

**The Word Became Flesh
(Week 59)
John 19:17-30
“God’s Perfect Plan”**

Introduction

So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.
Genesis 3:14-15

Most people can remember a day or an event in their lives that completely changed their course forever. For some, it may be the day they graduated college. For others it might be the day they got married or had children. For the Believer, it is the day that they first believed in Christ. But while these are all significant events in the lives of individuals, the most important event in all of human history is the day that Christ was crucified. All the other occurrences since the beginning of time pale in comparison to the significance of that day. In fact, it can be argued that everything that has ever occurred in history is a reflection of crucifixion Friday. For what people choose to do in regards to the cross of Christ will have a significant impact upon everything that they will say and do throughout their lives. Those who accept Him will live in order to please Him, while those who reject Him will live to please their father the devil.

It is also a true statement that the cross of Christ was planned long before time on this earth began. For, even before creation, God knew that His Only Begotten Son would have to die upon the cross to redeem fallen mankind. How do I know this? Because *The Bible* plainly says it.

All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in The Lamb’s book of life. The Lamb Who was slain from the creation of the world.”
Revelation 13:8 (NIV)

You see, Jesus’ atoning death was not “Plan B” after God’s initial plan had failed. No, God’s purposes never fail. The cross was always the plan. God knew before time began that men would reject His love and commandments. The sin of man would forever doom them to an eternity of separation from God had He not devised a way to redeem them to Himself. **The wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23)**, but God was willing to die for those who would place their faith in Him. So then, enter the cross of Christ. The very same God who declares that sin should be punished by death, **so loved the world that He gave His Son** to take this punishment in our place (**John 3:16**)! Jesus’ death on the cross is the propitiation (an act that appeases a Holy God) for our sins.

So without question, *the most significant event in all of human history is the cross of Jesus Christ*. It is the dividing line between life and death itself. What each and every person chooses to do with the cross will determine their eternal destiny. I am reminded here of the word of God to the children of Israel:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live. Love The LORD your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him...”
Deuteronomy 30:19-20a

As we continue our study of John’s gospel, let us look together at this, the most significant event in all of history, the crucifixion of The LORD Christ Jesus. And as we study, we will see *The Cross, The Crowd, and The Completion* of God’s perfect plan for our redemption.

The Cross (vs. 17-22)

Carrying the cross by Himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him and two others with Him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The king of the Jews,' but that He said, 'I am the king of the Jews.'" Pilate replied, "What I have written, I have written." **John 19:17-22**

It was Roman practice to have those condemned to die carry their own cross as a public display of humiliation. The thought behind the practice was to make a public statement so that all could see the shame that was to befall those who decided to rebel against Roman law. Jesus was compelled to carry His own cross as well. However, Pilate and his Roman counterparts could never have realized that God in ages past had foreshadowed the events of this day even in the book of *Genesis*, when God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son Issac as a sacrifice upon Mount Moriah.

"Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together." **Genesis 22:6**

For you see, this Mount Moriah is the exact same location where Christ was led to be crucified. John tells us that Jesus "went out" (**vs. 17**). This means that the Savior was led outside the city walls to be executed. In *The Old Testament Law*, the sin offering was taken outside the camp and burned. Jesus, the ultimate consummation of all *The Old Testament Law*, was taken outside the camp, as it were, to die for our sins. He was the ultimate and final sacrifice. All of the sacrifices of the Law were merely a foreshadowing of His death upon the cross. Once again, the cross is the most significant event in all of history, and everything in The Scriptures has been given to lead us to Calvary.

Jesus was crucified between two lawbreakers. This was also done in order to fulfill the prophecy given by Isaiah:

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but He was with a rich man at His death, because He had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully. **Isaiah 53:9**

You see, God had always known that Christ would be crucified amongst the guilty. For it was the guilty that He came to save. Even though He Himself had never sinned. This is why Pilate wrote what he wrote on the placard that was hung over Christ's head on the cross. It was Roman custom to make the accused wear a sign around their neck that stated their crimes. This sign would be worn as they marched through the streets in route to the execution site, then hung over them on their cross. Jesus' sign listed no crime, for even Pilate could see that He was innocent. So, as an insult to the Jewish leaders who had blackmailed Pilate in order to execute their enemy, he wrote the words **"Jesus of Nazareth, King of The Jews"** on Jesus' placard.

This writing had accomplished Pilate's desired effect, for the Jews were incensed by it. But what they, nor Pilate, could have ever known was that this was yet again from God. For the sign had not only declared the innocence of His Beloved Son, but it also proclaimed Him as the King of kings! And since it was transcribed in not only Hebrew, but in Gentile languages, it declared that the salvation found in King Jesus is not only for the Jews, but for all Gentiles who will believe. **For God so loved... the world!** (**John 3:16**).

For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God The Father. **Philippians 2:9-11**

All Scripture is given to lead us to the cross of Christ, for it is the most significant event in all of human history.

The Crowd (vs. 23-27)

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it." This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing. This is what the soldiers did.

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. **John 19:23-27**

As mentioned earlier, the cross of Christ is a dividing line between the children of God and the children of the devil. This can be illustrated no clearer than the juxtaposition between the unbelieving soldiers under the cross and those who loved Christ. The soldiers were mindlessly gambling for the garments of Jesus as He was dying above them. And at the same time His loved ones were there mourning for Him. How callous the hearts of these soldiers must have been! Had they taken part in so many Roman executions that they were no longer affected by the suffering of others?

What the soldiers did not realize was that by casting lots for the clothes of The Savior, they too were simply fulfilling prophecy. **Psalm 22**, written by King David some *one thousand years earlier*, had vividly described the scene around the cross, and the events that would occur on this fateful day. Among the verses of the song were these:

For dogs have surrounded Me; a gang of evildoers has closed in on Me; they pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones; people look and stare at Me. They divided My garments among themselves, and they cast lots for My clothing. **Psalm 22:16-18**

It should come as no surprise to us, that nothing comes as a surprise to God! Every single thing that would happen to His Son on that day was not only foreseen, but foreordained.

Yet The LORD was pleased to crush Him severely. When you make him a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, and by His hand, The LORD'S pleasure will be accomplished. After His anguish, He will see light and be satisfied. By His knowledge, My righteous Servant will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities. **Isaiah 53:10-11**

Now look at the difference between those cruel soldiers and the love and heartbreak of those that Jesus loved. As He hung upon the cross, He looked down with compassion for His mother, who had finally come to realize what the Prophet Simeon had warned her about.

"...Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed — and a sword will pierce your own soul — that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." **Luke 2:34-35**

The Cross is the dividing line between the children of God, and the children of the devil. To those who believe, their lives become the embodiment of love, and for those who reject the grace that it offers, hate and darkness shall be their path to destruction. The side that we choose will determine our eternity. *Which side will you choose?*

The Completion (vs. 28-30)

After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He said, "I'm thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to His mouth.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished." Then bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Notice the careful wording of John in this passage. Jesus knew that everything in Scripture was being fulfilled. So He says, **"I'm Thirsty"**, just before He declares **"It is finished."** A person could make the case that the very "script" for the events of the cross can be found pre-recorded in **Psalm 22**. The Psalm begins with the very same words that The Son of God uttered when they placed Him on the cross.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Psalm 22:1 (NIV)

And then the song goes on to describe virtually ALL the events that take place upon the cross of Calvary. And keep in mind that this song was written *one thousand years* prior to the actual event! Now listen to these words of the Psalm describing the LORD'S final moments upon the cross.

"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are disjointed; My heart is like wax, melting within Me. My strength is dried up like baked clay; My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth. You put Me into dust of death."

Psalm 22:14-15

Jesus knew when His time was over, and He knew at the exact moment when all the prophecies of Scripture had been fulfilled. The other gospels tell us that His final words upon the cross were shouted like the roar of a lion, **"Tetelestai"** (meaning "It is accomplished" in the Greek). He had finished the work that His Father had sent Him to do. Not one portion had been left undone. The propitiation for sin was complete. The grace that is offered by His atoning death was now available for all who would believe.

In Palestine in those days, the word **"tetelestai"** would be stamped upon bills that were considered paid in full. Jesus' blood paid in full our debt of sin. For those of us who believe in Him, our accounts with God were settled upon the cross. *The cross of Christ is the single most important event in all of human history.* And it serves as the dividing line between life and death itself. Believe, and you shall live. Reject, and you will die. The truth is that simple. So the only question that remains is this: *Which side of the cross are you standing on?* The soldiers that day were playing games at the foot of the cross. And the same is true for those who refuse to look up and see their salvation. They are playing games with their very lives, when salvation is so very near. So do not miss out on the most important decision you will ever make. Choose life. Look to The Cross... and live.

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness and they began to rebel against God, serpents were sent into their midst. The bite of those serpents was fatal. God instructed Moses to craft a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. Those who would by faith look to the serpent on the pole (an image of sin itself) would be healed. That bronze serpent is a foreshadowing of Christ Himself bearing our sin upon the cross. We need simply to look up to Him, and our sins will be forgiven, and we shall have everlasting life.

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so The Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."

John 3:14

Now let the believer look to the cross and say... TRUTH!!