

The Water and the Blood – *John 19:31-42*

Introduction – Hanging lifeless on the cross, signs are given that new life will flow from a new temple. It is the Preparation Day and the spotless Lamb's blood is spilt for a great exodus will now take place. A Man is put to death in a garden, and from His side a new bride comes forth. John gives his firsthand witness to the crucifixion of Jesus, choosing the details he brings out, *"who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe"* (v35).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Cor 2:2). It is good to summarize the gospel rightly, *"Christ came to save sinners"* but John is writing His gospel in ways that expound far more what it means that Christ was crucified.

Jesus was Dead – In all the details John gives, one of the first takeaways is the testimonies that Jesus really died on the Cross. Multiple well-trained soldiers do not follow Pilate's orders to break the legs of Jesus because they know He is already dead. A spear is thrust in His side to only confirm the matter (both His death and that He was a man, just like us, see John 1:14, 1 John 4:1-4). Two men lose their reputation before the Jewish authorities and become ceremonially unclean as they take Jesus' body and prepare it for burial. Instead of being thrown in a mass grave (as most crucified criminals were) Jesus is laid in a tomb in a garden where no other body had been laid. Jesus, the Man, was dead. Cold dead.

Passover and Exodus – Passover, a one day celebration, was followed by a week long celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 12, Num 28:16-25). During that week there was a Sabbath Day and a Day of Preparation before. It would be a curse on the land to have a man hanging on that holy day (Deut 21:23), so the priests asked the Romans to break the legs of the prisoners to quicken their death. This is sick, political irony. Yet even in these details, these wicked hypocrites see to it that another prophecy of the Christ is testified, *"Not one of His bones shall be broken"* (v36, Ps 34:20).

Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) that takes away the sin of the world. The Passover Lamb was sacrificed, and its blood was spread over the doorposts of the family's home so that the Angel of Death would pass over and the firstborn of the family would not die. The lamb was then eaten in the house, it was not to be taken out, and *not one of its bones was to be broken* (Ex 12:46). This final plague upon Egypt brought forth the deliverance of Israel from their bondage (Ex 12:26-27, 13:3).

His Pierced Side – John alone tells us of this event; another prophecy is fulfilled (v37, Zech 12:10). *"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced"* (Zech 12:10a). This prophecy was for the *true* house of David (the Church) where the Spirit of grace and supplication would be poured out. It was forward-looking to the Church that would be filled with the Holy Spirit as the Gospel was preached. *"Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear"* (Acts 2:33). Zech 12:10b finishes with the people mourning, as one mourns for his only son. And when this Gospel was preached *"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said... 'what shall we do?'"* (Acts 2:37).

Blood and Water – Not only was Jesus pierced, but John testifies that blood and water flowed out. Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God in Old Covenant ceremonies always included the shedding of blood and ceremonial washings. Many would consider the water and blood to point towards baptism and the Lord's Supper, the means of grace. This begins to make sense when we consider that this blood and water flowed from His side. John spoke in Creation language from the beginning in testifying to Who Jesus is (John 1:1-3, 13). Jesus, the One Who created Adam came to be the New Adam and we find Him in a garden (v41). It was in the first Garden that Adam was put into a death-like sleep and God took a rib from his side, fashioning a bride for him. God uses that which comes out of Adam to make Him a bride. He uses that which flows out of Jesus to make Him a bride.

Bridegroom symbols have been going on throughout the gospel of John. Jesus is the better Bridegroom, providing celebration wine instead of ceremonial water (John 2). John the Baptist says he is the friend of the Bridegroom (John 3). Then Jesus meets a woman at a well who does not have a lawful husband and brings her to faith in Him (John 4). And in Chapter 20 we will see even more garden/Adam/bride imagery. The church is the bride of Christ and the whole story of redemption is the great love story of Christ redeeming and glorifying His wife (Rev 21).

Blood, Water, and the Temple – But Jesus is also the Temple. He said when He cleansed the temple *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (John 2:19) speaking of His body (2:21-22). Blood was always shed at the temple and throughout this gospel waters of life are everywhere. Jesus fills the ceremonial basins with water and turns the water to wine

(Ch 2). Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and the Spirit (Ch 3). When Jesus meets the woman at Jacob's well, He offers her living water (Ch 4). A man cannot be healed at the Old Covenant pool near the temple and so Jesus takes the place of the pool and heals the man (Ch 5). He stills the waters of the storm and walks upon them (Ch 6). On the last day of the Feast of Booths Jesus cried out *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (Ch 7). He healed a blind man with water from His mouth (Ch 9) and washed His disciples' feet with water (Ch 13).

What is flowing out of Jesus' heart? What is flowing out of this New Temple? Water that will bring healing to the nations, flowing out further and further, deeper and deeper, with trees on its banks bearing life-fruit and leaves of healing (Ezek 47:12, Rev 22:2).

Jesus Christ and Him Crucified – What are you to see in the death of Jesus Christ? First, you are to see that there is something far worse than death, and that is sin. Death is the consequences of our corruption, not the source of our corruption. Preaching Christ crucified means calling men to repentance from the casual attitude towards sin while trying to be so hard to avoid death. We shudder at death. How much more should we shudder at sin?

Second, you are to see and believe. You are to hear and believe. Jesus Christ died to take care of your sin, your guilt, your uncleanness, and instead to give you eternal life in the Spirit and the hope of the resurrection of your body in the final day. Yes, in the gospel, your wicked sin is declared without excuse, without apology. But so is the tonic for it, the cure, the reversal. So is the Way out of your prison cell, the slavery to that sin. It is the blood sacrifice of Jesus to atone for God's holy wrath and the cleansing waters of baptism and the new life of the Holy Spirit indwelling you by faith.

Third, we are to see the church as the bride of Christ, dearly loved, rescued, and cared for by Him, and so we respond as a faithful bride, delighting to honor and obey. And we are to be the church militant, a mighty flowing river, flooding the world, bringing the story of Jesus to every family, every nation. Remember what Jesus had told Nicodemus some years before (John 3:16-17). Today, right here and now, it might look like the church is only a few small puddles, a larger pool or spring here and there, and some are telling us *"that's it."* But we are the temple of God and flowing from that temple, we are privileged to live in the Gospel Age of Hope, the time when the gospel conquers and rules, the time when the fountain of forgiveness to all nations has been opened wide, for sin and all uncleanness.

And that is what it means to preach Christ crucified. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ.

Dave Hatcher – July 30, 2023