

## INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth week of our study of the suffering of Jesus. I've been asking you to visualize the crucifixion of Jesus. But rather than see it as an historical event that happened 2,000 years ago, I challenge you to see yourself there at the cross as well.

Many years ago, Memphis pastor Dr. R.G. Lee was visiting Jerusalem for the first time. As they entered the opening to the Garden Tomb, Dr. Lee ran ahead of the tour group to the scene of Golgotha. When the guide arrived with the rest of the tour group, they found Dr. Lee on his knees praying. The guide asked, "Dr. Lee, have you been here before?" Dr. Lee looked up and replied, "Yes, I was here 2,000 years ago because I was in the mind and on the heart of Jesus when He died."

In a real sense, he was right. We were there as part of the crucifixion because it was our sins that nailed Jesus to the cross.

One of the most famous artists of all time was the Dutch master, Rembrandt. When he painted a scene of The Raising of the Cross, he painting himself right into the picture. You can see him in his customary beret helping to lift the cross. The meaning is simple. He felt that he was really there in a spiritual sense. So as you think about the cross today, realize that you and I were there in the mind and in the heart of the dying Savior.

As we come to our scripture today, it's around 3:00 in the afternoon. Jesus had been on the cross for six hours.

John 19:28-37. 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.

Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men's legs broken and that their bodies be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with him. When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: *Not one of his bones will be broken*. Also, another Scripture says: *They will look at the one they pierced*.

I've said before that no painting can truly capture the brutality of the cross. In 1630 the Flemish artist Gerard de la Valle painted the scene of the Piercing of Christ's Side with a Spear. It's probably not historically accurate, because I doubt the Roman soldiers were on horseback,

and it's unlikely that Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross was a blonde with milky white skin. But it's a good metaphor as the soldier on a ladder is preparing to break the legs of the remaining thief as the one of the left hangs dying. The pale body of Jesus is presented in contrast to that of the thieves.

The Bible says when the soldier stabbed the side of Jesus, that water and blood flowed out together. This is not a random detail about the crucifixion, it is filled with deep theological truth. There was great significance in the water and the blood. In this message, I want to share three important things that happened at the cross.

## **1. AT THE CROSS WE SEE THE FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE.**

Many of the details surrounding the death of Jesus were the precise fulfillment of Old Testament scripture. There are two threads of Messianic prophecy that run through the Old Testament. There is a scarlet thread that traces the first coming of Christ and His death on a cross. There is a golden thread of prophecy that predicts the events surrounding the second coming of Jesus.

The reason Jesus said, "I thirst" was to fulfill the scripture in Psalm 69:21 which said, "they gave me vinegar to drink." There are over 70 Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus. And John highlights two of them here.

### **(1) None of his bones were broken.**

This was to fulfill the direct prophecy found in Psalm 34:20 which said, "He protects all of his bones; not a one of them was broken."

The Roman soldiers had direct orders from their superiors to break the legs of the three men on the cross to hasten their death. When a criminal was hanging on a cross, it was difficult for them to take a breath. After a while, it became impossible to breathe normally. So they had to push themselves up to draw in a breath and lower themselves to exhale. When the soldiers broke the knee caps of crucified criminals, they could no longer push up to breathe, so they would soon suffocate. But when they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead. So none of His bones were broken.

The reason this is significant is because it was to fulfill God's requirement for the Passover Lamb. Jesus died on the day of Preparation for the Passover. God had given specific instructions about the Passover Lamb. The Bible says in Numbers 11:11-12: "They are to eat the animal with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; they may not leave any of it until morning or break any of its bones. They must observe the Passover according to all its statutes."

### **(2) He was pierced.**

Jesus hands and feet were pierced, and then His side was pierced. One of the most familiar and beloved Psalms is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. We all know it. But sometime you need to read the Psalm

before that—Psalm 22, because it was written as if someone was standing at the cross watching Jesus die. “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)

One of the greatest proofs of the authenticity of the Bible is fulfilled scripture. For instance, The Psalmist predicted that the suffering servant would have his hands and feet pierced. That amazing thing is that Psalm 22 was written 300 years before the Persians even invented crucifixion.

## **2. AT THE CROSS WE SEE THE FINAL ACT OF SHAME.**

To me it is the height of hypocrisy that the Jewish leaders were so concerned about sunset messing with their religious holiday that they appealed to Pilate to hasten the death of the three men being crucified. They didn't want a bloody body to inconvenience them from their religious acts. So the soldiers proceed to break the legs of the two criminals. There are two things I want you to consider about this final act of shame.

### **(1) The brutal act of the Romans.**

These soldiers weren't getting paid by the hour, so they were more than happy to end the lives of their prisoners. As I mentioned, they took an iron bar and broke the legs of the two thieves so that they could no longer breathe. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that He already appeared to be dead. This brutal act was to validate that the prisoner was really dead. If He hadn't already died, this *coup de grâce* would end His life for sure.

Charles Spurgeon the great British preacher of the nineteenth Century described the act in these words: “When Christ was dead, they might certainly have ceased from their scorn. But no! The brutal Roman soldier cared not for living bodies; they would not therefore be particular as to what they did with dead bodies. This soldier in a mere freak of wanton brutality, thrust his lance into the Savior's heart. It was the last kick of an old enemy. It was the last thrust that human malice could give to the Lord of glory. I see in this the crowning emblem of the shame which He endured.”

### **(2) The broken heart of the Savior.**

John wants us to clearly understand that Jesus was really dead. John takes a solemn oath and testifies that he saw the water and the blood flow out together. That was a postmortem phenomenon. That only occurs when circulation has stopped.

As you can imagine, there has been a great deal of research on the medical aspects of the crucifixion of Jesus. Many books have been written on the subject. One of the most respected study was an article that appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1986. Dr. William Davis was one of the physicians who wrote the article “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” Dr. Davis writes: “It remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or cardio-

respiratory failure. However, the important feature of our study is not HOW he died, but WHETHER he died. The weight of medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs perforated not only the right lung, but also the pericardium and heart. The water probably was probably serous pleural and pericardial fluid and would have preceded the flow of blood." (*The Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol 255 No. 11 p. 1463*)

Now, I have heard of people who claimed to have died from a broken heart. But it's important to note that Jesus didn't die FROM a broken heart, but He died WITH a broken heart. The Bible says He willingly laid down His life. He voluntarily surrendered His spirit and died. The spear thrust into His side punctured His heart. But His heart was broken in the process of dying for us. The Psalmist prophesied in Psalm 69:20, "Insults have broken my heart."

John was careful to note this medical evidence of death, because after the Resurrection, there were some who claimed that Jesus never truly died. Even today, some people hold to what is called "The Swoon Theory." This theory claims that Jesus never really died, and He survived the cross and the Disciples helped Him escape.

Some liberal preachers still believe this. Dr. J. Vernon McGee was a pastor in Southern California and had a daily radio broadcast called *Thru the Bible*. I listened to him when I was in college. One time he got the following letter from one of his listeners.

Dear Dr. McGee: Our preacher said that on Easter Jesus just swooned on the cross, and the disciples nursed him back to health. What do you think? Dr. McGee wrote back: Dear Sister, Beat your preacher with a leather whip until he passes out. Then nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for six hours. Run a spear through his heart. Wrap him in burial cloths. Put him in an airless tomb for three days. Then see what happens.

The point of the Gospel according to I Corinthians 15:4 is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; was buried, and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures." There is great meaning in the death, burial, and the resurrection. And next Sunday, God willing, I'll preach on "The Day Death was Buried."

### **3. AT THE CROSS WE SEE THE FOUNTAIN OF SALVATION.**

The Bible says blood and water flowed from that wound. It wasn't just a wound, it was a fountain of life. As early as Augustine, Christian leaders understood that there was a deeper spiritual meaning in the water and the blood. Augustine wrote that just as the First Wife Eve came from the side of the First Adam, even so the Second Adam, Christ, gave birth to His Holy Bride, the Church from His wounded side

In John 4 Jesus sat with a Samaritan woman at a well and offered her living water. But long before that day, God had been offering people a fountain of Living Water. Jeremiah 17:13 says: "All who turn away from me will be written in the dirt, for they have abandoned the Lord, the fountain of living water." And in Zechariah, we see a time in the future when all of Israel

will come to the fountain of living water. The Bible says in Zechariah 13:1: "On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the residents of Jerusalem, to wash away sin and impurity."

In 1763, an English pastor named Augustus Toplady was caught outdoors in a terrible storm. He sought shelter in a shallow cave in the face of a rock face. He went on to write a hymn a beloved hymn called *Rock of Ages*. The first verse says: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure; Save from wrath and make me pure."

It's a double cure because the water and the blood represent two types of cleansing. Save from wrath—that's what the blood of Jesus does. And make me pure—that's what the washing of the water of the Word does for us. Both the symbols of blood and water represent two powerful metaphors for Jesus.

### **(1) Like the Passover Lamb, His blood protects us from God's judgment.**

On the afternoon Jesus was dying, thousands of Passover Lambs were being slain throughout Jerusalem. Families were getting ready to commemorate a fateful night that happened many generations ago when their ancestors were slaves in Egypt.

Moses was sent by God to tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" But Pharaoh refused. And even after nine terrible plagues, Pharaoh refused, so God told Moses to tell the people to kill a lamb without spot or blemish. Then they were to take the blood of the lamb and smear it over and beside the door of their house. Then they were to roast the lamb and enter in under the blood and remain inside that night. Terrible judgment was coming. God said in Exodus 12:12, "I am the Lord; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."

The New Testament says plainly in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us." When a lost sinner comes to faith in Christ, that person finds cleansing in the blood of Christ. When God sees the blood of His precious lamb applied to the doorposts of our hearts, we escape the fatal and final judgment against sin.

In 1772 William Cowper wrote an old hymn that we're going to sing in a few minutes: But take a moment and consider the words: "There is a fountain; filled with blood; drawn from Emmanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains." "The dying thief rejoiced to see; that fountain in his day; And there may I, though vile as he; wash all my sins away."

### **(2) Like the Rock, His life-giving water keeps us satisfied.**

There's also a powerful metaphor that shows us the meaning of the water that came from Jesus' heart. When the Children of Israel were wandering in the desert for forty years, they

went for days without finding water. So God supplied them with a rock. The first time, God told Moses to strike the rock with his staff. Moses obeyed and life-giving water gushed forth from the rock. The people were satisfied.

Later they came across the same supernatural Rock and God told Moses to simply speak to the rock. But Moses lost his temper and whacked the rock two times with his staff. Water gushed out and the people were satisfied. But Moses had disobeyed the Lord and it cost him his ticket into the Promised Land. Why was God upset? That rock represented Jesus and it was to be struck only once, because Jesus's side was pierced once. To smite it again, was unnecessary. The New Testament makes it plain as we read these words in 1 Corinthians 10: 3-4: They all ate the same spiritual food (*manna*), and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." Dwayne Johnson used to call himself The Rock. But he's just a pebble compared to the real Rock, Jesus. And today, we can go to the rock for life-giving strength.

I love that great song by Dottie Rambo. Whitney Houston sang it the movie "The Preacher's Wife." It speaks to where we are today: "where can I hide till the storms have all passed over? Where can I run to when those winds of sorrow threaten? And is there a refuge in the time of tribulation? When my soul needs consolation? I go to the rock. Oh I'm going to the rock of my salvation. Going to the stone that the builder rejected. I run to the mountain and the mountain stands by me. When the earth all around me is sinking sand. On Christ the solid rock I stand. When I need a shelter, when I need a friend I go to the rock! Jesus is that Rock, and He is available to you today to nourish you with the Living Water.

## **CONCLUSION**

If you visit a church in Werden, Germany, you'll see a lamb carved in stone high on the bell tower. It is there because many years earlier, when a workman was laying the stone for the tower, he lost his balance and fell to the street below. His fellow workers hurried down expecting to find him dead or injured. Instead, he was not injured. At the moment he fell, a flock of sheep was passing through the narrow street and the workman fell on one of the lambs. The innocent lamb was crushed, but it broke the fall of the workman and he was saved.

In gratitude, the workman carved a stone lamb from the very spot from which he fell. And the church is known as the church of the Lamb.

In the same way, Jesus, the Lamb of God was crushed under our sin so that we can live. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was CRUSHED for our iniquities." He died as the Lamb of God who absorbed our punishment in His body. At the beginning of His ministry, John the Baptist pointed at Jesus and cried, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

As the song says, "Let the water and the blood; from His wounded side which flowed; be for sin the DOUBLE cure; save from wrath and make me pure."

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- (1) The brutal act of the Romans.
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*Jeremiah 17:13*

"On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the residents of Jerusalem, to wash away sin and impurity." *Zechariah 13:1*

- (1) Like the Passover Lamb, His blood protects us from God's judgment.

"I am the Lord; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." *Exodus 12:12-13*

- (2) Like the Rock, His life-giving water keeps us satisfied.

They all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." *1 Corinthians 10:3-4*

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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