

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Crucifixion, Part 1

Scripture: John 19:16-18, 23-24

Code: 1574

Turn in your Bibles to the nineteenth chapter of John's gospel and our text for this morning was verses 16 through 30, but we'll only begin just a portion of that, this morning as we examine the death of Christ. We come as we come to the death of Christ to the climax of the history of man. In fact, in a redemptive sense, it's the climax of the history of God in the sense that this is the event which secures redemption. We come to the crucifixion of Christ.

Now as we have considered already, particularly last week in our discussion of the prior text, we saw that Jesus came indeed as a king but was rejected as such. And we saw the full and final rejection in verse 15 where it says, speaking of the Jews crowded around the praetorium of Pilate, but they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Pilate saith unto them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." And with that statement you have the full and final and absolute rejection of Jesus Christ as Israel's king. All of His matchless beauty, all the majesty of His love and the wonder of His person had brought Him to that, to be despised and to be totally rejected, all because of the sinful unbelief of men. And so He will be crucified.

And already at this time, as we're approaching verse 16, He has been beaten. He has already been scourged and His back laid bare. The ribbons of flesh that are remaining there, covered with the blood that is coming from His back and He stands there in agony and pain and they scream for more. And the Jews are willing to indict themselves even in regard to His death for in Matthew 27 verse 24 when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man, and se ye to it." And then answered all the people saying, "His blood be on us and on our children." And with that the people of Israel indicted themselves in the death of Jesus Christ.

And you begin to wonder how it is that man could possibly stoop that low, how it is that man could possibly take the innocent, lovely Jesus Christ and crucify Him. But, you see, that's depravity, that's sin and that's the vileness of sin, and that's the depths to which it goes. And that's also the character of willful rejection, and that's also the character of religious hypocrisy which keeps the ritual and kills the reality. And that's also what happens when men sin against light and when they sin against love and when they sin against grace. And so, they're about to allow the most foul deed in the universe to be perpetrated against the innocent Christ and they sent in motion a chain of individuals who throughout all history have stood with the crucifiers and some today stand with the crucifiers, the

same kind of attitude, rejecting Jesus Christ. And even though there are few people today perhaps who would be willing to nail Him to a cross, they are in so many terms doing just that by rejecting Him. And so the crowd screams, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

The trial is over. The ministry of Jesus is over. Both His ministry to the public and His private ministry from verses...from chapters 13 to 17, it's all over now. The cross is the climax. Redemptive history has reached its apex and the combination of the sinful, vile, murder of men and the divine purpose of God comes together to bring redemption to the world.

There is something we need to say at this point, just by way of interest, and that is there is no more horrible death possible than the death of crucifixion. Even the Romans regarded it as a horrible thing and it is said that they shuddered to talk about it. Cicero, for example, declared that it was the most cruel and horrifying death possible. Tacitus said it was a despicable death. Crucifixion was invented, evidently, by the Persians, picked up by the Carthaginians and passed on to the Romans. The Romans had employed it never for a Roman citizen, no Roman citizen no matter how vile his crime would ever be crucified. But it was the dreaded death which was brought upon foreign slaves and foreign criminals. And so, Jesus Christ dies the death of a foreign slave and a criminal. But it is certainly true that this is the hour for which He was born, this is the hour for which all along He's been saying, "Mine hour is not yet come," but here His hour has arrived.

You see, Jesus Christ was born to the world really for one purpose, and that was to die a redemptive death, that was to be a sacrifice for sin, that was to bear in His own body the sins of the world, that was to be made sin in order that men might be made righteousness. And so that for which He was born comes to pass. He is to be crucified by the hate of men and by the will of God. And you must understand those two go together. God uses the hateful things of men to accomplish His purpose. Keep this principle in mind, my friends, and learn it well. God works His purposes through holy men and sinful men. No sinful man will for one split second violation the plan of God. And so we see Jesus Christ moving to the cross.

Now as we look at John's gospel, we are again made aware of John's purpose. Now if you've been coming at any time...for any time at all, you know what John's purpose is, to present Christ as God, right? To present Christ in majesty, to present Christ in beauty, in glory. And you'd say, "Well surely John's going to run out of that right here because the cross is so despicable, it's so degrading, it's so de-humanizing, it's so debased, it's so horrifying. Certainly at this point there's no way that John is going to be able to proclaim the deity and the majesty of Jesus.

But that's not so because here as clearly, as graphically, as dynamically and as dramatically as you have ever heard it, you will hear the majesty of Jesus. In crucifixion He shines even the more glorious. And John selects...and there were many things he could have selected about the

crucifixion...but John selects those things around the cross that lend themselves to the majesty and the deity of Jesus. And basically he picks out four of them, we'll cover one of them and next time we'll finish the others which are more brief. But this is so important.

He picks out four things, four features of the cross that speak of the deity of Christ that exalt Him to the skies. They are the specific fulfillments, the superscription, the selfless love, and the supernatural knowledge and control. And John, true to his purpose, the Holy Spirit doing exactly what He wanted to do all along, glorify Christ, does it again. And whereas some of the other gospel accounts would maybe major a little more on the humanity of Jesus and emphasize that, this is the point here, the deity of Christ. And so this morning as I talk about the crucifixion, I'm not going to talk about the emotion of it. I'm not going to paint you a vivid picture of the agony. I'm not going to major on the drama and try to stir your emotions. I'm going to do just what John did, I'm going to present to you John's glorious portrait of majesty in death and of Jesus as God. And I hope it will give roots to your faith and a solid foundation, more solid than you've experienced in terms of the truths of the Word of God and just who Christ is.

To begin with, Jesus is glorified as God by the specific fulfillments that took place at His death. Now one of the ways, and I believe the greatest way, we know the Bible is true is through fulfilled prophecy. An announcer from KFWB radio called me on the telephone yesterday when the news came in about the new particular manuscripts supposedly found on the gospel of Mark, which would be older than any manuscript we ever have. It's very interesting that this man would date it at 50 A.D. because in it there are prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem which didn't happen until 70 A.D. and the liberals have always put the gospel of Mark past 70 A.D. so that Mark isn't prophesying at all, just reporting what already happened. In effect, he's a liar, he just pretends to be prophesying. But the liberals conveniently date everything past when it's fulfilled so they can eliminate prophecy. And so he asked me what the significance of it was. I said, "I really don't know now whether it's legitimate or not, but the significance of it would be this, that if it's securely dated earlier than 70 A.D., they have a lot of people doing some theological gymnastics to try to figure out how Mark predicted accurately that not one stone would be left upon another when he predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. And if it's as early as 15 (meant 50), that would be a good 20 years before it ever happened.

The Bible is verified repeatedly by prophetic utterance. And here in the death of Jesus Christ, John picks out some little kind of obscure prophecies, and it's beautiful. Just little tiny details. And you know, the smaller the detail, the more impact it has. Do you know that? The more minute the point, the more powerful it is when it's accurately fulfilled. And so John is going to move from one little tiny detail to the next and see how prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Notice in verse 16, and we'll begin to read and I'll read through verse 18 and then we'll go back.

"Then delivered he Him," that is Pilate delivered Christ, "therefore unto them," that is to the Jews, first of all, and then to the Roman soldiers to be crucified, "and they took Jesus and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him and two others with Him on either side one and Jesus in the center."

Now there's the crucifixion. That's all John says. He doesn't dramatize it. He doesn't portray the dripping blood and go into the dramatics. That's it. But, you see, John's purpose is not to show the human agony, John's purpose is to show the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ in fulfilled prophecy. Now let me show you how it works, verse 16.

"Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified and they took Jesus and led Him away." There's the beaten, shattered, panicky Pilate, unable to control the crowd, seeing that he's got a riot on his hands, washes his hands and says, "See to it." And they say, "Let His blood be upon us," and away Jesus is taken to be crucified. But I want you to catch just one fantastic thought. The second verse in that...the second word in that verse is the word "delivered," "Then delivered he Him." Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified. Hang on to that thought.

Romans 8:32 says this, "God...God who spared not His own Son but...what?...delivered Him up for us all." Who delivered Jesus up? Not only the governor of Judea, but the governor of the universe. You say, "Does that mean Pilate and God are working together?" That's exactly what it means. And in no way does the vileness, unbelief, cowardice or sin of Pilate alter the plan of God. As I've said to you earlier, and don't you ever forget it, God's plans are on schedule, be they operating through sinful men or holy men. God is the author of history. And so God delivered over Jesus as well as Pilate. And the Bible says He was delivered for our...what?...offenses. And so again we see God using His holy purposes, and though men mean it for evil, God means it for...what?...for good and He makes the wrath of men to praise Him. Don't you ever forget that principle. So many people have that mistaken idea that if you're a sinful man you keep on fouling up God's plans. Not in any way. God works through men holy or sinful.

All right, now in regard to fulfilled prophecy...that was just a little extra added attraction. But coming to fulfilled prophecy in the death of Christ, let me just say that the very fact that Jesus died a redemptive death fulfills massive amounts of prophecy. And I'm not going to begin on that because we could...this could be a month, month, month, month series, you know. We could go on and on forever on Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the death of Christ. But the whole mass of Old Testament redemptive promise is now fulfilled in Him. Every Old Testament picture of the final sacrifice, every type, every prophecy about one who would die, it's all resolved here in Jesus Christ.

And there are two types of prophecy, and I've told you before, I tell you again, because that's how you'll learn it, there are two types...number one, verbally predictive, number two, typically predictive. Verbal prediction is I say such and such will happen, and such and such does. But a type, and this is what we mean, there are certain things called types or pictures. For example, there are Old Testament things that picture what Christ will do. For example, the sacrifice of a lamb in the Old Testament was a picture of Christ's sacrifice, a kind of a preview illustration. That's called a type of which Christ is the antitype or fulfillment. So those are two kinds of prophecy. They're both just equally powerful, verbally predictive and types predicting and Jesus fulfilled both the verbal predictions and all the types to the letter. And we'll show you how.

First of all, look at verse 16. "They delivered Him to be crucified, they took Jesus and led Him away." Hang on to those last three words, "led Him away." Small little statement, you run right across it, you wouldn't even notice it. According to historians, the crucifixion was often so panicky and so terrifying and the victim already beaten through the scourging and in agony and pain, so full of fear, but it was customary that the victim was often dragged or driven to his execution. That was customary. But not so with Jesus. It simply says...it doesn't say they dragged Him away and it doesn't say they drove Him away, it says they...what?...they led Him away. That means He willingly without resistance followed. That's what it means. There was no panic, there was no struggle. They led, He followed. Our friends, that fulfills a very specific and very minute prophecy. In Isaiah chapter 53 verse 7 the prophet said hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born, when he didn't even know in his brain what crucifixion was, or if it existed, the prophet said, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." You see, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah said when He goes to His death He will not be driven, He will not be dragged, He will be led. Jesus fulfilled that exactly. And like a sheep, you can't drive sheep, you can drive cattle, you cannot drive sheep, you lead sheep and thus was He led.

Now we might add this, also, from this same verse, the latent thought here. That it was immediately after His trial that He was executed. Roman law provided a two-day interval for any new evidence or for the man to put his affairs in any kind of adjustment that needed to be done. There was a two-day period between the trial sentencing and the execution. Not in this case. By the time Jesus is nailed to the cross, it's only been two and a half hours since His trial before Pilate started. I mean, they were in a hurry. They wanted Him dead and they wanted Him dead now. And they weren't about to allow two days ago to go by and they weren't about to allow any time to go by. Jesus went from Gabbatha to Golgotha just that fast. And it was immediately after His sentence that He was executed, from judgment to execution with no stops in between, no time for slip ups.

You say, "So what." So this, Isaiah 53 again, just a little statement. It says this, "He was taken to die from prison and from judgment." Do you see the order right there? It says that when He dies, He'll go from prison to judgment to death. That was not normal. Normally He went from prison to judgment to prison for two days, to death. Isaiah prophesied He would go directly from His judgment to His execution, something the Romans never did but they did it this time because God said that's how it is

to be done. And so, Jesus fulfilled that prophecy. And yet it's so amazing because so many pea-brained liberals come along and they say, "Well, Jesus just worked at it and He figured out how He could fulfill all those prophecies." That is so stupid. How do you get the Romans and the Jews and everybody else to fulfill them all? You think they're all Old Testament scholars going by a little sheet they've got hanging up in the deal there, saying let's see, next according to Isaiah we do this? There is no way that these events could ever happen, apart from the sovereign plan and design of God. Jesus is no victim, this is not the tragedy of the life of Jesus, this is the God-ordained, God-authored, God-planned and designed climax of His life and every tiny detail is in the plan of God from eternity past. Nothing's been violated. He is no victim. He is a victor on the way to His triumph, in step every moment.

And so, just two little things hidden in verse 16 show the deity of Jesus Christ and His majesty as He moves on God's pattern steps to the cross. Notice verse 17, "And He bearing His cross went forth to a place called the Place of a Skull which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha." Now it says there that He was bearing His cross, and it's very emphatic. Later on in His time going to the cross, evidently just as they reached the city gates, perhaps, the cross was picked up by Simon of Cyrene because Jesus had fallen under the load of it, but to begin with, He was bearing His own cross. And in the Greek, the pronoun is there, it's emphatic, it's an emphatic use, bearing His cross Himself.

You say, "Well that's no big deal, what's the importance of that?" There's a lot of importance to that. Before I mention what it is, let me just tell you how it worked. They would put the cross on Jesus and I believe it was the entire cross and I'm led to believe that the cross was the style of cross that we have up here, as opposed to the St. Andrew's cross which is shaped like an X or the T-shaped cross because of the fact that tradition tells us it is this kind of a cross, the standard cross as we know the Christian cross, and also the fact that Pilate put a name over His head, indicates that there would need to be a piece of wood up there to place it on. And so we feel best that it was this kind of cross. And so they would take the entire cross of great weight and they would drop it on His shoulders and He would need to walk up to Calvary carrying it.

As He would move through the city, they would go into as many streets as possible when they were taking a victim out because as the victim was moving, the man in front of the victim had a placard in his hand and on that placard was the crime that the man was being crucified for committing. You say, "Why did they do that?" For two reasons. Number one, it was a warning to everybody that crime doesn't pay. And I imagine it was fairly vivid, a man already been scourged and bleeding as He was moving through the town. The second reason they did it was because they had a great sense of fairness and it could be possible that a new witness or that a new evidence could be introduced into the situation and were someone to come up and stop the procession, and have legitimate new evidence, the case could be taken back and retried again. So they gave every opportunity for that. And so Jesus was undoubtedly led through the streets of Jerusalem on the road to the cross and

carrying His own cross.

Keep that thought in mind and listen to what I read you. In Genesis chapter 22 there is a man who is a type of Christ, an Old testament type. His name was Isaac. Isaac was a type of Christ, he was a picture of Christ for Isaac was to be given as a sacrifice, just as Christ was. The beautiful thing in the story of Isaac is that you have two types of Christs, both Isaac and the ram are both types of Christ. Now notice this, Genesis 22:6, remember Isaac is a picture of Christ. "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son." Did you know that Isaac bore his own wood to his own execution? And Jesus did too or the type would have been destroyed, Jesus fulfilled it to the very letter. This is divine inspiration, my friends. This is how verbal and typical prophecy predicted to the very tiniest point the death of Jesus Christ.

There's another specific fulfillment and that's another typical one of a type. Notice in verse 17, "And He bearing His cross," the next two words, what are they? "Went forth." What does that mean? Went out of. Went out of where? Went out of Jerusalem. The Romans had a law. According to that law, no one could be crucified within the city limits or the boundaries of the city. The Jews had tried on several occasions to stone Jesus inside the city, but it couldn't be allowed. If it had been allowed, something horrible would have been violated and the whole Bible would have been mixed up and you could have written off your Bible, or written off Jesus Christ and in either case Christianity would be doomed. Let me show you what I mean.

In Exodus chapter 29 we have a picture of Christ. Now all of the Old Testament offerings were pictures of Christ, right? All of the repeated sacrifices were pictures of His final sacrifice. And the sin offering particularly, for He died as an offering for sin, didn't He? So in Exodus chapter 24 verse 19 we read this, I mean, 29 verse 14, sorry about that, Exodus 29 verse 14, "But the flesh of the bullock and his skin and his dung shall thou burn with fire outside the camp, it is a sin offering." In other words, a sin offering had to be taken outside the camp of Israel.

In the very next book, the book of Leviticus in chapter 4 and verse 12, the same thing is indicated. "Even the whole bullock shall be carried forth outside the camp unto a clean place where the ashes are poured out and burned on the wood with fire, where the ashes are poured out shall it be burned, or he be burned." Then in chapter 16 of Leviticus verse 27, it says, "And the bullock for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place shall one carry forth outside of the camp and there be burned."

In other words, the sin offerings in the Old Testament were taken outside the camp. Who then was the ultimate sin offering? Jesus Christ. Where then in order to fulfill that typical prophecy did Jesus have to die? Outside the camp. There was no way that He could ever be stoned or executed within the city walls for God had designed Him to be the perfect fulfillment of every Old Testament sin

offering and they were all taken outside the camp. And thus does the writer of the book of Hebrews say in chapter 13 verse 11, "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp," then he said this, "wherefore Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood suffered outside the gate."

Do you know why they executed Him outside the city? Jesus had to fulfill prophecy. God had to manipulate Roman law to make sure they had a law that said crucifixion happened outside the wall in order for Jesus to fulfill the significance of Old Testament types. And so He went outside the city. And so He fulfilled another specific detail of prophecy.

Now you'll notice a little note in verse 17 that the place where they crucified Him was called the Place of a Skull. Recently we believe that this has been found and identified, it's commonly known as Gordon's Calvary, for the man who discovered the tomb in that area. And from a certain angle it very definitely resembles a skull, we believe it is called the hill of the skull because of its resemblance to a skull, some say it's called the hill of the skull because Adam's skull is there. Who would ever know that? And other say because it used to be a place where they threw skulls. Who would ever know that and why would they have a place where they threw skulls?

The point seems to be obvious that it is an indication of the face of the hillside which very definitely resembles a skull. And I personally believe that it is accurate, or as best we can tell it's accurate because of the fact that it is in proximity of Fort Antonious and it would not be a problem. The other one, the Catholic Calvary is right in the middle of Jerusalem and there's not even a hill there, at this point, and it's all obscured by all the paraphernalia that they built around it. This is definitely outside the wall. It's definitely near where a highway was. It is definitely in proximity to a tomb right beneath it which we believe to be Christ's tomb. It is definitely close to Fort Antonious northeast of the gate called Damascus and so we believe that it is accurate. And so He is taken to a place called the Place of the Skull. Incidentally, today it's a very interesting place because on the top is an Arab cemetery with all kinds of tombstones. It's anything but glamorous and the Arabs bury their dead up there. And right below it is an Arab bus depot with all the fumes rising and so forth. And so you stand in the garden tomb and you look at Calvary, and the Arab bus depot is beneath it and the Arab graveyards on top of it. But at least it's one place where they haven't built a cathedral. There and the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 18 tells us that when they had reached Golgotha they crucified Him. Now this of obvious interest to us fulfills reams of prophecy. For example, Numbers chapter 21, we have a very clear type of Christ's death. The children of Israel have been sinning which was nothing new for them or for us, for that matter. So the Lord sent poisonous snakes to bite them. Verse 6, "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people and many people of Israel died." This is the direct method of chastisement. Verse 7, "Therefore the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned." You see they had the sense to acknowledge it once it got desperate. "For we have spoken against

the Lord and against thee, pray unto the Lord." Notice they knew they weren't on grounds to pray, "That He would take the serpents away from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Make thee a fiery and set it on a pole, it shall come to pass that everyone who is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it on a pole and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of bronze, he lived."

Now what's the significant of a serpent on a pole? It's the idea that it was lifted up high so that all could see it. And they had to do was look, it was the look of faith, believing, and they were healed. The significant thing is this was a type of Christ among sin-cursed dying people, He is lifted up and all may look on Him. So the brazen serpent is a beautiful type of Christ. Therefore we conclude this, whatever kind of death Jesus dies, it must be a death where He is lifted up, right? Therefore we conclude that there was no way that Jesus could die by being stoned. Let me show you in John chapter 3 verse 14. Jesus Himself acknowledged that this serpent on the brass pole was a type of Him. In John 3:14 Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." You see? "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Jesus said, "I have to be lifted up." Later on in chapter 12 He said the same thing in verse 32, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me. And this He said signifying what kind of death He would die." In other words, it would be a lifted-up death. And the same thing is in chapter 18 and I think it's verse 31. The Jews at the end said, "It's not lawful for us to put any man to death that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke signifying what death He should die." In other words, He had to die a Roman death, not a Jewish death because a Roman death would lift Him up on a cross. So Jesus had to be crucified. That means the Romans had to be in control in Israel when Jesus was dying. That means the Jews would not be allowed to stone Him. All those details of history moved around so that Jesus would die a death being lifted up and every one came to pass.

The Jewish scholar Edersheim tells us that the place where the criminals were stoned in Jerusalem, a place called Bethhaccekela(???) was a place of execution the Jews used and that it was elevated about 11 or...11 to 13 feet and below were rocks. And the way they executed people was to shove them off and they would be broken and crushed on the rocks. And the way it worked was the first witness that brought testimony against the person got the first shove. And so the person would go over it at the hands of the first witness. Then if the person didn't die from the fall, the second witness got to lift a large and sharp boulder and drop it directly on the victim's heart. If the victim lived through those two things, then everybody took stones and stoned him. Now that was the manner of Jewish execution. There's no way you can construe that as being lifted up. That's being thrown down and thrown down and thrown down. Jesus could not die a Jewish death, He had to die at the hands of the Gentiles. It also adds to the culpability of the whole world in the thing, the guilt of the whole world. And so just to make sure that every tiny jot and tittle of prophecy is fulfilled, Jesus is crucified, lifted up.

But beyond that, crucifixion has even predicted an exactly sense for in Psalm chapter 22, the psalmist portraying the coming death of Messiah, describes what it is like to be crucified. And he hadn't got any...he didn't have any idea of crucifixion at this point. "I am poured out like water," verse 14, "My bones are out of joint." Certainly what happens in crucifixion. "My heart is like wax, it's melted within Me." He says, "My tongue cleaves to My jaws," He's dry." And then at the end of verse 16 it says this, direct prophecy, "They pierced My hands and My feet."

Now how does he know this? You say, "Well the Romans knew it and they nailed him for that reason." Oh, don't be ridiculous. The Romans didn't even know the Old Testament existed in terms of this particular passage. They were carrying out the divine plan of God. They had to crucify Him because that's what the Bible said would happen...lifted up and nailed. And the only way He could be lifted up and nailed would be crucifixion. It's the only kind of death Jesus could die. And indeed, He died a death of crucifixion, fulfilling prophecy.

And so, Jesus Christ already bleeding from the scourging and rapid loss of blood, was nailed and held to the cross by four great wounds through His hands, as those blood-square nails were driven through the quivering flesh. And there He was to hang on a piece of wood. The cross is lifted, dropped in a socket. The thud and the jolt rips and tears the flesh as it hits bottom and there He is to hang. And He will die, He will die of hunger and He will die of thirst. He will die of exposure. He will die of suffocation of His organs. And if He doesn't die soon enough, they'll come by and they'll smash His legs to break them so that He cannot hold Himself up anymore and that will totally suffocate all of His organs. And He will die.

It's an ugly picture. It's an ugly picture of a crown of thorns crushed into His brow and blood running down mingled with the sweat and the grime and the flies and the gnats irritating Him and Him pinned and unable to do anything about the torture of the annoyance and irritation. The horror of His visage in His face would be nothing to look at. And that also fulfills Scripture, for Isaiah said, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He has no form or comeliness." And Isaiah in 53:2 right when he said that was talking about His death. Isaiah predicted that He would be in an ugly presentation in death and indeed He was. Again fulfilling Scripture.

So there He hangs, dying from severe inflammation, hunger, thirst, swelling of the wounds, unbearable pain from torn tendons, agony from the horrible weight of His body hanging by those four wounds, suffocating by the rearrangement of His internal organs with a throbbing headache beyond belief and bursting thirst. And add to that the bearing of your sin and mine and all the sin of every man who ever lived and you'll find out that everybody put together in all eternity and hell would only begin to feel what He felt in those hours.

And then it says at the end of verse 18, fulfilling prophecy again, "And two others with Him on either side one, and Jesus in the center." Jesus wasn't crucified even alone, He was crucified like a common criminal. He was just stuck up there with a couple of other criminals. You say, "What's the significance of that?" The significance of that is that it accurately and specifically and directly fulfills another prophecy. Never a miss with the accuracy of the Word of God for Isaiah 53:9 it says, "And He made His grave with the wicked." And verse 12 says, pointedly, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Those who broke the laws, Jesus was to die with evildoers. Jesus was to die a criminal's death with other criminals.

I'm sure the Roman design in crucifying the other criminals was just to be a mockery to the Jews and to Christ, to just put Him up for like any common criminal, but in the design of God it was a glorious fulfillment of a detailed prophecy. And again we see not a humiliated Christ dying with criminals, but an exalted Christ fulfilling prophecy. Do you see the difference? And I love it because it's again a great illustration of what men meant for evil, God meant for good. It just so happens that one of those thieves that Pilate stuck up there was the first trophy of the grace of Christ won at the cross. And in Luke chapter 23 we show you how Christ turned that thing into glory. In verse 39, "One of the malefactors who were hanged railed at Him saying, 'If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.' But the other answering, rebuked him saying, 'Dost not thou fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.'" See, he saw the purity of Jesus. Then I love this, "He said unto Jesus, 'Lord,'" That's good, isn't it? He acknowledged who He was. "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

"And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'" And even in death, bearing sin, He has time to gather into His arms the first trophy of the new age, a dying thief. And you see here again a marvelous fulfillment of prophecy. He was crucified with criminals, and yet He was the victor and carried one of them even into His own presence. And so Jesus fulfills prophecy and thus it is that in the Word of God in chapter 2 in that glorious sermon that Peter is preaching, listen to this, he says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. A man approved...Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know Him being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken Him and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Did you hear with Peter said? He said you took this one and you slew Him. But he also put in there, "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Do you see? God controlled every detail of history whether enacted by holy men or godless unholy men.

Skipping down to verse 23 and 24, let me give you the other prophecies, and we'll take these two sections, skipping the one in the middle and we'll consider it next time, because these...this verse, 23

and 24, is also an indication of fulfilled prophecy. And so it fits with our first points, specific detail.

Now back in Psalm 22:18, that same Psalm we looked at a moment ago, there is a very accurate prophecy. It says this, "They part My garments among them, then cast lots upon my vesture." That's a prediction that when Jesus dies whoever it is who is responsible for His death is going to gamble for His clothes. First they're going to part His garments, and then they're going to gamble for His vesture. That is, they're going to part some of it, then they're going to gamble for another piece of it. Now that's pretty accurate, pretty specific prophecy. It better come to pass or you can throw away the Old Testament, or eliminate Christ. And it does, look at verse 23. "Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus after their work was done, took His garments, made four parts." That's right, they divided His garments. "To every soldier a part, and also His coat, His vesture, now the coat was without seam woven from top throughout and they said therefore among themselves, 'Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it.'"

Well why did they say that? Can you imagine that? What would ever make them say that? Listen to what it says. "That the Scripture...what?...might be fulfilled." You think they knew what they were doing? You think one of them had a copy of Psalm 22:18 and they were going along the script? They did it that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith they parted My raiment among them and for My vesture they did cast lots." They parted part of it, they gambled for one piece of it. And I love that last statement of verse 24, absolutely powerful. "These things therefore the soldiers did." Why did they do them? "Therefore...therefore what?...therefore because the Scripture said they would they did it." You say, "But they didn't know the Scripture." That's okay, God knew it and God knew every move and God made every man make the move to fit the plan. And yet in no sense is there any guilt relieved from them. God's is the plan, man's is the responsibility.

And so, a witless group of callous, godless, pagan soldiers are down there all alone, operating in a casual, have-fun basis fulfilling prophecy right to the letter. And there were four soldiers in this effort, as always there were four in a crucifixion scene. And it would be very simple because there would be four elements to divide...the shoes, the belt, the headdress and the outer cloak of equal value, to some degree, would be divided among the four. That left only the inner tunic which is represented by the word here used, the inner tunic which goes next to the skin, just the regular tunic. That's the thing they gambled for. It would have been a tragedy if Jesus had hadn't an outer cloak on, or if somebody had forgotten to give Him His headdress, there wouldn't have been anything to gamble for. God worked every detail out.

Then I want you to notice another fulfillment of prophecy, typical prophecy. It says in verse 23, "The cloak was without seam woven from the top throughout." You know, I imagine somebody would read it and say, "Ah so what? I mean, we don't need exactly a fashion note at this point. What's the point of putting that in there? Who cares whether it's woven up, down or inside out? What's the difference?"

The difference is extremely significant, my friends. Do you realize that in the Old Testament the garment of the high priest made of linen had to be without seam? Did you know that? That was a symbol of his total purity, there could be no seam in the garment of the high priest. Guess who is the final and faithful high priest? Jesus Christ fulfills to the very letter the symbol of the high priest, even by the note of John that He wore the garments of His priesthood.

Now you remember the high priest? The high priest was a liaison between God and man. In fact, the Latin word for priest is *pontifex* and it means bridge builder. The priest's job is to build a bridge from man to God, this is the function of a priest. And here was Jesus Christ like no other priest had ever done in his life building a bridge, right? To God for men. Here He was and He even has the garb of the priest, seamless. And so does Jesus fulfill a beautiful type of the great high priest.

As I look at those verses, 23 and 24, I'm made aware also of the tremendous indifference of the world to Jesus Christ. Here a group of men sitting beneath a redemptive act of history and all they can think about is gambling for some clothes. This is indifference and this is exactly what you see in the world today...the same kind of indifference to Jesus Christ. And yet just as those soldiers are indifferent and still in the plan of God, so men today indifferent to God continue on a path to a place where God will actually place them because of their indifference. The Bible says, "Fear not them who destroy the body, but fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and that's God. Indifference is tragedy, it's what we talked about a few weeks ago when we said, according to Hebrews 2, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The tragedy of indifference. There they are gambling while He's bearing their sin on the cross, never do they recognize it.

Then, as we'll go from there next time, we'll see other glorious features of the cross that speak of His deity. Let me close by saying this. According to Cannon Liden(???), there are 322 distinct prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Christ. Now stay with me on this. Three hundred and twenty-two distinct prophecies literally fulfilled in Christ, that doesn't include the types even, that's just the prophecies. Now I'm no mathematician but Hendrickson figured the mathematical probability of 332 specific prophecies all coming to pass in one man and the probability was, hang on to this one, I don't know what it could possibly be but it's one in eighty-four with a hundred zeroes after it. There isn't even a word for it. That's the chance possibility of every one of those 322 possibilities coming to pass in Jesus.

You want to know something? Every one of them did to the very letter. Plus another hundred or so types. And so we believe that Jesus is God incarnate, the anointed, the lamb slain for the sins of the world.

Father, thank You, this morning, for showing us these truths again, teaching us. Help us to see Christ for who He is. Help us to see the beautiful magnificent details of the cross that tell us that He is God, that He is moving in a divine authored plan to a divine authored destiny. Help us to realize that Jesus

never was, never will be a victim of men, but that He is operating in a divine timetable. Help us to realize that if we know Him and love Him and accept His righteousness, He will use us in His plan. Help us to realize that even the men who reject Him will be moved around in His plan to fulfill His design as well. But, God, may we not be those indifferent pieces of His plan. May we be those loving objects of His promise. May no one go from this place this morning, a part of the plan of God only by default or by ignorance, but may we be a part of His plan by will, by choice, by faith in Jesus Christ that we may enter into the joy and rejoicing that is ours in His presence some day. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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