

Death of the Lamb of God

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Date: 14 April 2017

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, this evening we remember the ultimate sacrifice you made in sending your only Son, your beloved Son, as the sacrificial offering to die for sinners, for our sins, so we might believe in Him and live.

We pray that this truth would not be too familiar to some of us, but that the wonder of it would strike us anew this evening and capture our hearts and our imaginations, so that we are strengthened in our faith, so that we grow in our love for You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

I will be speaking from John chapter 19 today, so if you don't have a Bible, there's a Blue Pew Bible you can grab there on that table, and in that Bible it's page 905.

John chapter 19, verses 16 to 42. Let me read.

So they took Jesus, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Gogotha.

[1 : 51] There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the King of the Jews, but rather, this man said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each other, each soldier. Also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

[3 : 04] So 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 His mother and 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. And from that hour the disciple took her to His own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

A jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished.

And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

[4 : 24] But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and He knows that He is telling the truth, that you also may believe.

For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of His bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says, They will look on Him whom they have pierced. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave Him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in

weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths 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.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, He laid Jesus there. The word of the Lord. Dr. Michael Brown is one of the foremost apologists, defender of the Christian faith among Jews.

[5 : 59] So he's a Messianic Jew. And he writes in one of his testimonies about how he came to faith. And he was reading, he was a drug addict, and he was living a very messed up lifestyle.

And there was a reading of Isaiah 53, of course, which many Christians know as a prophecy about Jesus, which said, Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him not, stricken and smitten by God and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. When he heard this passage and saw that this pointed to Jesus, he was compelled by the power of it and came to faith. And in this passage in John, it mentions several of the prophecies or mentions of Jesus in Old Testament that were fulfilled. And John tells us this in order that we might believe in Him, believe that He was the Messiah that was to be fulfilled.

And the main point that he wants to persuade us of is that Jesus died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of His people. And we're going to examine that claim in this passage.

[7 : 15] And John tells us that first, that Jesus is the new David, and secondly, that He is the new Passover lamb, and that thirdly, He brings about, He creates a new people by His act on the cross in dying for His sins.

So read verses 16 to 17 with me. It says, So they took Jesus, and He went out, bearing His own cross, the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

So when the Bible gives us a name of a place, and especially the meaning of the place in extension, it probably is significant. And so Golgotha is an English transliteration of the Greek, which is itself a transliteration of the Aramaic.

And you may have heard the word Calvary, which is just a Latin form of it, which comes from the Latin word for skull, Calvaria. And some scholars suggest that the name is derived from the rock formation of the tomb, the way it looked like a skull, or that they think that a lot of people were buried there.

But that's just speculation, because there's nothing explaining that to us in Scripture. And it seems odd to us, if that's the case, why He names the place, the place called the place of a skull.

[8 : 27] And there are a lot of people buried there, why isn't it called the place of the bones, or why is it called the place of the skulls? But it says a singular, the place of the skull. And this is the case in all the Gospel writers' writing.

And it's also, it's translated in the ESV as the place of a skull, which we read, but in the other translation, it has the place of the skull, which is the more accurate way to translate that syntax. And if that's the case, then whose skull is it referring to? If it's the place of the skull, a singular, and that's, there's a couple options for explaining that.

And the first, and I'm going to tell you both, and the first is that the church fathers wrote about origin, John Chrysostom, that there was a Jewish tradition that's held that Adam's skull was buried on the site of Golgotha.

And the tradition says that Noah preserved Adam's bones and divided among his sons to be preserved, and one of them took the skull, Shem took the skull and took it to Jerusalem.

[9 : 32] And this tradition, if it's true, of course, would convey a powerful truth, a biblical truth, which, because Romans 5, 12, 17 says, therefore, as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.

Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass, for if many die through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many.

So he's talking about how Adam, through his sin, sin came into all of humanity, and now Jesus, and he was a type of Jesus, pointing to Jesus, and Jesus is the new Adam through whose perfect sacrifice, whose perfect life, now life comes to humanity.

And that's why, if you've seen some of the kind of orthodox drawings of Jesus' crucifixion, sometimes you see a skull at the base of it that's depicting that Adam's skull.

[10:45] So that's an attractive solution, but we can't be certain of that because, once again, it's not preserved in scripture, and we don't find documentation of it in Jewish writings, only in Christian writings.

But a second solution that I think is probably even more likely is based on etymology and not based on tradition. And it's because the word Golgotha, even though it's explained as meaning the skull, it's actually, it doesn't mean skull, the word in Aramaic, well, it does mean skull, but it's actually a very unusual mangled spelling of the word.

So you're like, why would you, if that's what you're trying to spell, skull, why would you spell it that way, you wonder. And it makes you think, if you think about how it sounds, Golgotha, think of a connection to a certain man named Goliath of Gath.

That's how he's described in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 17, 4, he's named Goliath of Gath. And Goliath, as many of you know this from the story of David and Goliath, was a Philistine warrior, the champion for the Philistine camp.

And he engaged in the battle of the champions with the Israelites. And so not fighting an all-out war, but having one representative from each camp fight for victory.

[11:55] And Goliath mocked Israel's army, Israel's God, and only one person had enough faith in God to oppose him, and that was David who would eventually become king of Israel. And once you think about that, it's really interesting because the Bible notes specifically in 1 Samuel 17, 54, that David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem.

And so that's, if you're thinking about that, that could be an interesting corroboration of this hypothesis, that maybe it's Goliath of Gath, his skull that's buried there, and hence, to name it skull, they said, Golgotha, and spelled it in an unusual way to convey that.

And of course, Jesus, David was also a type of Jesus. He pointed to Jesus. Jesus is the new David, the ultimate David, the ultimate king over God's kingdom. And he is engaging then on this hill, on the cross, his own battle against sin and death and the devil.

And he's the champion to represent his people as David was a champion to represent Israel. And he is victorious again here. And like that's the first prophecy of the gospel in Genesis 3.15, which said that the devil would bruise his head, but that he would bruise, and the devil would bruise his heel, but that he would bruise the devil's head.

Again, this here on Calvary, on Golgotha, is where the devil's head is bruised once and for all. And so, if that's what it means, and that's why there's a connection also probably to the fact that he's the king, which is repeatedly emphasized in this passage.

[13:37] And Pilate writes that he's the king of the Jews, and this is written for the whole world to see. So in three languages, in Aramaic for the Jews, in Latin for the Roman army, and in Greek for the rest of the Gentile world, the Greek world.

And it's because David was a type of Jesus, a prefigurement of Jesus, Apostle John applies a Psalm of David to Jesus in verses 23 to 24.

And you guys, we're all familiar with this, because if you look at, watch movies or read books, a lot of literature has Christ types, right? Types of Christ. And then, and so they're intentionally alluding to, alluding back to Jesus and his example of sacrifice.

So in the same way, the Old Testament points forward to Christ. And so that's why these figures, all the major institutions in the Old Testament, the temple, the high priest, the king, they all point to Jesus.

They're a type of Christ. So verses 23 to 24, read it with me. It says, When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

[14:42] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

This quote is taken from Psalm 22, verses 16 to 18, where David is lamenting his own plight as an innocent sufferer. And Christ, who is the ultimate innocent sufferer, therefore fulfills this in a fuller way than David even did.

And the verses in Psalm 22 reads this way, For dogs encompass me, a company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones.

They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. I mean, the details are astounding, fulfilled to the minute detail that he was pierced in his hands and feet, that he can count all of his bones, that none of his bones were broken, that people were gloating over him and mocking him, that they divide his clothing among them, and even cast lots for his clothing.

So the parallel with David continues in verses 28 to 30. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was not finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

[16:02] A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

So, on the cross in the Middle Eastern heat, Jesus is parched from losing so much water from the beating and the labor, carrying the cross, and then Jesus asks for a drink and says, I thirst.

But even this, he says, to fulfill the scripture because Psalm 69, 21 says, For my thirst, they gave me sour wine to drink.

That's again, a Psalm of David, which is applied to Jesus. And to fulfill that scripture, Jesus says, I thirst, and the soldiers predictably grab the sour wine using a sponge and hand it to Jesus.

So, Jesus is the new David. He's the champion that represents his people to win victory over sin and death and the devil. But he's also the new Passover lamb, sacrificed for the atonement of God's people.

[17:12] And we see this in verses 16 to 17. So, they took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross. The reason why they have to go out is that the Old Testament stipulated that executions must take place outside the camp in order not to defile the land.

And on the day of atonement to Yom Kippur, which we know of, which happened once a year, the high priest was commanded to make an atonement for all of God's people by sacrificing a bull and a goat as an offering for sin and then sprinkling their blood on the altar.

And then, the Old Testament Leviticus 16, 27 said this, The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place had to be carried forth outside the camp.

Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned with fire. So again, Jesus fulfills the institution of the sacrifice, Old Testament sacrifice, the day of atonement in being carried out, going out of the city to die there for his people.

And that's why the author of Hebrews in chapter 13 writes, makes that connection, 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.

[18:30] So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. And there are several more allusions specific to the Passover in verses 31 to 37.

Read it out loud with me. Follow the 31 to 37. Since it was the day of preparation and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness, his testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe.

For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says they will look on him whom they have pierced. The crucifixion was a long excruciating process.

[19:44] I mean, excruciating, the word comes from that, right? And the victims would slump because of their weight because of gravity and that would constrict the chest, the cavity and prevent them from breathing.

So what they would have to do is push themselves up using their pierced legs and hands in order to free up the chest cavity to breathe. So that was, the victims died from asphyxiation basically, from suffocation.

And usually the Roman practice was to leave the crucified victim on there for as long as necessary to die and then to let the vultures devour them. But especially the criminal sedition which Jesus was because he claimed to be the king of the Jews.

However, on this day because of Jews' request, they're requesting that because of Sabbath, their holiday especially during the festival of the Passover is coming up, they don't want victims lying there on the cross just to defile the land like they were afraid of.

And they don't want to have to deal with them and deal with Jesus especially on their Sabbath during the Passover. So they ask them to expedite the process by breaking their legs.

[21 : 00] And by breaking the legs, they don't have to strengthen their legs to push themselves up so therefore they would die by suffocation sooner. So that was the idea. But when they came to Jesus to break his legs, they note that he's already dead probably from the enormous loss of blood from the double flogging he already received.

He died sooner than a normal victim. And so when Jesus dies in that way, we noted already Psalm 22, 17, which said I can count all my bones.

He fulfills that scripture which said no bone was to be broken. But not only that, he fulfills the type of the Passover lamb because the Passover lamb, when they were eaten, so the Passover feast where Israelites celebrate because they were in captivity in Egypt, but God sent his angel of death to judge those who oppose him in Egypt to kill the first borns of all families.

But to those who obeyed him and listened to him and killed the Passover lamb instead and daubed its blood on the doorposts were spared. And so the Passover lamb, however, when they eat it, they were not to break any of its bones.

So in that, Jesus fulfills that. He is the ultimate Passover lamb. His bone is not broken as he dies. And it is his blood that becomes the atonement for our sins so that we can be spared from God's righteous and just judgment of sinners.

[22 : 29] And those who die on a tree or hang on a tree, which happened to those who are executed, and these Israelites typically executed victims and then hung them on a tree to display.

And because of that, the Bible said that those who die in that manner is cursed. And then Jesus then takes on our curse on the cross by dying on the tree. He's hanged on a tree.

And the author of Galatians 3.13 notes this, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

So Jesus is the new Passover lamb, and so because he's already dead, the soldiers instead of breaking his legs, they just pierce him to make sure that he is good and dead. And when they do, it says, at once there came out blood and water, which medical experts disagree on what exactly was pierced, but they agree that that could happen in multiple ways.

They make it possible that they pierced the heart, so the blood was from the heart and the water was from the sack that surrounds the heart. Either way, these are soldiers who are trained to kill, and when they pierce, to make sure that they're dead, this person is dead, and so Jesus, he's there to show that Jesus was clearly dead.

[23 : 53] And John's point about water and blood coming out is not really, you know, medical, it's not a medical interest, it's a theological interest for him, because he had noted that it's the blood of Jesus that poured out, that cleanses us from sin, as he writes in another place in 1 John 1 to 7.

And then again, earlier in John chapter 7, he said, whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the spirit whom those who believe in him were to receive, for as yet the spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So the image of water throughout the Bible often refers to the spirit of God, and so here the water being poured out with water is a symbol, is a visual representation of the Holy Spirit really coming out of his heart, of the water pouring out of his heart, so they can be living water to those who would believe in him.

And then finally, they will look on him whom they have pierced. Again, that's fulfillment of Zechariah 12, 10, which said that, and then later in that same passage, it says, on that day there shall be a fountain open for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

So again, with the water and blood pouring out of Jesus' heart, that's the fountain opened up for his people, those who would believe in him for the cleansing of our sin by the blood and the water.

[25 : 26] So Jesus fulfills scripture as the new David and as the new Passover lamb, but he does this in order to create a new people. John writes in verse 35, he who saw it has borne witness, his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe.

This is the goal of John's writing. He's not just writing it just to remember for the sake of memory, but he is bearing witness so that those who read this, those who encounter Jesus through his writing might believe in him.

That's his goal, and in doing so become born into the family of God. And we see a glimpse of this new family in verses 25 to 26, where Jesus, even as he's dying on the cross, takes care of his mother, he says, and he says to his disciple whom he loved standing nearby, and he said to his mother, woman, behold your son.

Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother, and from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. And this is interesting because Jesus has other siblings, even though they're half siblings, of course, because Jesus was born of Mary when she was a virgin.

But she has children after Jesus, right, and so he has at least half brothers, siblings, but instead of entrusting his biological mother to his biological brothers, he entrusts her to his spiritual family, his spiritual brother, the new family of God that has come up through his work.

[27 : 00] And he says, this is your mother, this is your son. And not only that, we see this new family in verses 38 to 42.

New people come and join this family. It says, after these things, Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, and Sanhedrin is the highest ruling body among the Jews that condemned Jesus, and took him to the cross.

And so here we see him leaving that family, that structure, that Sanhedrin is no longer the focus of the focus of God's people, but the new family of God now is built around Jesus, and he comes to grab Jesus so that he could give him a proper burial.

We see this also in Nicodemus. It says, that passage continues, Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

[28 : 05] So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. John uses the metaphor, the motif of light and darkness to great effect throughout his gospel.

So when he notes here that Nicodemus had formally come to Jesus at night, he's noting that he was at that time in a place of darkness, a place of unbelief, a place of not knowing who Jesus was. But now here he comes to bury Jesus and to anoint him. He has come out of the darkness into light, the light that is Jesus, the light of the world. And in sharing this, John is inviting all of us to step out of darkness into light, to believe in Jesus and to be born again into that new family of God.

As the new David and the new Passover lamb, Jesus died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people. And of course that's not the end of the story.

There's Easter and I hope you guys come back for Easter to hear the rest of the story because apart from the resurrection, this would be meaningless. Because the resurrection is the proof that his sacrifice is accepted by the Father.

[29 : 26] But if you're here this evening, you're not here by mistake. God summons you, he calls you to believe because John wrote this that we also may believe.

And as much as we'd like to tell ourselves that we're pretty good people, that we live in a pretty good world, this world is full of darkness and the evil, the darkness in our hearts, it's kind of like, you know, puss that's just barely covered over by skin.

A little bit of pressure, a little bit of scraping, and it just spews out of us, the evil, the darkness in our hearts. A little bit of stress and our anger spews out.

A little bit of disagreement and our egos and our selfishness spew out. A little bit of scarcity and our greed spews out. A little bit of pleasure and our gluttony, lechery, and all kinds of perversions spew out of us.

A little bit of uncertainty and our fears and insecurities spew out. We need a redeemer. We need a savior.

[30 : 37] And that's why God the Father sends his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And Jesus is unique among history's religious leaders in that he does not merely teach a way of life, but offers life, eternal life itself.

He accomplishes this for us. He doesn't leave it up to us to strive and earn and attain enlightenment or salvation for ourselves, but he himself takes the initiative to make a way for us to come and save us.

He doesn't merely teach us to live a good life. He proclaims to us the good news that he made a way for us already, that he accomplished it.

That we must only believe in it. And that's why he says decisively at verse 30, it is finished. He gave up his spirit.

And this is powerful. Because the word gave up is the same word that's translated as delivered up or handed over. And over and over again throughout the gospel of John, over a dozen times, it refers to Jesus' betrayal.

[31 : 51] They handed him over. They delivered him over to be crucified. They handed him over to Pilate. But even though all these forces of this world are conspiring against him, at the end of the day, it's not other people who hand Jesus over, but it's Jesus who himself who hands over his spirit.

He gives up his spirit. He is the master of his own faith. That's why it says also late earlier that he bore his own cross. He wanted to do this. This was of his own will.

He wanted to die for our sins. And once he has done it, he said, all is fulfilled. It is finished. It doesn't mean that, okay, now my life is over.

I'm about to die. That's not what it means. The word finished has a sense of accomplishing. It's the same word that Jesus used earlier in 17, chapter 70, verse 4 to say, I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus is saying, it is finished. It is accomplished. I have done it. The work of redemption is done and there is no more for us to do but to believe in him and take hold of the work that he has completed by faith.

[33 : 07] A simple poem by S.W. Gaty conveys the deep irony of it all. It says, he held in hell laid low, made sin, his sin overthrew, bowed to the grave, destroyed his soul, and death by dying slew.

Tonight, I invite you guys to not dwell on your own accomplishments, to not dwell on your good works, but dwell instead on the good news of what Jesus has done for us and let that be your salvation and when you cling to him and come to Jesus, you will hear those words pronounced over you, it is finished, it is accomplished and the joy of salvation will be yours.

Let's pray together. God, we thank you.

There's so, there's only so much we can say to thank you, to marvel at what you have done and to praise you for all that you have done for us, for what you have done in saving us on that cross, you alone deserve all praise and honor and glory.

Grant us the gift of faith so that we may cling to you and hear those words pronounced over us. It is finished. In Jesus' name we pray.

[34 : 48] Amen.