

Lesson 25 Notes

John 19:17-30

Focus Verse

"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30)

Outline

- Jesus's Suffering on the Cross – John 19:17-24
- Jesus's Compassion on the Cross – John 19:25-27
- Jesus's Victory on the Cross – John 19:28-30

Engage

How do you respond when you read about Jesus's death on the cross? What wells up within you when you consider Jesus's willing sacrifice? We should feel sadness over Jesus's suffering and the costliness of sin. However, these traumatic events represent the greatest gift ever given. Jesus's death provides the only source of eternal life and present hope. **The great love that took Jesus to the cross and kept Him there leaves us silenced in awe yet overflowing with praise.** Our familiarity with Jesus's death should never eclipse its majesty. The salvation we cherish came at a profound cost. The Savior we worship demonstrated inexpressible love.

How do we prepare our hearts to approach this account? *Lord, help us grow in our understanding of the gift Jesus offered.* What is the proper response to such an indescribable gift? *Lord, help us live in view of Your sacrifice.* Our highest joy comes through the greatest suffering ever known. Real nails pierced Jesus's human hands and feet as He shed real blood to set us free. **The gift of our salvation cost Jesus His life.** Jesus died, not as a tragic victim, but as the triumphant victor over sin and death. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe to offer us salvation we could not earn. Jesus died a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.¹ But Jesus finished His God-ordained mission in triumph.

1. A man of sorrows: Isaiah 53



Jesus's Suffering on the Cross – John 19:17-24

Jesus's death on the cross was the most pivotal event in human history. When Jesus died, He finished the essential work God sent Him to earth to accomplish. The Bible's chief message and the ultimate truth confronting every human rise from Jesus's atoning sacrifice. John presents Jesus's death with dignified brevity that honors the Savior who died in our place.

The Agony of Jesus's Death – 19:17-18

The Significance

Crucifixion was a method of execution designed to cause intense humiliation, prolonged suffering, and an excruciating death. Likely beginning in ancient Persia, the deadly practice spread quickly throughout the Mediterranean region. Cicero, one of Rome's most influential philosophers, deemed the violent cruelty of crucifixion unacceptable for any Roman citizen.¹ However, Rome freely carried out this brutal execution method, not practiced against Roman citizens, when dealing with people occupying its provinces. When Pilate gave in to the angry crowd's demands, Roman soldiers surrounded Jesus to crucify Him. Without delay, they led Jesus away to carry out the cruel sentence on a man they deemed worthy of death.²

The Suffering

As a condemned prisoner, Jesus was expected to carry His own cross to the place of execution.

This cruel and humiliating practice was designed to publicly shame a person as a convicted criminal. Jesus, already fragile from the flogging and physical abuse during His trials,³ willingly carried the weight of His cross and humanity's sin. However, His weakened and wounded human body struggled to bear the weight of the wooden cross as He walked to the place of His death.⁴

Jesus was led to Golgotha, known as "the place of the skull." To avoid public outcry and conform to Jewish law, Rome executed criminals outside the walls of the city.⁵ However, the place for Roman execution always existed near the city on a main road so many would be warned about the seriousness of defying Rome.

At this desolate spot associated with death, Jesus hung on a cross between two criminals.

Jesus, the innocent sacrifice for humanity's sin, took His place among the condemned. John simply tells us, "There they crucified him." He did not record the details of Jesus's excruciating suffering. We know that Jesus endured physical trauma, emotional pain, and spiritual agony. The hands that healed the leper, opened blind eyes, and held little children were pierced with nails. Jesus struggled to breathe with His outstretched arms and tortured body raised high on a cross for the world to see. The death Jesus died represents cruelty we can scarcely describe.

The physical torment Jesus endured expressed His infinite love for humanity. His suffering represents the costly price of sin. As Jesus hung on that cross, the Father laid upon His Son the punishment for the most heinous acts of human evil and every sin committed by every human throughout time. Jesus did not merely take on our sin but became sin for us.⁶ **We gaze upon the cross of Christ not to be repulsed by its ugliness but to be drawn to the beauty of a suffering Savior who died in our place.** This painful sacrifice came not just as the violent act of evil men but as the loving gift of our heavenly Father.⁷ Jesus suffered for us.

1. **Roman view of crucifixion:** Cicero, "In Defense of Rabirius," 16, in *The Speeches of Cicero*, trans. H. Grose Hodge (London: Heinemann, 1927), 467.

2. **Led to crucifixion:** Matthew 27:27-31

3. **Physical abuse:** John 19:1-3

4. **Jesus's journey to the cross:** Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26

5. **Execution outside the city:** Exodus 29:14; Numbers 15:36; Hebrews 13:11-12

6. **Jesus became sin for us:** 2 Corinthians 5:21

7. **Crushed by the Father:** Isaiah 53:10-11

The Royal Inscription – 19:19-22

The Proclamation – 19:19-20

A soldier who accompanied a condemned man usually carried a sign listing the prisoner's crimes that was nailed to the cross at the place of execution. **In Jesus's case, Pilate ordered the sign to proclaim, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."** The message attached to Jesus's cross marked Him as guilty of sedition from a Roman perspective and included three important languages of the ancient world:

- **Aramaic** – the daily language of the Jews in Judea at the time of Jesus
- **Latin** – the language of Roman civil law and government
- **Greek** – the common trade language of the eastern Roman Empire

Pilate posted his pronouncement in three languages so all could understand. God, however, had a greater purpose—for all people to rightly recognize the glory of His Son. **The three languages represent the universal scope of the gospel.** Jesus is not only King of the Jews⁸ but reigns over all the earth and every part of life. He reigns forever.⁹ When God completely fulfills His plan for the world, He will unite all things under Jesus Christ as King. On that day, everyone will bow before King Jesus and acknowledge He is Lord.¹⁰

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The Protest – 19:21-22

The chief priests objected to Pilate's wording about Jesus. They urged Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Though Pilate had earlier wavered under political pressure regarding Jesus's death sentence, this time he remained steadfast. He replied, "What I have written, I have written." Whether Pilate wanted to irritate the Jews or curiously chose to stand firm on this lesser issue, God's truth prevailed. Jesus is indeed Israel's King.

Out of all the world's nations, God chose the Jews as His people.¹¹ God revealed Himself to them and held them responsible to prepare the world for the coming King—His Messiah.¹² **The leaders of Israel, God's chosen nation, led the people to reject their one true and eternal King.**¹³

The Dividing of Jesus's Clothes – 19:23-24

The soldiers attending to Jesus's crucifixion took His clothes. **Jesus endured the humiliation of being publicly disrobed while people watched Him suffer.** These soldiers, likely accustomed to watching criminals die, stood beneath the cross of humanity's suffering Savior and divided His clothing among themselves. However, they gambled for His seamless tunic, reluctant to tear the garment woven in one piece from top to bottom. This detail represents the fulfillment of a

8. King of the Jews: Matthew 2:1-6

9. Jesus's united, eternal kingdom: Psalm 2; 72; Revelation 11:15

10. Every knee will bow: Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 5:13

11. Chosen by God: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 7:6-8; 2 Samuel 7:23-24; Romans 9:3-5

12. Coming King: Psalm 10:16; 45:6; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6

13. True King: Psalm 2; 1 Samuel 8:6-8; John 19:12-15

prophecy from Psalm 22:18. God's Word never fails. David's psalm relates to his own life but also points to Christ. The specific fulfillment of prophecy validates the person and work of Christ and His part in God's redemptive plan. Only God could foretell and fulfill such specific details.

Beyond these physical details, Jesus's nakedness bears spiritual significance. **Jesus bore the full force of sin's curse, including a marred physical appearance and public disgrace.** Isaiah foretold long before that "there were many who were appalled at him."¹⁴ Jesus suffered the weight of every sin committed against God by all people across all generations. The Lord Jesus felt the guilt of sin as if each sin were His own. He bore what those who do not turn to Him for salvation will face after death, forever, if they do not repent.¹⁵

When Adam and Eve first sinned against God, they immediately realized their unclothed state, inwardly and outwardly. Like all their sinful descendants, their pitiful attempts to clothe themselves proved insufficient.¹⁶ The Lord graciously provided animal skins to cover their nakedness.¹⁷ The clothing God provided to Adam and Eve points to Christ's perfect righteousness that God imputes to everyone who looks to His Son for salvation. Through Christ's sacrifice, believers are washed clean by His blood and clothed in His robe of righteousness.¹⁸ **Jesus was stripped naked and suffered sin's curse so that all who come to Him in faith might be clothed in His sinless perfection.**

The intensity of Jesus's suffering can be difficult to think about. Jesus willingly stepped up to endure every cruel, shameful moment on the cross. His affliction was terrible because sin is terrible. Jesus suffered excruciating physical torment, emotional stress, and public disgrace. Beyond that, Jesus's spiritual suffering as He bore the full weight of sin and experienced separation from His Father cannot be adequately described. Jesus did this for us. **We study Jesus's painful death not merely to be sad but to remember that we are saved because of His sacrificial love on our behalf.**

Jesus's Compassion on the Cross – John 19:25-27

The scene surrounding Jesus's cross reveals many people and a variety of responses. Pilate succumbed to pressure and displayed weakness as he surrendered an innocent man to an unjust death sentence. Roman soldiers carried out their duties with seeming callousness as they watched Jesus suffer and die. The Jewish leaders and gawking crowd rejected the Savior sent by God as they cried out for Jesus's death. Two criminals endured their own suffering as they hung on either side of eternity's forsaken King. However, some who gathered around Jesus and watched Him suffer loved Him deeply.

What was it like for those who knew and loved Jesus as they stood beneath His cross? Confusion and intense sadness surely flooded their hearts and minds as they took in the events John so discreetly recounts. John records a tender scene that further reveals Jesus's heart of compassion and love.

14. **Jesus's physical appearance:** Isaiah 52:14; 53:2-3

15. **Eternal suffering:** Matthew 22:13; 25:30; Revelation 20:14-15

16. **Inadequate covering:** Genesis 3:7

17. **Animal skins:** Genesis 3:21

18. **Robe of righteousness:** Isaiah 61:10

Several women gathered around Jesus's cross:

- **Mary, Jesus's mother** – Three decades before, the angel Gabriel announced she would conceive and give birth to a son.¹⁹ Her honored role as mother to the Messiah was not an easy one.²⁰ She bore a son conceived by God's Spirit and watched Him die a death He did not deserve. Whatever she understood, her pain at this moment must have been immense.
- **His mother's sister** – The exact identification of the women with Mary can be difficult. This was probably Salome,²¹ the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John.
- **Mary, wife of Clopas** – God honored her love for Jesus by recording her courageous presence at the cross. She may have been the woman identified as the mother of "James the less" and Joses.²²
- **Mary Magdalene** – Delivered from demon possession,²³ she now gratefully followed Jesus, even to the foot of the cross.

While nailed to the cross and enduring unspeakable torture, the Lord Jesus saw His mother and attended to her care. Jesus provided for His mother as both law and love required.²⁴ Mary certainly looked upon her son, humanity's Savior, with profound grief. Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of a beloved disciple, whom most believe to be John, the writer of this Gospel. Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, here is your son." To John, Jesus said, "Here is your mother." Jesus honored His mother even as He died for the sins of the world.

◆ Jesus's Victory on the Cross – 19:28-30

"I Am Thirsty" – 19:28-29

After Jesus entrusted His mother to John, He prepared to die. **Jesus's last moments fulfilled Scripture as He spoke His final words with His ultimate triumph in view.** John's account of Jesus's death focuses on His dignity and sovereignty as He completed His divine mission. "Later"—after intense suffering John did not detail—Jesus spoke.

Jesus knew "everything had now been finished" and that Scripture had been fulfilled. Jesus's every response yielded to God's eternal plan rather than His own comfort. Jesus said, "I am thirsty." Only John records these words. **Jesus emerged from the terrible depths of spiritual suffering and only then directed any attention to His physical needs.** The end was in sight. We cannot fully comprehend the intricate spiritual battle that took place within Jesus's death. A sponge soaked with vinegar was lifted to Jesus's lips on a pole of hyssop.

Jesus's expression of thirst revealed His humanity but also His divine purposefulness in fulfilling prophecy. Psalm 22:15 describes Jesus's extreme thirst: "My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death." Psalm 69:21 says, "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." Hyssop was

19. Gabriel's visit: Luke 1:26-28

20. Mary's difficult calling: Luke 2:34-35

21. Salome: Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1

22. Mary, wife of Clopas: Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40,47

23. Delivered from demon possession: Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2

24. Provision for Jesus's mother: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; 1 Timothy 5:8

Declared Righteous Despite Our Sin

The Doctrine of Justification

Jesus's death on the cross accomplished more than our minds can conceive. Jesus paid sin's price on behalf of all who look to Him for salvation. When Jesus died, He bore the sins of the world. **Jesus opened the way for repentant sinners to be justified—declared right with God.**

A legal term, “justification” refers to God’s gracious act in forgiving and declaring righteous the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ.¹ God does not overlook anyone’s debt of sin but accepts Christ’s payment for sin on behalf of the believer.² God attributes Christ’s perfect righteousness to the forgiven sinner. When Jesus died, He paid in full every believer’s debt of guilt and sin. Clothed in Christ’s righteousness, believers enjoy right standing with God. Justified sinners also enter the process of sanctification by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who enables them to live a new life that increasingly reflects Christ.³

Everyone sins because we are all born with a sinful nature that automatically rebels against God.⁴ Unless we turn to Christ for salvation, the penalty for our sin remains on us. No one can earn salvation because the best we can offer will never satisfy God’s standard of perfect righteousness. **We cannot be justified before God without turning to Christ for salvation.**

How can we express the wonder of justification in Christ? **The pain Jesus suffered on the cross represents the price He paid to justify sinners before a holy God.** If you are a believer, when God looks at you, He does not see your sin. Instead He sees only the perfect righteousness of Jesus—who never sinned in word, thought, or deed. We do not deserve justification but receive this gracious gift because of what Christ accomplished on our behalf. Believers live in eternal gratitude for the Savior who suffered in their place and the God who has declared them righteous. Justification is God’s gift—not earned but bought. Jesus paid for our justification with His own blood—an amazing gift received by grace through faith in Christ.

1. **Justified:** Romans 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:9
2. **Free from sin’s penalty:** Romans 5:18-19; 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:6
3. **Sanctified:** Romans 6:1-4; 8:12-13; 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-26; Colossians 3:1-17
4. **Sin within:** Romans 3:9-18

utilized as part of the rituals in the first night of Passover.²⁵ Jesus died as the Lamb of God—the perfect Passover Lamb.²⁶

“It Is Finished” – 19:30

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” **Jesus’s words were not a weary sigh of defeat but a bold declaration of victory.** Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin, death, and Satan for everyone

25. **Hyssop:** Exodus 12:22; Psalm 51:7

26. **Passover Lamb:** John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7

who trusts Him for salvation.²⁷ Jesus faithfully completed the ultimate purpose of His earthly ministry. Every miraculous sign and powerful word pointed to this victory. The body of God's Son hung on a cross outside Jerusalem, but His joyful shout of victory reached across time and throughout the universe.

Jesus bowed His head and released His spirit by deliberate surrender to death. In love and faith, Jesus entrusted Himself into His Father's keeping. The Father and the Son awaited the resurrection of Jesus's pierced body and the fulfillment of God's grand plan of redemption. God did not abandon Jesus to death and the grave but awaited yet another moment that would celebrate heaven's glorious triumph.²⁸

Are you anxious to study Jesus's resurrection? Indeed, Jesus rose from the grave as God's eternal redemptive plan continued to unfold. Believers often move quickly through passages about Jesus's crucifixion—anxious to celebrate the joy of His resurrection. Certainly Jesus rose to claim the triumph His death purchased. However, we gain much spiritually by gazing at Jesus's horrific suffering and sacrificial death. We cannot grasp the seriousness of sin or the sacrificial love of our Savior without thinking about Jesus's cross. For believers, Jesus suffered to end our suffering for all eternity. He paid the price of our sin and offered us His perfect righteousness. **The gift of our salvation cost Jesus His life.** We do well to ponder the mystery and majesty of Jesus's cross.

◆ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

Jesus willingly embraced His painful torment and death on the cross. His bruised body was stripped naked and nailed to a wooden cross. Our sin leaves us spiritually naked—exposed with no place to hide from God and His holiness. In infinite grace, Jesus bore our sin as He took the place we rightfully deserved. His death was no accident. Jesus died not as the victim of evil men but as the purposeful sacrifice of Holy God.

Even while Jesus suffered, He expressed compassionate care for His mother. Jesus embraced fully the weight of sin and the redemptive purposes of God without faltering. Fulfilling Scripture, He drank the cup of God's wrath to its bitter dregs.²⁹ **Jesus finished His earthly mission with triumphant finality.** He yielded His spirit unto death, purchasing eternal life for all who receive His gift of salvation. Jesus became sin so that believers might become righteous. The wonder of His sacrifice will be celebrated for all eternity.

Apply It

Do you recognize your part in Jesus's crucifixion? We can easily disdain Pilate, the fickle crowd, the evil religious rulers, or the callous soldiers who gambled for Jesus's clothes. The people in Jerusalem that day put Jesus on the cross, no doubt. But who put Jesus on the cross—really?

27. Jesus's victory: 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14-15

28. Not abandoned: Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27

29. Cup of God's wrath: Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15; Matthew 20:22; 26:39; Revelation 14:9-10

First and foremost, God did. Our heavenly Father sent His only Son to earth as the God-man who satisfied His righteous justice by dying on behalf of sinners. And second ... we did. Every one of us. **Jesus did not hang on the cross for a faceless mob of people, but for you.** He knows your name. Jesus died so you might live eternally. How will you respond? Are you ever amazed that Jesus died for you? Have you repented of your sins and turned to Jesus, who has loved you in the greatest way possible? If not, why not?

We live in a world that hesitates to label anything as wrong. Sin has become an increasingly foreign concept. **The severity of Jesus's suffering reveals the seriousness of humanity's sin.** As eternal God in a human body, Jesus could die for an infinite number of sins. He willingly suffered a cruel death we can scarcely bring ourselves to ponder. Jesus's commitment to His divine mission shone through His excruciating pain. Though He was humanity's rightful King, Jesus took the form of a humble servant. He suffered willingly and finished His mission gloriously. We study the cross to understand the gravity of sin, the beauty of salvation, and the wonder of Jesus the Savior. How has your understanding of God's compassion, love, grace, mercy, justice, and holiness grown as you have gazed at Jesus on the cross?

We finish a lesson like this eager to turn our thoughts to the empty tomb. Before you do, consider the privilege God has granted you this week. **God offers you an opportunity to wrestle with what Jesus endured for you.** Jesus carried the cross upon which He would die. He took His place between two criminals who likely deserved the sentence they received. He hung his thorn-crowned head under words that simultaneously mocked and exposed the truth that He was indeed Jesus, the King of the Jews. He felt the nails that pierced His hands and feet. Stripped naked, Jesus took His place on a wooden cross made from a tree He designed. He heard the scoffing yet noticed His mother. He expressed His physical thirst and willed His own death. Jesus died so that you can now live. May worship rise from our hearts as we praise our Savior, whose death reveals more love than we can comprehend.

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