

John 19:16b-42 - "The Crucifixion"

As we get toward the end of John's gospel, his argument builds to a crescendo. Is Jesus the Messiah? That's the decision that his readers have to make. If he's not the Messiah then who or what can he possibly be? That was the question last week - Who Is Jesus? This week during the crucifixion we get a very definite reply from Scripture.

As you read John 19:16b-42 note the number of references to fulfilled prophecy.

Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53 feature heavily in this passage. Matthew and Mark make reference to Jesus' words from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is the opening to Psalm 22 and a first century literary device, 'part for the whole' (an extended metonymy) implies that Jesus made mention of much more than the opening verse of the Psalm. Matthew and Mark both have Jesus as suffering (as does Isaiah) but Luke and John show Jesus as sovereign (the suffering is implied though).

Q. What do you think as you read the passion narrative? Do you feel grateful or sorry that Jesus went through what he did?

Q. Why did Jesus go through what he did? Why did it have to happen and why did it have to be Jesus?

The clue to answering that question is really in the Old Testament (but picked up by New Testament authors - especially in Romans and Hebrews) — specifically the first Passover (Exodus 12). A hyssop branch was used to spread the lambs blood on the doorpost so the angel of death would *pass over*. The Passover was then celebrated each year onwards by the sacrifice of a perfect spotless lamb. Priests were careful to check that the lamb was not already dead and did not have any deficiencies - indeed that the lamb was perfect. In reflection note the hyssop branch in John 19:29 and that no bone of Jesus was broken (19:36; c.f. Ps 34:20) but that his blood was poured out (v34). Also keep in mind John recording John The Baptists words which he uttered twice, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29,36).

Q. Did Jesus really have to die? Could God have done things another way?

Along with the perfect Passover Lamb motif and the number of other Scripture fulfillments covered by John (Ps 22:18; Ps 69:21; Deut 21:22; Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; Zec 12:10; 2 Chron 16:14) the chances of this being fulfilled in one man the number of years after the prophecies were made is 10^{17} (that's 1 followed by 17 zeros). It's like marking a silver dollar and covering the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars; blindfolding someone and telling them to pick out that marked silver dollar. And that's for 8 fulfilled prophecies. For 48 it's 10^{157} . Jesus fulfilled about this many in the crucifixion alone (throughout all accounts). The estimate is that Jesus fulfilled 456 prophecies in his lifetime - the chances of that happening "by chance" is astronomical. The chances of it happening when God is involved is a certainty!

Q. What does this tell us about who Jesus is?

On the cross, John records Jesus as saying, "It is finished." This is much more than a statement about his life, this is a statement about EVERYTHING. Here's why: Jesus fulfilled Old Testament Scripture and because he did that we know that he is reliable and will continue to fulfill Scripture in his second coming which in turn means a fulfillment of New Testament Scripture.

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Q. Is the Bible wholly trustworthy?

Q. Is God true to his promises?

Q. Do you really believe that Jesus will return?

Throughout the recent chapters of John that we've studied Jesus has been telling his disciples that he has to go so that the Spirit of Truth can come. This is *his* Spirit - Jesus remains with us today because his Spirit is with us and this was only made possible because of the cross. We'll cover this next week but after Jesus said, "It is finished" John tells us that he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit. The word for 'gave up' is *Paradidomi* and it means "handed over". We often associate Pentecost with the coming of the Spirit but it really happened at the cross. It happened *in power* at Pentecost but John records it happening before then too.

Q. Last week the question was, "Who is Jesus?" If you answered that question last week, has anything changed? If you didn't answer it, in light of the **fulfillment** (that's not 'alluding to' or 'referencing' it's **completion**) of Scripture - Who Is Jesus?