

The Crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:17-37)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background and Recap of Preceding Events from Gospel of John

- a. After going to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, who is leading an armed band, representing the high priests, Pharisees and other religious leaders.
- b. He was taken first to the Jewish religious authorities: to Annas, to Caiaphas (the high priest). Then He was brought before Pilate. Although Pilate does not want to crucify Jesus, he reluctantly goes along with the Jewish leaders and hands Him over to be crucified.

II. Jesus is Crucified, and Dies (Read John 19:17-37)

- a. Summary of the events, from the text:
 - i. Jews carries his cross to Golgotha, a place also called “the Place of a Skull”.
 - ii. Here it says Jesus carried the cross.
 1. In the other gospels it mentions that Simon from Cyrene (a Greek city in Libya, North Africa), a man coming in from the country, was compelled carried the cross (**Mark 15:21**)
 2. I assume both accounts are correct (Jesus carrying part of the way, and then Simon of Cyrene for part of the way).
 - iii. Jesus was crucified between two men (in **Luke 23:32-33** it says the two were criminals with one crucified on the left side of Jesus and the other on the right side).
 - iv. In the other gospels, it says Jesus was crucified at the third hour (9am) and expired at the ninth hour (3pm). The ancient time system used by the Jews had the day starting at sunrise (say 6am). See **Mark 15:25-37**.
 1. However, in **John 18:14** it says Jesus was tried before Pilate at “about the sixth hour” (which would be noon, if based on the system that starts the day at 6am).

2. Eusebius (c. 260-341 AD), church historian and bishop of Caesarea, said he believed the apparent discrepancy was caused by an early copyist's error in John's gospel, since the letter representing "6" is extremely similar to the letter that represents "3" in Greek.
 - a. (Source: Eusebius of Caesarea, *Gospel Problems and Solutions*, Chieftain Publishing, 2010; Greek Fragments to Marinus Supplement #4, pp, 218-221; and Syriac Fragments #13-14, pp. 344-349)
- v. Above the head of Jesus, Pilate had a title sign on the cross that read: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews", in three languages.
 1. The chief priests objected to the wording, but Pilate insisted it be maintained, saying, "What I have written, I have written."
- vi. Soldiers divide garments of Jesus among them; but cast lots for his seamless tunic.
- vii. Jesus entrusts the care of his mother, Mary, to "the disciple whom He loved".
- viii. Jesus says, "I thirst" and is given a sponge of sour wine to drink. Then He lowers His head and dies.
- ix. With start of the Sabbath approaching, the Jews want the execution work completed by sundown.
 1. Soldiers first break legs of the two criminals being crucified by Jesus.
 2. When the Roman soldiers come to Jesus, they see He is already dead.
 3. Therefore, instead of breaking Jesus' leg bones they pierce His side with a spear. Blood and water come out, confirming He is dead. Therefore, the soldiers do not break Jesus' legs.
- b. Why did Jesus, the prophesied King of the Jews, the Son of David, have to die such a horrible death like this, at the hands of the Jews? (This was/is a real stumbling block for many Jews: that the prophesied Christ would be killed in this manner.)
 - i. From a debate between Justin Martyr, a Samaritan former philosopher, and Trypho, a Jew (c. 160 AD):
 - ii. "Then Trypho remarked, 'Be assured that all our nation waits for Christ; and we admit that all the Scriptures which you have quoted

refer to Him. Moreover, I do also admit that the name of Jesus (*Joshua*, or in the Greek LXX “Jesus”), by which the son of Nun was called, has inclined me very strongly to adopt this view. But whether Christ should be so shamefully crucified, this we are in doubt about. For whosoever is crucified is said in the law to be accursed, so that I am exceedingly incredulous on this point. It is quite clear, indeed, that the Scriptures announce that Christ had to suffer; but we wish to learn if you can prove it to us whether it was by the suffering cursed in the law.’

- iii. “I replied to him, ‘If Christ was not to suffer, and the prophets had not foretold that He would be led to death on account of the sins of the people, and be dishonored and scourged, and reckoned among the transgressors, and as a sheep be led to the slaughter, whose generation, the prophet says, no man can declare, then you would have good cause to wonder. But if these are to be characteristic of Him and mark Him out to all, how is it possible for us to do anything else than believe in Him most confidently? And will not as many as have understood the writings of the prophets, whenever they hear merely that He was crucified, say that this is He and no other?’
- iv. “‘Bring us on, then,’ said [Trypho], ‘by the Scriptures, that we may also be persuaded by you; for we know that He should suffer and be led as a sheep. But prove to us whether He must be crucified and die so disgracefully and so dishonorably by the death cursed in the law. For we cannot bring ourselves even to think of this.”
- v. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*, chapters 89-90; in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 244)
- vi. The argument presented here by Trypho, a Jew:
 1. Trypho is willing to admit that the prophecies quoted by Justin do apply to the Christ, the Messiah that the Jews were waiting for.
 2. Trypho admits that the name “Jesus” is revealed through (Joshua) the son of Nun in the writings of Moses.
 3. Trypho grants that the passages quoted by Justin (such as **Isaiah 53**) do indicate that *the Christ would have to suffer*.
 4. However, Trypho struggles with the idea that the Christ would have to be crucified: a horrible death which the Scriptures says is for those who are cursed.

- a. The Scripture Trypho was referring to, that *anyone hung on a tree was cursed by God*:
 - i. “Now if a man committed a crime under the sentence of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day; for he who is hanged on a tree is accursed of God; that you do not defile the land the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.” (**Deuteronomy 21:22**, LXX, OSB)
 - ii. One example in the Old Testament: Haman is hung on a tree (the gallows) in **Esther 7:10**.
- b. This passage may sound familiar, since Paul refers to it in his letter to the **Galatians**:
 - i. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (**Galatians 3:13–14**, NKJV)
- c. This also is consistent with what Paul said, that the cross was a stumbling block for the Jews.
 - i. “...we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness...” (**1 Corinthians 1:23**, NKJV)
- vii. Justin challenged Trypho to prove from the Scriptures that the Christ would have to die this horrible, cursed form of death. Justin took up that challenge, and we can as well.
 - 1. Justin began his response, citing the account in **Exodus 17** of Moses facing the Amalekites in the Wilderness.
 - a. “For it was not without design that the prophet Moses, when Hur and Aaron upheld his hands, remained in this form until evening. For indeed the Lord remained upon the tree almost until evening, and they buried Him at eventide; then on the third day He rose again.”

- i. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 97; in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 247)
- b. Read the account Justin is referring to, in **Exodus 17:8-16**, a story that occurred 1400 years before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Parallels include:
 - i. God tells Moses how victory will be brought against God's enemies:
 1. Moses must stand on top of a hill, holding up his hands with the wooden staff between them.
 2. He would have one man on each side of him, to assist him.
 3. This would continue all day long, in order for the victory to come about.
 - ii. **Question:** Why did God give Moses these very odd, specific instructions?
 1. **Answer:** This picture of Moses (with outstretched hands holding the wooden staff all day long, with a man on either side of him) provides a clear foreshadowing of Jesus' death on a cross!
 2. On the cross, Jesus hands had to be held up all day long (9 am - 3 pm). He hung on the cross between the two thieves, with one man on either side of Him.
 3. The cross is where (and how) God would destroy His enemies, through redeeming them from sin and conquering death.
 - iii. Recall that God promised He would "raise up" another prophet "like Moses" (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**).
 - iv. Justin uses this prophecy to convince Trypho that Jesus was, in fact, the prophesied Christ who would suffer death on a cross. This prophetic foreshadowing, from an event that occurred 1400 years before Jesus was born, is convincing

evidence to Jews and Gentiles alike that Jesus was the promised Christ. It provided compelling evidence not only for those in the first century, but also for us today!

2. Recall that Jesus said in **John 3** that He would have to be “lifted up” just as the (bronze or brass) serpent was lifted up in the wilderness.
 - a. Read **John 3:14-17**.
 - b. Read **Numbers 21:4-9**. This is another story foreshadowing the crucifixion of Jesus that occurred during the time of Moses, about 1400 years before the birth of Jesus.
 - i. Travelling through the Wilderness, the people became discouraged and sinned by complaining against Moses and the Lord. As a result, many were bitten by poisonous serpents and died.
 - ii. The people acknowledged their sin and ask Moses to pray for them. However, God tells them the only way they can be healed is for Moses to put a bronze (or copper) representation of a serpent on a pole.
 - iii. When the people are bitten by snakes, they must look up at the bronze serpent lifted up on the pole, in order to be healed (and saved from death).
 - c. **Question:** Why did God give them such strange instructions regarding how to be healed after poisonous snakebites?
 - i. **Answer:** Here Moses again provides a picture foreshadowing of the healing power of the cross!
 - ii. The biting poisonous serpents represent Satan, the serpent of old (**Genesis 3, Revelation 12:9**) who inflicting people who leads people into sin, that leads to death.
 - iii. Christ “becoming a curse for us” (**Galatians 3:13**), as the bronze serpent was lifted up on the pole, that we might be saved.

- iv. Only way for those bitten by a serpent (representing Satan) to live is to look to the bronze serpent on the pole (Jesus on the cross).
 - v. Jesus had to be *lifted up* on the cross.
 - 1. “And I, *if I am lifted up from the earth*, will draw all peoples to Myself.’ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” (**John 12:32-33**, NKJV)
3. The Passover Lamb foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus
- a. John the Baptist said of Him, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (**John 1:29**, NKJV)
 - b. Peter said we were redeemed by “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (**1 Peter 1:19**, NKJV)
 - c. Paul said “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (**1 Corinthians 5:7-8**, NKJV)
 - d. Read **Exodus 12:1-15**. Parallels of this story with Jesus’ death are remarkable for their specificity, and include:
 - i. Selected lamb without blemish or defect (Christ was without sin, **Hebrews 4:15**).
 - ii. Sacrificed at twilight, on eve of the Passover, so that God’s people could be saved.
 - iii. Blood of the lamb will save those protected, from death and destruction.
 - iv. A memorial meal will be celebrated by the community regularly thereafter, commemorating the saving event. All in the spiritual community are to eat the flesh of the lamb and remember that deliverance.
 - v. None of the bones of the lamb to be broken.
 - vi. After the lamb slain, must get rid of all the yeast (sin) or be cast from the community.

4. Abraham sacrificing his beloved son, Isaac
 - a. Read **Genesis 22:1-18**. Parallels include:
 - i. Beloved son of the father had to be sacrificed.
 - ii. The wood of the sacrifice is laid on the one to be sacrificed, who then carries it up to the place of sacrifice.
 - iii. There is a substitutionary sacrifice.
 - iv. The son is “raised up... from the dead” (Isaac is received back from the slated *death in a figurative sense*, as stated in **Hebrews 11:19**).
 - v. As a result of this one act of obedience, willing to sacrifice the beloved son, a tremendous blessing will come *to the whole world*.
 1. “I will multiply your seed as the stars in heaven and the sand on the seashore...In your seed *all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*, because you obeyed My voice.” (**Genesis 22:17-18**, LXX, OSB)
5. Isaiah’s prophecy about stretching out hands all day
 - a. Read **Isaiah 65:1-2**
 - b. Quoted by Justin to Trypho as foreshadowing the posture of Christ being crucified: “I stretched out my hands the whole day long to a people who disobeyed and contradicted me.”
6. The Suffering Servant prophecy of Isaiah
 - a. Read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. Elements of this prophecy relating to the crucifixion of Jesus include:
 - i. Suffering Servant
 - ii. Dishonored, rejected, a man of suffering
 - iii. (Explains why He had to do this: *for us*) He was wounded for our transgressions, became sick for our sins, bore the sins of many; delivered over for our sins.

1. This should help us to personalize what Jesus went through. He did it to redeem us, to ransom us from Satan's enslavement.
 - a. Paul said that Jesus "...gave Himself a ransom for all..." (**1 Timothy 2:6**, NKJV)
2. I have heard people, in motivating others to connect personally with the cross of Jesus, try to establish that we are guilty of killing Jesus.
 - a. Peter said to the Jews at Pentecost "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (**Acts 2:36**, NKJV)
 - b. Peter, in speaking to the Jewish ruling council, said "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree." (**Acts 5:30**, NKJV)
 - c. However, Peter later, in preaching the gospel to the Gentile household of Cornelius, said regarding the death of Jesus, "(Jesus) whom they (the Jews in Jerusalem) killed by hanging on a tree..." (**Acts 10:39**)
3. Should produce in us, naturally, a great sense of gratitude if we understand both the extent of His suffering, and the motivation.
4. "Therefore...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**, NKJV)

- a. This also should motivate us to persevere in the faith; when we are tempted by sin, the distractions of the world, and suffering.
- iv. He was considered among the lawless (crucified with two criminals)
- v. Did not open his mouth; like lamb before shearers is silent.
- vi. No lawlessness nor deceit in him.
- vii. Appointed rich men for his death (and burial).

7. **Psalm 22**: a detailed prophecy about the crucifixion

- a. Read **Psalm 22:1-19** (designated **Psalm 21** in LXX).
Parallels include:

- i. Considered forsaken by God.
- ii. Despised by the people and mocked.
- iii. No one to help him.
- iv. Surrounded by enemies, wicked people who stare at him.
- v. Poured out like water.
- vi. Tongue cleaves to his throat; thirsting.
- vii. Hands and feet pierced.
- viii. Divided garments and cast lots for his clothing.

- 1. John Chrysostom (bishop and preacher in Constantinople, c. 347-407 AD) commented on this prophecy:

- a. "Consider too, I pray you, the exactness of the prophecy. For the prophet said not only, that they 'parted', but that they '*did not part*'. The rest therefore they divided; the coat they did not divide, but committed the matter to a decision by lot."

b. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 85 on the Gospel of John*)

- b. Justin wrote to Trypho, regarding this psalm:
- i. “And again, in other words, David in the twenty-first Psalm (*LXX numbering*) thus refers to the suffering and to the cross in a parable of mystery: ‘They pierced my hands and my feet; they counted all my bones. They considered and gazed on me; they parted my garments among themselves and cast lots upon my vesture.’
 - ii. “For when they crucified Him, driving in the nails, they pierced His hands and feet; and those who crucified Him parted His garments among themselves, each casting lots for what he chose to have, and receiving according to the decision of the lot.
 - iii. “And this very psalm you maintain does not refer to Christ; for you are in all respects blind, and do not understand that no one in your nation who has been called King or Christ has ever had his hands or feet pierced while alive, or has died in this mysterious fashion—to wit, by the cross—save this Jesus alone.”
 - iv. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho*, chapter 97 found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 1, pp. 247–248.)

8. Psalm 69

a. Read **Psalm 69:20-22** (designated **Psalm 68** in *LXX*).

Parallels include:

- i. Looked for comforters; but found none.
 - ii. Given gall for food and vinegar for drink.
- viii. Notice that all of these prophecies, written many hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, foretell the specific details we find in **John 19** and in the parallel accounts in the other gospels, regarding the crucifixion of Christ.

1. The fact that these things were foretold so far in advance, and in such detail, is powerful evidence to support the claims of the Christian faith regarding the crucifixion of Christ
2. The crucifixion of Christ is a particular stumbling block to the Jews.
3. The crucifixion of Jesus also is rejected by Muslims (who follow the claim of Mohammad 600+ years later that Jesus did not die on the cross; it only appeared that way, with the Christians later changing the story).
 - a. Of course, it would have been impossible for Christians to have changed the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament) which was written centuries before. Furthermore, the Old Testament Scriptures have been in the hands of the Jews (who were hostile to the Christians); so there is *NO WAY* that the Christians could have altered these prophecies.
 - c. Prophecies were used in the early church by men like Justin (as well as by Peter, Paul and Apollos in the Book of Acts) to convince unbelievers. This powerful evidence can be used just as effectively today to persuade unbelievers!

III. How We View the Suffering of Jesus on the Cross

- a. All Christians accept that Jesus died on the cross.
 - i. However, many Protestants have the attitude that “Isn’t it great that Jesus did all the suffering for us on the cross, so that we don’t have to suffer!” In the services in many large churches, the members sing out their gratitude that Jesus “did it all”, celebrating what Jesus did for them.
 - ii. At the same time, Catholics and others have had a different view of the crucifixion. In Good Friday services, and in religious exercises such as Stations of the Cross, they reflect somberly on the mysteries associated with the sacrifice of Jesus, especially in the weeks leading up to Easter.
- b. Many Christians only sing songs about what Jesus did on the cross; or have mystical reverence for it. However, I believe that Jesus’ death on the cross is not just something we are supposed to be grateful for or to meditate on. ***Jesus on the cross provides the model for how we should be prepared to live the Christian life.***

- c. Early Christians prayed 3x daily: at 9 am, noon and 3 pm (marking the hours Jesus was on the cross). The crucifixion of Christ was a daily remembrance and focus in the devotional life of Christians in the beginning; much more than we see today, typically.
- d. In calling us to persevere through trials and temptations of the flesh, we are directed to ***follow the example of Jesus on the cross.***
 - i. “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (**Matthew 16:24**, NKJV)
 - ii. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (**1 John 2:6**, NKJV)
 - iii. “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (**1 Peter 4:12-13**, NKJV)
 - iv. “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;” (**1 Peter 2:18-23**, NKJV)
 - v. Read **Hebrews 10:32-39** and **Hebrews 12:1-6**
 - 1. We are called to persevere, to endure.
 - 2. Look to Jesus. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners.
- e. Jesus suffered deeply, sweat, was in agony, tortured. Had to *deny the flesh*, motivated by looking forward to *the joy set before Him*.
 - i. We are called to do the same when tempted (for example, by sexual immorality, pornography, drunkenness, drug abuse, and other sins of the flesh).

IV. Regarding Mary, the Mother of Jesus

- a. Re-read **John 19:25-27**.
- b. While it does not identify the “beloved disciple” to whom the care of Mary was entrusted, over the ages it generally has been assumed to apply to John, author of the fourth gospel, based on what it says in **John 21:20-24**.
- c. Some believers (I think of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox in particular) point to this passage to claim that Mary somehow is the mother of the church, that we all need to look to her (and pray to her, pray the rosary, do novenas to her, do pilgrimages to shrines, etc.)
 - i. However, it doesn’t say that; and personally, I don’t see how a dying Jesus asking John to look out for His mother in the future translates into all that!
 - ii. Paul told Timothy, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,” (**1 Timothy 2:5**, NKJV)
 1. Jesus sits at the right hand of God, interceding for us. We do not need to go through His earthly mother, to then go through Him in order for our prayers to reach His Father.
 - a. (Speaking of Jesus as the ultimate High Priest: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (**Hebrews 7:25**, NKJV)
 2. Also, consider what Jesus said about His mother.
 - a. “Then His mother and brothers came to Him and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, ‘Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘My mother and My brothers are *these who hear the word of God and do it.*” (**Luke 8:19-21**, NKJV)
- d. John Chrysostom commented on this passage, when preaching through John’s gospel:
 - i. “And He, having committed His mother to John, said, ‘Behold your Son.’ (**John 19:26**) O the honor! with what honor did He honor the disciple! when He Himself was now departing, He committed her to the disciple to take care of. For since it was likely that, being His mother, she would grieve, and require protection, He with reason entrusted her to the beloved. To him He said, ‘Behold your mother.’

(John 19:27) This He said, knitting them together in charity; which the disciple understanding, took her to his own home.

- ii. “But why made He no mention of any other woman, although another stood there? To teach us to pay more than ordinary respect to our mothers. For as when parents oppose us on spiritual matters, we must not even own them, so when they do not hinder us, we ought to pay them all becoming respect, and to prefer them before others, because they begat us, because they bred us up, because they bore for us ten thousand terrible things.”
 - 1. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 85 on the Gospel of John*)
 - a. We should follow the example of Jesus and show similar honor and concern toward our own mothers.
 - b. Even if they are deceased, treat their memory with honor and do not speak badly of them.
- iii. John Chrysostom also noted that when Jesus was suffering, He showed great concern for others.
 - 1. Taking care of His own mother.
 - 2. Giving hope to the thief on the cross (**Luke 23:43**)
 - 3. Fulfillment of prophecies.
- iv. Jesus’ entire life, including up to His gruesome death, was characterized by *self-denial and concern for others*. May we imitate that in our own lives!

V. Blood and Water Came from His Side

- a. Is there any significance in the fact that *both blood and water* came from the side of Jesus when his body was pierced to confirm His death?
- b. John Chrysostom, from the same work cited previously in this lesson, commented:
 - i. “With this too an ineffable mystery was accomplished. For ‘there came forth water and blood.’ Not without a purpose, or by chance, did those founts come forth, but because by means of these two together the Church consists. And the initiated know it, being by water indeed regenerated, and nourished by the Blood and the Flesh. Hence the Mysteries take their beginning; that when you approach to that awful cup, you mayest so approach, as drinking from the very side (*of Christ*).”

- c. This also reminds me of what John wrote: “This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (**1 John 5:6**, NKJV)