meant when he quoted Is. 53:5 at the end?*

Satisfaction (vv. 28-30). Jesus’ request for something to drink was a stark reminder of His humanity. Earlier, the soldiers had offered Him wine mixed with a bitter gall to dull His pain, which He refused (Matt. 27:34). Offering Him sour wine (which He apparently didn’t drink) was also part of the soldiers’ mocking according to Luke 23:36. Here, when all was done, He called for it and received it. This was no doubt in response to the prophecy mentioned in Psalm 22:15. But in a very practical sense, the wine wet His throat sufficiently for the triumphant cry: “It is finished!” (v. 30). In this case, the single word translated in the phrase is very important. It signifies a final culmination; a payment made in full. Certainly, His physical suffering was done. As well, the fulfillment of myriad Messianic prophecies had been accomplished. But most importantly, the sin debt held by God Himself had been satisfied once and for all (see Heb. 10:12). Equally as important as the word itself, is the verb tense in which it appears. In the Greek, the perfect tense describes a completed action, the results of which are still in effect. Therefore, when Jesus said, “It is finished,” He was saying that the payment for sin had been made *one time*, but that the results would go on *forever*. For reflection: *As we celebrate the Easter season, take some time to review the seven statements Jesus made from the cross. What doctrinal truth can you find there? What devotional value?*

Attestation (vv. 38-42). In Paul’s definition of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4), he mentions the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Yet in our rush to Sunday morning, we often overlook the significance of His *burial*. John’s details are all significant. Notice the change of heart that Jesus

already wrought in His death: two prominent Jews who were afraid to follow Him in His life were now risking themselves to follow Him in His death. Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four Gospels. He is described as rich, righteous, and against Christ's crucifixion. Here, his devotion was made manifest. Setting his fear aside, he exerted his influence to acquire the body of Christ (v. 38). While Joseph was getting *permission*, Nicodemus, whom we met in John 3, was gathering *preparations*. They were seeing to it that the *indignity* shown to the Lord in His death were replaced by *devotion* in His burial. The description of the tomb is also telling. (1) It was new, as was befitting the King; (2) It was in a garden, a reminder that new life would spring from the same setting in which death had been brought; and (3) It was borrowed...because it wouldn't be needed very long! For reflection: *If I were to add a (4) to the list, it would be that the Passover celebration had arrived. What significance do you think that has? See 1 Cor. 5:7 for a hint.*