

The Finality of the Cross

John 19:17-30

The apostle John's account of the crucifixion is unique in that he includes the controversy over the superscription over Jesus' cross, several references to the fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus' care of his mother, his sixth cry before his death, and the piercing of his side. John presents the fact that *through his death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture and provided completely for our salvation.*

The journey to the cross (17-18)

Criminals condemned to crucifixion, such as Jesus, normally carried their entire cross or only the crossbeam (17).

While the Persians and Greeks used crucifixion, the Romans employed it as a severe public punishment for slaves, conquered peoples, and lower class serious criminals and rebels.

Jesus was crucified along with two other men who evidently were robbers and terrorists (18).

The identification of the King (19-22)

Pilate ordered that a placard be inscribed with Jesus' supposed crimes (19). It was written in Aramaic, the common language spoken by Jews; Latin, the official language of the Romans; and Greek, the common language of the Greek Empire founded by Alexander the Great, which included Israel (20).

The chief priests wanted to modify the inscription and thus rob Pilate of one last chance to humiliate the Jews (21). Pilate refused to give them the satisfaction (22).

The greedy actions of the soldiers (23-24)

Every Jew wore five pieces of clothing—sandals, a turban or head covering, a belt, an inner tunic, and an outer robe. Each of the four soldiers chose one piece of the less expensive items (23).

Since the tunic was seamless, they gambled for who would receive that piece (23-24). It was bad enough to take a dead man's clothing. The soldiers showed the hardness of their hearts by gambling over Jesus' clothing while he was still alive.

John noted that this fulfilled another prophecy (24; Psalm 22:18).

Jesus cares for his mother (25-27)

There were four women present at the crucifixion—Jesus’ mother, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (25). Many believe that Mary’s sister was Salome, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56). If so, then Jesus and the apostle John were cousins.

Jesus addresses his mother by saying, “Woman” (26). This was an affectionate and respectful way of speaking.

The language that Jesus used was legal and similar to the terms used in adoption proceedings. Jesus’ action indicates that he was the person responsible for his mother, implying that Joseph was no longer alive and he was the oldest son (26-27).

Jesus’ act places Mary under John’s authority (27).

The task of providing salvation is complete (28-30)

As the moment of death drew nearer, Jesus said that he was thirsty (28). This authenticated his true humanity, which the Gnostics and Docetists of John’s day denied. This also fulfilled prophecies in Psalm 22:15 and/or Psalm 69:21.

It may have been customary to offer sour wine to the victims of crucifixion, or the soldiers may have brought it for their own refreshment (29). They put some on a sponge on a hyssop branch and offered it to Jesus.

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “It is finished!” (30). The task of providing redemption was completed.

Having thus spoken, Jesus handed over his spirit to his Father, and bowed his head in peaceful death (30).

Principles to Practice

Consider the cost of your salvation.

Don’t add anything to the completed work of Christ.

Receive the free gift of salvation.