

The Testimony at the Cross

John 19:31-42

To begin our message we want to focus on what John tells us in v.35.

³⁵ 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

John saw the events of the cross. He has borne witness and emphatically tells us “HIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE.” He knows for certain that he is telling the truth. The purpose is so that you also may believe.

John’s whole writing of the Gospel of John is HIS TESTIMONY. It is a Testimony Worth Believing. Every detail is historically accurate. John could sit in the witness chair and declare his testimony to any judge. **His testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth.** There are those who have taken the witness stand and given false testimonies concerning Christ. They lie to cover up the truth. They lie to protect themselves from being exposed. This is the truth from John, the Apostle. John can stand unashamedly, and place his hand on the Word of God and tell what he has seen and heard. It’s His True Testimony.

1. A Testimony to the Hypocrisy of the Jews vv.31-32

First of all, John’s testimony exposes the hypocrisy of the Jews. The Jewish leaders were so careful to observe the Mosaic law that they overlooked the main part.

- It was the day of Preparation. The Day before the Sabbath. This Sabbath was a **“high Sabbath”**. **A special day!** It fell on Passover which was a very holy day. Not only was Sabbath a holy day, this “high” day made it doubly holy.
- Victims on the crosses would mess up their holy observance.

The bodies, according to their law, **MUST** not remain all NIGHT on the crosses.

Deut. 21:22-23

²² “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ **his body shall not remain all night on the tree**, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

The Jews, therefore, asked Pilate to have their legs broken to **SPEED UP** death. This would prevent their ability to push up to get a breath. Suffocation would end their life.

HURRY Pilate....time is running out! The Sabbath....our Holy Sabbath is near. Getting these criminals dead and removed from the crosses is in keeping with our religious requirements.

Oh, my, can you see the hypocrisy? So careful to observe the law in this one detail, yet they Murdered the Holy One, the Son of God!

It's like when Jesus said to them... *"you strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."*

Matthew 23:23-28

²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!.....²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The hypocrisy is clear. The Jews were so adamant about keeping everything kosher, and holy, but at the same time they crucified the Son of God who is the author of the Scriptures and the Giver of the Law.

John gives this testimony of the Jews' hypocrisy. This is a warning to us. Don't be like the Pharisees who OUTWARDLY gave "lip" service to God, but INWARDLY their heart was FAR from God. Christian churches are infected with evangelical hypocrites. Many claim loyalty to Christ, but their lives tell a different story. We can study the gospels and see how often Jesus nailed those Pharisees and their hypocrisy. He gave the truth and exposed them.

And that was John's purpose to give the truth about everything. His testimony at the CROSS revealed the ugliness of pretentious worship. The hypocrisy of false religion.

Let's move on to v.33

The Roman soldiers broke the legs of the criminals who had been crucified with Jesus. But notice this -- **v.33** "when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs." And just to be sure Jesus was dead,"one of the soldiers **(v.34) pierced his side with a spear,** and at once there came out blood and water."

Here we see another purpose for John's TESTIMONY at the CROSS: And let's be reminded (v.35) his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth.

2. A Testimony to the Fulfillment of Scriptures vv.33-37

- **No bones broken** v.36 "these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "not one of his bones will be broken."

The Scripture reference is to **Psalm 34:20** *"He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."* The Roman soldiers would take an iron mallet and break the legs of the

crucified victims. Not Jesus... no need. He's already dead. Another reason- The Scriptures says - *not a bone will be broken.*

We can add something else from the Scriptures about this. **Jesus is the Passover lamb.** ICor. 5:7 "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed." One requirement given to the Jews as they observed Passover each year.... God gave this commandment in regards to the Passover Lamb.....Exodus 12:46 "...and you shall not break any of its bones." (Numbers 9:12)

- **Pierced side** v.37

The Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus's body and at once there came out blood and water. Here's another testimony from John. The soldier wanted to be sure Jesus was dead. But there's another reason - it fulfilled the Scriptures. We go to **Zechariah 12:10**

¹⁰ "And 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 (Zech. 12:10)

BTW - This is another scriptural witness to the Deity of Christ.... He is God. "When they look on me... Who is the "me"? God is speaking "I will pour out on the house of David...a spirit of grace... when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced....

A testimony of Scriptures which testifies to the Deity of Christ. He is God the Son.

NOTICE AGAIN ----and at once there came out blood and water.

While in the Book of Zechariah, we learn this from Zechariah 13:1:

"On that day there shall be **a fountain opened** for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

Blood - we are saved by the BLOOD that Jesus shed on the Cross of Calvary.

There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains.

WATER - speaks of the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit; and the life-giving Spirit...

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Scripture reference can be made to Exodus 17:

The children of Israel left the land of Egypt. As they journeyed (some have estimated about 2 million) they could not find water. They were very thirsty. They complained to Moses...about ready to stone Moses. Moses goes to the Lord... and we read **in Exodus 17:6:**

⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Jesus is the ROCK that was smitten on the Cross.

.Paul said in **1Cor. 10:4** *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

We must move on now

3. A Testimony to the Service of Two vv.38-40

- Joseph of Arimathea

Two men showed up at the cross to show their loyalty and devotion to the Lord Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus.

John tells us of Joseph of Arimathea (Arimathea...we don't know where that's located, but only that it was a Jewish town.) Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. He's mentioned here and in the synoptic gospels only in regards to the burial of Jesus.

- We know Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43)
- We know he was rich. (Matthew 27:57)
- We know he was looking for the kingdom of God. (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51)
- We know according to Luke 23:50, *Joseph of Arimathea was a good and righteous man, who had not consented to the councils' decision and action concerning having Jesus crucified.*
- We also know....according to Mark 15:43 **Joseph took courage** and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **He boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body.**

We never see BOLDNESS from this Joseph during the ministry of Jesus. He came to believe in Jesus, but kept it a SECRET. Why? He was afraid of the Jews, that is the Jewish leaders....the other members of the Sanhedrin council.

But now, he steps forward with boldness.

It took courage to stand before Pilate; it really took courage to go against his fellow members of the Jewish Sanhedrin council. He took great risk to be criticized and even cast out as a standing member.

He kept his belief in Jesus a secret for a good while. Now he's stepping out. He goes to Pilate to ask permission to take the body of Jesus from the cross. Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. The Roman soldier gave the credentials to Pilate – yes, he is legally pronounced DEAD. So, Joseph asked for the body of Jesus. He takes care of the LEGAL matters. He was most suited to get this done.

Joseph is granted permission from Pilate to take the body away. He also bought a linen shroud to cover the body of Jesus. Being a man of wealth and influence, Joe gives his service to Christ at this important critical time.

- **Nicodemus**

Nicodemus steps out of the shadows to do his part. He shows his devotion to the Lord. He's the same one who came to Jesus by night. John wants us to know him as the one who came to Jesus by night. Secretly, at night, undetected by others. Nicodemus was also a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin council. He knew Jesus personally; had a nighttime visit to hear Jesus speak to him about being "born again". He's known as Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night; but NOW he's stepping out of the shadows. He's coming out into the light and demonstrating by his own actions where he stands with Jesus.

Nicodemus spoke up for Jesus in **John 7:50**....the Pharisees were wanting to have Jesus arrested. They wanted to get rid of Jesus. Have him killed. Here in John 7:50 speaking of Nicodemus:

⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹ "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" (IN other words... he should get a fair hearing first before you go ahead and convict him)

Nicodemus – brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight. This amount was a costly amount. It was the amount you gave for the death of a king. I believe Nicodemus saw Jesus as a king. He, at some point, came to believe in Jesus. Now, he gives the greatest respect possible under those circumstances. No time was available to clean the body... No time to arrange for a fancy funeral. No time for parting words, extravagant display of flowers....Nick had to hurry because the Jewish day of Preparation was about over. Sabbath was coming.

Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are in the testimonial records of John and they did a great service for our Lord. The Sabbath was near and that meant no further burial work would be allowed. So they had to hurry. Joseph and Nicodemus were men of resources. Men of financial means. No doubt, they had others to help get the body from the cross.... help carry the body, and wrap the body carefully and lay the body in the tomb. A lot of effort was made by these guys, and their contribution is forever recorded in the scriptures for us to remember.

They did what they could. Joseph and Nicodemus did not become preachers and apostles like another Pharisee we know as the Apostle Paul. God gave them courage, and boldness to step up to this important task.

What has God place upon your heart to show your devotion and service for Christ? There is something you can do.

One final thought - is in regards to the tomb, itself.

4. A Testimony to the Garden Tomb

vv. 41-42

- **a tomb that was new** - no body has laid in this tomb....there are no remains...no dead bones in this tomb. If there were some dead bones....then someone would say, Jesus resurrection was the result of touching dead bones. Do you remember the story back in 2Kings 13?

2Kings 13:21

²¹ Once, as the Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a raiding party, so they threw the man into Elisha's tomb. When he touched Elisha's bones, the man revived and stood up!

The tomb was Joseph's new tomb. One he had made for himself. But Joseph will get it back. It's brand new....but the Lord Jesus will "break it in" for Joseph. Just give the Lord a few days..... you'll see. He'll break it in, alright. He'll knock a hole in that tomb. He'll take down the BARS, the doors, the chains of death.

1Cor. 15:54-57

⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Something else to think about. Take this from **Matthew 27:59-60**

⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

- **a tomb cut in a rock** - this would be most fitting for Jesus

Listen to how Spurgeon puts it:

Charles Spurgeon:

It would seem, too, to be the proper thing for our Lord to have a tomb in a rock. You cannot fitly put Him in sand who is Himself the Rock of Ages. No, let our Lord Jesus, with that grand immutable love and eternal faithfulness of His, let Him lie in the solid rock. There it is, all ready for Him, just the very kind of tomb that is wanted for Him who is the Rock of our salvation.¹

- **a tomb close at hand**

the tomb was close at hand.....that is, the tomb was nearby.

Time was drawing near for the Sabbath to begin. There was no time to travel miles and miles to find a suitable burial site.

This tomb was conveniently there in the garden just a few steps from the cross. Joseph knew all about it. It was the one he had carved out of a rock.

Nicodemus might have asked, "Where will we place his body?" Joseph with a smile, "I have a perfect spot picked out."

Nicodemus - "we need to hurry, the Sabbath is coming. the Day of Preparation is coming to an end."

Joseph - "don't worry, it's just over here..... it's nearby. It's "close at hand".

God, in his providence, had the tomb all prepared. Joseph had it done, but God moved upon Joseph for this important time.

There is a wonderful testimony of God's providence at the tomb of Jesus. God provides what's needed. It's not FAR Away. You don't need to travel miles and miles to find the truth. It's incredible when you think of the billions of dollars spent to explore outer space. Looking for life on Mars. Trying to find out the truth about what's out there.

Why not save your money? If you know Christ, you'll pass Mars on your way out in the Rapture, right? Take a picture of it when you pass by.

What God has provided..... it's nearby....it's close at hand.

¹ [A ROYAL FUNERAL \(spurgeongems.org\)](http://spurgeongems.org)

They laid Jesus there in that tomb, but they are not completely finished. Women will come after the Sabbath to pay their respect; to bring spices that they had prepared. For the ladies, you see, the funeral is NOT over.....the mourning, the crying is not over.

John, who said, he bore witness...his testimony is true, he knows he is telling the truth, that you also may believe.....just wait till you hear the testimony of the women when they come to the tomb.

-----Outline for Church Bulletin-----

The Testimony at the Cross

John 19:31-42

- I. A Testimony to the Hypocrisy of the Jews vv.31-32

Matthew 23:23-28

Deut. 21:22-23

- II. A Testimony to the Fulfillment of Scriptures vv.33-37

- no bones broken - Psalm 34:20

1Cor. 5:7 Exodus 12:46 Numbers 9:12

- Pierced side - Zechariah 12:10

blood and water - fountain - Zechariah 13:1

John 7:37-39 Exodus 17:6 1Cor. 10:4

- III. A Testimony to the Service of Two vv.38-40

- Joseph of Arimathea

- Nicodemus

- IV. A Testimony to the Garden Tomb vv. 41-42
- it was new
 - it was cut in a rock
 - it was close at hand