

# Jesus: A Death Predicted

*Building a Christian Mind*

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Tonight we're going to continue our series on how to know that Jesus is Lord and we have had, I think, five messages on that, and the first four were devoted to simply seeing how often the Scriptures premise the Lordship and the deity of Christ based on what the law and the prophets said were going to take place in the future. Going back 3,500 years from our day to the writings of Moses, and then through the prophets, we saw how again and again Jesus and the apostles premised their argument about his Lordship in the context of Old Testament revelation, and that was just a general statement that that was their method, they pointed back to the Old Testament to show the truth of what they were saying now that Christ had come. Then last Tuesday we looked at some of the content of what the prophets said and what Moses said, details about the life of Christ that were predicted in advance. And that brings us to tonight where we see we're going to consider what Scripture says about the death of Christ and the prophecies of Christ that were made long before he came.

Now before we get to those specific prophecies, I want to set a context as we discuss the death of Christ because there's something very critical for us to remember and to keep in mind. Jesus' death had a particular significance. His death is the centerpiece of biblical Christianity. Paul said that, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord, and his death is foolish preaching to the Jews and to the Gentiles but it is the power of God." And at the center of the Lordship of Christ is the cross of Christ, and at the cross of Christ is the significance of his death, and I just want to kind of lay this overview to it so that we don't lose sight of the significance of the reason that Jesus died. Scripture is filled with explanations of that that point to this very fact. His death was not simply an example of God's love. It shows and displays God's love, but that is not the primary significance of it. Jesus was not simply dying as a martyr to inspire us to, you know, to fulfill all that we can do with our lives and things of that human nature. No, Jesus' death was a ransom paid to God on behalf of his people to deliver them from their sins. He was paying a penalty. It was a penal death that he died. He was doing it on behalf of his people. It was a substitutionary death that he died.

He died as a substitute for his people, paying the penalty of their sins so that the wrath of God would be turned away from them and any explanation of Christianity that does not include a clear ringing statement of the wrath of God is not biblical Christianity. Any statement of Christianity that avoids the penal substitutionary nature of his death is not

biblical Christianity. Christianity is not a self-improvement message. It's not simply designed to help you have a better life here on earth. That's not the point of Christianity at all. Christianity is not instruction to you on how to be a better moral person in order that you can attain your own spiritual salvation. It is certainly not a political message that is designed to address the needs of America in the 21st century, although there are implications for politics by Christianity but it's secondary. The primary direction of Christianity is individual salvation from sin based on the atoning substitutionary work of Jesus Christ. Scripture describes it as a ransom that was paid for the people of God. A price was paid so that the people of God could be delivered from Satan, from sin, from self, from death, from hell. And it's only as you grasp the significance of that substitutionary work of Christ that you enter into the unique aspect of Christianity, and it is only that understanding of the atonement, of the price paid for your salvation, that you will ever really love Christ as he ought to be loved. If you think Christianity is about, you know, some kind of moral exhortation to make you a better person, then you're going to be filled with pride over yourself rather than love and humility before the cross of Christ.

Scripture says this too many times to miss it and yet, and I want to take you through, I'll just quote a few different passages for you to support what I just said, and yet, this is the very heart of things that is often suppressed and hidden out of shame over the gospel. Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel," but when you talk to people and tell them that you're under the wrath of God for your sin, you're responsible to God for your sin, you're not basically a good person, Scripture says that you are a rebel against God and no one is righteous, not even one, those kinds of things do not endear you to the general population. And so it's easy to shave the corners off of that, to hide that, to suppress it, to put it backstage and maybe pull it out once in a great while, but you know, if that's what you do to draw people together, you're really wasting everybody's time. More than wasting everybody's time, you're doing a positive evil in suppressing the clarity that the gospel requires so that people know what God says and what God thinks about them and their guilty souls. You know, there have been people that have said, rightly so, that sometimes the gospel is not even preached clearly enough for the non-elect to reject it. How do you know what you're rejecting if it's not set forth before you plainly? Well, Scripture, when you read Scripture, you don't have that problem. Scripture is filled with explanations about the purpose of the death of Jesus Christ.

So, for example, in Matthew 20, we read this, Jesus said the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. The purpose of his death was that he would give it as a ransom that would deliver his people from sin, Satan, and damnation. The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20 that Christ obtained the church with his own blood. He purchased it with the shedding of his own blood. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, we read that you were bought with a price. In Galatians 3, we read that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Do you see the substitutionary aspects of it? Do you see the price being paid? Do you see the penalty aspect, the penal aspects of it? In Titus 2:14, we read that Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Christ purchased us on the cross. Christ paid the price necessary for our

salvation on the cross. That is the significance of his death, and any lesser explanation is not a presentation of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, we're going to see the prophecies that were made in the Old Testament predicting the death of Christ. What we've done here is just give a preview of the significance of that death. It's not just that certain facts were presented in advance, it's that there was an entire purpose of redemption being worked out from the eternal counsels of God. Now, this death, in other words, that the prophets predicted, had as its goal redemption of a people for Christ. One writer said this, and I make an extended quote from it, it's one of my favorite authors, a man named Loraine Boettner, in his book on the atonement, he said this. He said, "No person can understand the purpose and meaning of the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ until he grasps this central truth, that Jesus came into the world to give himself a ransom for others. The inability of man to redeem himself turns precisely on his inability to pay the price, which the commission of sin has made mandatory. Christ, and Christ alone, was able to pay the price which frees his people from the curse of sin."

You see, because you and I are guilty of sin, we cannot redeem ourselves from our own condemnation before God. We cannot erase the stain of our own guilt. We do not have that power. We do not have that ability. Scripture says we don't even have the desire to do that if it really means giving up our cherished sins as an unbeliever. No, it takes a powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the heart through the proclaimed gospel, faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. Well, the word of Christ is that Christ died to give his life as a ransom for many, that God raised him from the dead in a powerful, supernatural affirmation of his death that the sacrifice had been accepted, all of this being a fulfillment of the Old Testament pattern and shadows of animal sacrifices being made in substitution for the life of the sinner who presented them. This is basic Christianity, beloved. We're not giving advanced theology here. This is central to the gospel and so to the extent that perhaps we come with different ideas of Christianity, we need to let the word of God shape us, change our thinking, and give us a higher, deeper, broader, eternal perspective on the death of Christ. Christianity collapses without the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Now, because it is so central to the gospel, so central to the eternal plan of God, God prepared the way for the death of Christ by things that were said in advance by the prophets over a course of centuries. And with all of that said in mind, and let me just say, let me just go to one other passage. Turn to the book of Philippians 2. I might expand on this on Sunday, depending on what I think after tonight's message. But remember, the whole series that we're looking at here is how to know that Jesus is Lord. How to know that Jesus is Lord, and in Philippians 2, you see the death of Christ placed at the center of that knowledge and so that in Philippians 2:5, we read this, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5 and now verse 6, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." There it is: death on a cross.

Now, what was the outworking? What was the result of his death on the cross and his resurrection? Verse 9, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God." We look at the death of Christ and we understand its redemptive significance. We look at the person of Christ and see that he is God incarnate, who left heaven to come to earth, humbled himself in that way, humbled himself by going to death, even death on a cross, so that the Lordship of Christ was manifested in the glory of the cross. It was manifested in a great humility that is utterly contrary to human wisdom.

If you and I in our unredeemed state were to draw up a plan that would manifest that someone was Lord of the universe, none of us would have drawn up something that would have a man hanging, exposed to all of the world, in utter shame and defeat at the cross as Jesus Christ did. None of us would draw up that plan. No one would make that up because we have human concepts of authority and regality that talk about lordship and strength and power and position being manifested. Take, for example, the coronation of the King of England. That's the human perspective on power and glory. What Christ did, and isn't it so wonderfully providential that that's so fresh in human history that I could allude to it at a time like this. I love the providence of God in preaching. Nothing like it in the world. Nothing like it in the universe. You look at the coronation of King Charles and all of the human glory that was attached to that to manifest that he is now king. Fair enough. That's the way the world does it. What you and I need to understand as the wisdom of the world is folly to God and the wisdom of God is folly to the world, and what God in his wisdom, which is folly as measured by human wisdom, what God did in his wisdom is that he manifested the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a crucifixion, the most shameful method of execution that the world has ever known. He humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross, and in having done that, God exalted him and made known his glory, the glory of Christ, and made known the wisdom of God. If you want to know that Jesus is Lord, beloved, you look at what the Old Testament says in preparation for it, and you make a beeline to the cross and the cross shows forth his Lordship as nothing else does. It was there at the cross that he paid for the salvation of his people. It was there at the cross that he defeated Satan and the demonic host. It was there at the cross that he overcame sin. It was there at the cross in his death that he defeated death itself and the Lordship of Christ manifested in a way that human minds would never conceive.

Now, that's all pretty glorious, that's all pretty remarkable, this is all wonderful truth from the word of God, and it's even more wonderful, and the glory and the manifold majesty of it is multiplied even more when you see that this was the outworking of the plan of God from the very beginning. Look at the book of Acts 2 as we now move into the substance of our message titled "Jesus: A Death Predicted." Jesus, a death predicted. In Acts 2:22, we read this; with all of that background of the redemptive significance and the glory of God manifested in the cross of Christ, now we look at Acts 2:22 and 23. "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know," he appeals to contemporary history that the men of the first century could not deny.

Everybody knew these things to be true because they were conducted in public, in close quarters where hundreds and thousands of people even witnessed these miracles that he did that distinguished him from everyone else and vindicated his claim to be deity, to be God in human flesh. His works attested to him, Peter says there in verse 22. Verse 23, "this Jesus," and here's the point for tonight, "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." This was the plan of God from the beginning. It's not that Jesus went to the cross because he was rejected by Israel, his offer of the kingdom was rejected, and then we had to go to Plan B when they didn't immediately receive him as the Messiah. No, that's bad theology. The plan of God from the beginning was that Christ would be crucified. This was the definite plan. It was his foreknowledge. That Jesus, in that plan, Peter says, "you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." You crucified your own Messiah. You crucified the Lord of glory. You had God in your hands and look what you did with him.

Now we in our day and age would say, "Yeah, those rotten Romans. Those rotten Jews. Look what they did in the first century." But beloved, there's something really important that you need to understand when we think about who is accountable and responsible for the death of Christ in light of what we said about the point being that he was redeeming his people from the sins. You maybe never thought about it this way, but you and I who are his people, who were redeemed by his shed blood, you and I bear greater responsibility for the death of Christ than those first century Romans and Jews did because it was for our sins that he suffered. It was our sins that needed to be erased and paid for. It was our lack of righteousness that required a substitute righteousness, a representative to appear for us. And yes, the people of Israel and the first century Romans bear their own unique responsibility for acting according to their wicked motives, which God used to carry out his eternal plan, but let none of us look down on them as if we were somehow removed from responsibility for the death of Christ. Our sins put him there. Your sins and mine put him there on the cross. And because we were guilty, our guilt needed to be removed, our guilt needed to be forgiven, therefore, the greater responsibility for the death of Christ belongs to his people who committed the sins that required their redemption.

Kind of humbling, isn't it? A lot to take in, isn't it? Well, beloved, let me just say, you know, as these things kind of sink into your heart and to your thinking, to just recognize a really significant reality about it, that as we approach the cross, as we approach the death of Christ, we're approaching something with a deep, profound significance that fills our minds and humbles our hearts and is something that is not meant to just be, you know, a matter lightly regarded. As we contemplate the death of Christ, we are contemplating the centerpiece of human history, the centerpiece of the plan of God, that for which the redeemed will sing his praises throughout all of eternity. And so we should expect, in light of the cosmic significance of his death, as we've seen, both on a grand, eternal scale by the power and plan of God, as well as the profound importance, the immeasurable, infinite, incalculable importance that it is for our own souls, we should expect to find something that is much bigger than we are and that is what we find when we study the death of Christ.

In God's plan, he sent prophets to prepare the way for our Lord. Last time, as we said, we saw the prophecies about his life. Now we're going to see what the prophets said, in part, about the death of Jesus. And one writer said this about the prophetic significance of the death of Christ. He said, and I quote, this is an amazing statistic, "No fewer than 29 prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus in the 24 hours leading up to his death." There was a prophetic climax taking place as Christ went to the cross and all of the things that we saw in his life that were being fulfilled as he entered into Jerusalem, as he was betrayed by Judas, as he was born in Bethlehem, as he was pierced, you know, all of those things coming together in his public ministry, in his birth and public ministry, there's just a rapid progression and acceleration as it moves to the climax at the cross. A climax that was attested to God in many different ways, when you think about it. Climaxed by the supernatural darkness that came upon the world for three hours as he bore our sins. Climaxed by earthquakes and supernatural wonders. Climaxed by the tearing of the veil in the temple from top to bottom and opening up the way to the Holy of Holies that had been so carefully guarded before that. You know, can we help but think, can we help but feel that maybe we haven't given the due regard to the death of Christ that it's really due, even as mature believers? That we haven't really stopped and dwelt on the significance as it deserves? I think it's possible. I think it's true because there's no exhausting the significance of this.

The prophets knew that as God worked through them and laid the groundwork for his death and resurrection. I want to take you through four points here quickly this evening; quickly on my clock is always a relative term, I know. But first of all, I want to look at the death of Christ predicted. The death of Christ predicted and we're going to accelerate now and just kind of go through these things in a hurried way, just to give the overview, the vista, big picture, 30,000-foot satellite view, look at things. Although satellites, I guess, fly at higher than 30,000 feet. But first of all, we see that the prophets predicted that Jesus would be executed with common criminals. He would be executed with common criminals. We're going to look at just four prophecies about his death and the first one that we're looking at is that Jesus would be executed with common criminals.

Look at Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:12 as Isaiah makes this great prophecy of Christ 700 years before his incarnation. That great chapter ends in verse 12 with this. It says, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors," that's what I want you to see here. He was numbered with transgressors. He was accounted as one of the criminals. He was not viewed for the unique status that was really his. He was put to death with common thieves. That's what Scripture said would happen. "Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors."

Jesus would be executed with common criminals. Secondly, another aspect of his death that Scripture foretold was that Jesus would be pierced. He would be pierced in his body, and I want to take you to two different texts for that. Turn to Psalm 34 with me, if you would. Psalm 34 and we'll kind of take these two together. Psalm 34:19 and 20. You could take a more global view of the sufferings of Christ in his earthly life by including verse 19 here. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all." If you think about who was...let me ask this question: who was the most

righteous one of them all? Who was the epitome, the incarnation of righteousness? Was it not Christ our Lord? Were not his afflictions many on earth? No place to lay his head, mocked, despised, spat upon, a crown of thorns thrust upon his head in addition to the cross itself and everything else we read about his righteous soul being afflicted and tempted during his earthly life. So many afflictions of that righteous one and where is he now? Exalted to the right hand of God, one day to return and come again to earth in glory. All of those afflictions, the Lord delivered Christ out of all of them decisively, triumphantly. Then we read in verse 20, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken." Not one of them is broken.

If you'll find your way to the book of Zechariah, toward the very end of your Old Testament. If you go to Matthew and then turn back a few pages, you'll find Zechariah 12, the 11th of the 12 minor prophets, so-called. In Zechariah 12:10, we have another prophetic look at the coming of Christ, even to the Second Coming of Christ. In Zechariah 12:10, we read this, "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." Beloved, God himself is speaking in this text, saying, "They will look on me." And then he expands on what will happen as they look on God himself, they'll look on the one that they have pierced. There will be a looking on the God who was pierced for their iniquities, and this verse in its context is looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ, at the restoration and the mass repentance of the nation of Israel as their Messiah comes, and they recognize, "Our nation crucified him in his first coming," and they'll mourn and repent over their guilt for that crime.

For our purposes tonight, we'll save the prophecies of Zechariah for a few years down the road. For tonight, we see that Christ was prophesied that he would die with common criminals, that he would be pierced, and we see also, thirdly, that Scripture says that his garments would be gambled for. His garments would be the subject of a dice roll, you could say, in modern parlance. Look at Psalm 22. Going back to the Psalms again, Psalm 22. We read this in verse 18 or let's, again, just for the sake of context, let's look at verse 16 and you see even the piercing again. Oh, that our Lord suffered like this, that righteous one who committed no sin nor was any deceit found in his mouth, that perfect God-man, that one unlike any others, the guardian, creator, and keeper of the universe was subjected to this. Verse 16, "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." The Lord of glory hanging exposed for all the world to see and to mock, and as Roman soldiers did, they divided up the spoil of those that they were crucifying. "For my clothing they cast lots," Scripture says. And you think of the dogs that surrounded him, those that the Pharisees and the leaders that mocked him, "If you're the Christ, come down from the cross, save yourself and save us." Dogs, vile, despicable animals speaking that way to the King of glory. Evil in their hearts. Mocking Christ. In some ways, the climactic temptation from the devil to come down from the cross, being beckoned to come down from the cross, they not knowing it as they said that, but Satan tempting Christ to come

down from the cross before the work of redemption was accomplished, before the atonement was done.

His garments gambled as evildoers surrounded him and then one final prophecy about his death is that Jesus would be buried by a rich man. By a rich man. Go back to Isaiah 53 with me for just a moment. And obviously if we're only looking at four and one writer has identified 29 prophecies, we're only giving a bare inadequate sample of these things. Isaiah 53:9. Let's go ahead and read verses 7 and 8 as well. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." There's a minor key there giving us the sense of the weight of what would happen to the Messiah. Oppressed, afflicted and yet he didn't respond. He didn't defend himself. He didn't rain down judgment. He didn't call upon the legions of angels that were waiting at his beckoning to come and deliver him. He didn't do that. Instead, quite to the contrary, he said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Verse 8, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?" Exactly what we said in the opening, beloved, that there was a redemptive aspect, a substitutionary payment of penalty on behalf of his people that Christ was fulfilling at the cross. He was struck down for our transgressions. Verse 9, "they made his grave with the wicked and with," here's the point, "and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth."

So what do we see from these quick looks at prophecy? The prophet said centuries ahead of time, we cannot emphasize that enough, centuries ahead of time, executed with common criminals, pierced with none of his bones being broken, soldiers gambling for his garments, buried by a rich man. Well, what do we see in the fulfillment of these things as we read the gospel accounts? Turn to the gospel of Luke 22. Luke 22, as we come to the second point for this evening: the death of Christ fulfilled. We saw the death of Christ predicted, now we see the death of Christ fulfilled in the actual outworking in human history, in time and space events, in real people, in real events, in real time. Christianity is a message that is built on historical fact and occurrence. You cannot have Christianity without the historical events that underlie it. You cannot do away with the words of Jesus. You cannot do away with the life of Jesus and still have Christianity. They are inseparable.

And so in the death of Christ fulfilled, we see, first of all, that Jesus was executed with common criminals. He was executed with common criminals. As predicted, he was numbered with the transgressors. In Luke 22:35, Jesus is anticipating his death before his disciples and he said to them in verse 35, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, 'Nothing.' He said to them, 'But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.' Something is about to change and Jesus says in verse 37, "For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.'" That Scripture had to be fulfilled. "For what is written about me has its fulfillment." We see the direct reference to the prophecy.

And then if you'll turn back to Mark 15, we see how this plays out. Mark 15, we'll kind of combine two of them together here for the sake of time. In Mark 15, beginning in verse 21, actually let's go back to verse 16 so that we see not only the prophecies, but just have a sense of the setting and the shame and the humiliation that our Lord went through, shame and humiliation which rightly should have been ours, that by justice, better stated, would have been ours before a holy God. Mark 15:16, "the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him." "You say you're a king? Here's your crown. Here's your robe. We acknowledge you." Verse 20, "And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him." Verse 21, "And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him and divided his garments among them," here it is, "casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left."

So we see here, he was executed with common criminals. Just robbers. They gambled. They cast lots for his garments, taking our predictions out of sequence in the way that I structured it. Numbered with transgressors. They gambled for his garments. Verse 29, "those who passed by derided him." Look, this was a public place of execution. This is how the Romans did it. They crucified people in public. In public, in prominent intersections, so that everyone would see it happen and there would be a strong deterrent effect against committing similar crimes in the future. You're tempted to commit a crime, to rob someone, look at what happened to him. You don't want that. And so there was this compulsory way of bringing about compliance with the social legal order enforced by the very way that crucifixion was carried out and Christ was subject to that. And that's why Scripture can say that those who passed by could see it. It was in a place where it was publicly accessible. They didn't do this in a corner. The Romans didn't do it like we do. To the extent we still practice capital punishment, where do we do it? We do it behind penitentiary walls. We do it in a sanitary antiseptic environment with very few witnesses so as, supposedly, I guess, to preserve the dignity of the condemned. That's not how Rome did it. That's what we're used to. We have in America bills of rights against cruel and unusual punishment. Romans didn't give that right to the convicted. Roman citizens were exempt from crucifixion, generally speaking, but they had no compunction about making a public spectacle of someone because they understood the deterrent value that it had, and it helped maintain social order. They wanted as many people as possible to see it. We want as few people as possible to see it. I'm not saying what's right or what's wrong, I'm just pointing out the difference.

So verse 29, "those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come

down from the cross!" So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another." They're laughing. They're looking at each other with Christ off to their left or Christ off to their right, "Get a load of this guy. He saved others. He can't save himself." "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also reviled him."

Common criminals, casting lots for his garments. What about the piercing of Christ and the fulfillment of that? Look at the gospel of John 19. John 19. He was pierced. John 19, beginning in verse 31, "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." If the legs were broken, they were no longer able to push up to relieve the pressure on their diaphragm and gain another breath and so it just hastened their suffocation if their legs were broken. The weight of the body pressed down so that they couldn't breathe anymore.

Verse 32, "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," the Apostle John is making a self-referential statement here. He's speaking in the third person, but he's talking about himself because remember, he was there at the cross because Jesus committed the care of his mother Mary to the Apostle John. "Woman, behold your son, behold your mother." In other words, "Take care of my mother now that I'm leaving."

So John was there, and he's making this dogmatic claim of eyewitness testimony. "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." You weren't there. You and I were not there at the cross, but we have it on direct, inspired, eyewitness, human testimony crossing 2,000 years, we have it on direct eyewitness testimony that these things actually happened as he said they did. "I was there. I know, and I'm telling you what I know so that you also may believe."

Verse 36, "For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken.'" He says, "These things happened this way. They had to happen this way because it's what Scripture said in advance would take place." And the testimony of the prophets lay the groundwork for us to know that Jesus is Lord because the prophecies were fulfilled in him in a way that could not be true of anyone else.

Verse 37, "And again another Scripture says, 'They will look on him whom they have pierced.'"

Prophets said he'd be numbered with transgressors. He was. Prophets said they would gamble for his garments. They did. Prophets said he would be pierced and none of his bones would be broken. That's exactly what happened. Prophets said he'd be buried by a rich man. Look at Matthew 27. Matthew 27, beginning in verse 57. "When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be

given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away." A rich man, a disciple of Jesus, making provision for his body in his death, fulfilling what Isaiah had said 700 years earlier would take place.

Common criminals, pierced, not broken, garments gambled, buried by a rich man, all as the prophets had said would take place. You know, beloved, I think I'm going to stop here for this evening and just wrap up with a few concluding comments here. Try to take all of this in and just see the profound majesty of Scripture, the profound majesty of Jesus Christ, the profound majesty of the gospel. This is not something to trifle with. This is not something to turn into a means of personal fulfillment. This is not something that should be prostituted for the advance of some political agenda on earth. This is not something to turn into lighthearted banter. This is not something that is augmented and enhanced by colorful lights and fog machines and powerful amplifiers and loud music and swaying hands. At what point does reverence step in? At what point does the fear of God step in? At what point do we stop and look at this, and look at the prophecies, and look at the death, and look at the atonement, and look at the eternal ramifications of it? When do we look at that and let it sink in so much so that we put our hands on our mouth and adopt a posture of silence before the holiness and majesty and sovereignty and grace and goodness of God? When? I ask you, when? When does this sanctify our thinking? When does this turn our mind from earthly things to eternal things? When does this humble us to the point that we bow in worship before Christ, bow in perpetual gratitude before him, and bend our hearts in submission to him and ascribe to him the glory that is due to his wonderful name? When?

The prophecies, the historical circumstances of his death, the atoning work that was accomplished in that death and you see, the prophets help us understand why Christ came. Why he came. Not just what would happen when he did, but why he came. Why all of this? Why the weight of these things? And it's a glorious weight. This isn't like the weight of depression or despair. This isn't the weight of having done, you know, wrong before another person and feeling the weight of embarrassment. This is the weight of truth. This is the weight of glory. And why all of it, why was this all necessary? Why did it have to be exactly this way? Well, beloved, God is holy and you and I are sinners and sin brings forth the wrath of God. The breaking of the eternal commandment of an eternal God requires eternal punishment. Let me say that again. The breaking of an eternal commandment, just one, let alone our multiplied transgressions, the breaking of the eternal commandment of an eternal God requires eternal punishment. That's weighty. There is no way, there is absolutely no way to present biblical Christianity without having the weight of that fall on our minds.

This is the truth. It doesn't matter that it's not popular. It does not matter that people don't want to hear it. It doesn't matter that there are 10,000 churches that will entertain you with something else. What matters is the truth of God, what Scripture says about the wrath of God and that it must be satisfied and turned away if we are to be reconciled to him. And the fulcrum of that, the centerpiece of that is the death of Christ. And it's as we embrace that, that we enter into the truth and reality of redemption.

Isaiah said this in Isaiah 53 and coming back to the question that I asked a few minutes ago: why was all of this necessary? It's necessary because of you and me. All of us, verse 6, Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to," what? "Fall on him." To fall on him. The glory of Christ, the Lordship of Christ manifested at the cross. The holiness of God manifested at the cross so holy that his Son had to suffer like that in order to fulfill the justice of God. The guilt of our sin manifested at the cross.

That's what it required for you and I to be redeemed and yet somehow in all of that, the love of God manifested perfectly at the cross. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The sacrifice which turns away the wrath of God. All of this bound up in the cross. All of it manifesting all of these multi-splendored, wonderful attributes of God. All of it pointing to the glory and identity of our Lord. God inflicted the punishment for sin on his own Son at the cross. He shows mercy to those who believe in him. He accepts the death of Christ as payment for sin. He accepts the righteousness of Christ as our merit for heaven. Beloved, do you know Christ in this way? Because only his blood can reconcile you to God.

In Acts 13, and we'll close with this. In Acts 13:38 and 39, we read this, "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers." Let it be known to you therefore, brothers. Are you here and you don't know Christ? Let this be known to you, "that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."

Let's pray together.

*Father, such lofty themes, such weighty themes that silence the babbling tongue of men and women that give us right perspective on our earthly trials and tribulations that there's something far beyond the joys and sorrows of this life, there's something far beyond the challenges that await us as we leave this building, something infinitely greater, something infinitely ennobling, something revelatory about the glory of Christ found in the manifestation of your wrath and your love meeting together at the cross of Jesus Christ. Father, for those of us that are in Christ today, renew our sense of gratitude, love, worship and submission to you in light of the glorious things that your word has brought to our minds here this evening. And Father, for those, and there must be some in the room, over the live stream, hearing this later through subsequent media, those that your Spirit has not yet brought to Christ, those that your Spirit has not yet opened their minds, Father, may these great truths be in the hands of your Spirit, a laser-focused conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment that opens eyes to the glory of Christ so that men outside of him, as I speak, would come freely to him under the influence of your Holy Spirit. Father, may many be born again and brought into your kingdom as Christ and his death and his resurrection are lifted up. O Christ, you said, if you are lifted up, you will draw all men to yourselves, gather in then your people through the proclamation of your great glory and we'll give you thanks. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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