

Chapter 17: Sacrifice and Salvation

Now we will study the last few chapters which detail Jesus crucifixion. Our study will continue by mainly focusing upon John 18-21:

Destiny

Firstly let us recap some of the verses that we have previously studied. Consider the following:

*14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:14-15 (NKJV)

Jesus is referring to an event that is recorded in the Old Testament, which is detailed below:

*5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread."
6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.
7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.
8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."
9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.*

Numbers 21:5-9 (NKJV)

When the people were plagued by fiery serpents (snakes) God commanded Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole so that anyone who looks upon it will live. Therefore Jesus told Nicodemus that just as the serpent was placed on a pole so to will He be raised up. Jesus foretold His crucifixion at this time and explained the manner of His death.

John the Baptist also described Jesus as "*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*". The purpose and mission of Jesus was revealed to him. If we reconsider what we learned about animal sacrifice in Leviticus 4:32-35 the lamb was one of the atonement sacrifices provided by the people to the priests as a demonstration of seeking forgiveness for their sins. Therefore John the Baptist revealed that Jesus is the Lamb of God. That He will be God's sacrifice to atone for our sins. However we must not forget what we have learned in those early chapters. Consider the following verses again to refresh our memories:

35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 3:35-36 (NKJV)

John the Baptist testifies that those who believe in Jesus will obtain everlasting life. Therefore it was Jesus' destiny to die for all those who will believe in Him, and if we believe in Jesus, His death is a sacrifice to bring us forgiveness for our sins so that we who would believe can repent and seek forgiveness.

Jesus was also aware of His destiny as is recorded in the following verses:

33 Then Jesus said to them, "I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me.

34 "You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come."

John 7:33-34 (NKJV)

20 These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

21 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."

22 So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"

23 And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

25 Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.

26 "I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him."

27 They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

29 "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:20-32 (NKJV)

14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

John 10:14-18 (NKJV)

20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

25 "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? `Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.

31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

John 12:20-32 (NKJV)

These verses demonstrate that Jesus was aware of His impending crucifixion and Our Father's purpose for this. Knowing that through His death all those who believe in Him will be saved from the punishment for sin.

No greater love than this

In this study we will focus mainly upon John's account of these events. However it is advisable to study the other accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels.

Read John 18. This chapter details the betrayal of Jesus by Judas and His arrest. Because he was afraid Peter denied being Jesus' disciple during the questioning. Notice how Pilate initially refused to punish Jesus, but because of the insistence of the Jews he gave them a choice to either release Him or another called Barabbas who is recorded in this chapter as being a criminal. The people chose the criminal over the Christ and Jesus was scourged (flogged and beaten).

Read John 19. After Jesus' punishment Pilate was still reluctant to crucify Jesus maintaining that he finds no fault in Him. However the people insist that Jesus is crucified because they did not believe that He is the Son of God and accused Him of blasphemy, for which they demanded His death. Consider Pilate's last conversation with Jesus, which is recorded in the following verses:

5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

6 Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."

7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

8 Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,

9 and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

John 19:5-11 (NKJV)

Jesus understands that it is the people and not Pilate who are calling for His death, and even in His last hours He does not display any malice or hatred towards the man who sentenced Him to death. Once again the people call for His crucifixion, deny Jesus and claim Caesar as their king. As a result of this Jesus was sent to His death on the cross. This was a very horrible, agonising and cruel way to die, which He endured for all those who believe in Him that we might receive forgiveness for our sins. Consider the following:

it appears likely that the mechanism of death in crucifixion was suffocation. The chain of events that ultimately led to suffocation is as follows: With the weight of the body being supported by the sedulum, the arms were pulled upward. This caused the intercostal and pectoral muscles to be stretched. Furthermore, movement of these muscles was opposed by the weight of the body. With the muscles of respiration thus stretched, the respiratory bellows became relatively fixed. As pain in the wrists and arms increased, the victim was forced to raise the body off the sedulum, therefore transferring the weight of the body to the feet. Respirations became easier, but with the weight of the body being exerted on the feet, pain in the feet and legs mounted. When the pain became unbearable, the victim again slumped down on the sedulum with the weight of the body pulling on the wrists and again stretching the intercostal muscles. Thus, the victim alternated between lifting his body off the sedulum in order to breathe, and slumping down on the sedulum to relieve pain in the feet. Eventually, he became exhausted or lapsed into unconsciousness so that he could no longer lift his body off the sedulum. In this position, with the respiratory muscles essentially paralyzed, the victim suffocated and died." (DeP DePasquale, N.P. And Burch, G.E. "Death by Crucifixion" Pasquale and Burch).

Kellerman (2006)

The previous quotation is a medical explanation of the death caused by crucifixion. From this we learn that Jesus suffered a long and agonising death, which suffocated Him slowly until He died.

Remember Jesus' words recorded in John's Gospel before He was crucified:

13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

John 15:13-14 (NKJV)

The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

All seems to be lost. Jesus was dead and the disciples were scattered and afraid. However God's great redemption plan was about to be fulfilled. Read John 20 and 21. In these chapters we learn about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Notice what Jesus says in verse 17:

11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.

12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

John 20:11-17 (NKJV)

Jesus tells Mary that He will ascend to Our Father. (To ascend is to travel upwards or rise) Therefore Jesus told her that He would soon leave to be with Our Father again now that His salvation plan had been fulfilled.

Consider again what Jesus told the Jews in the temple:

13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.

15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

19 Jesus answered and said to them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**"

20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

John 2:13-22 (NKJV)

As John informs us in verses 21-22 the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was the fulfilment and exact meaning of what He told the Jews in the temple. That through His death and resurrection the old temple was destroyed in terms of becoming obsolete, as a new temple of those who believe in Jesus is built. This is a living temple where there are no more sacrifices but all who believe have received grace and through the gift of Jesus' sacrifice their sins have been forgiven and a new covenant between man and God was established.

15 Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;

16 "for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves;

18 "for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "**This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.**"

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.**"

Luke 22:15-20 (NKJV)

Read Luke 24. In this chapter we learn Mark's perspective of the events of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. We learn that after Jesus instructed His disciples, He ascended to once again be with God our Father.

44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 "And you are witnesses of these things.

49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

51 **Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.**

52 **And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,**

53 **and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.**

Luke 24:44-53 (NKJV)