

Good Friday

*But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.
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. 36 For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” (John 19:34–37 ESV)*

They Will Look On Him Whom They Have Pierced

April 15th, 2022

John 19:12-19

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Introduction:

Over the course of our service this morning we've been reading from the Gospel of John chapter 19. If you have your Bible with you, I'd love for you to open it to that passage again as we focus in on verses 31-37. This is what the Scripture says:

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. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. 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. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” (John 19:31–37 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

I mentioned on Palm Sunday that Jesus, particularly during the end of his earthly ministry, appeared to be working off of some kind of script. He was very eager to do certain things and even to say certain things so as to fulfil the Scriptures. Here we see that even after he died, events

unfolded in very particular ways so as to conform with the biblical blueprint. We are told that the manner of his death – and the manner by which his death was confirmed by the Roman soldiers – was orchestrated in such a way so as to fulfil certain patterns in Holy Scripture. That fact that they didn't break his legs – as they did to the two men on either side of him – and as they would normally do in circumstances like this to hasten the death of the victim by asphyxiation - was intentionally ordained by God SO AS to highlight the connection between the death of Jesus and the death of the Passover lamb – whose bones we are told in Exodus 12:46 – were not to be broken.

The PIERCING of his side by the Roman soldier was likewise orchestrated by God so as to highlight the connection between the death of Jesus and the prophecy about the Good Shepherd in the Book of Zechariah. That's what John is referring to when he says:

And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” (John 19:37 ESV)

The “OTHER Scripture” there is Zechariah 12:10. It is one the most amazing prophecies in all the Bible. Let me read it to you in full. It says:

“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.” (Zechariah 12:10 ESV)

That prophecy was given more than 500 years before death of Jesus on the cross! It was given before the Roman Empire had risen to prominence in the region and had popularized the use of crucifixion as a means of terror and subjection of its criminals and conquered peoples. This detail could only have come into the picture that Zechariah is painting by Divine Inspiration – it is a way of PINNING – literally – the death of Jesus on the cross TO the picture painted of the coming Messianic King in Zechariah. It's a double pin, actually, as I mentioned, it pins the death of Jesus to the Passover story and it pins the death of Jesus to the shepherd narrative in Zechariah – and we are far less familiar with that story nowadays, so I thought we could take just a minute

or two and revisit it so as to heighten our understanding and appreciation of Christ's death upon the cross.

The Book of Zechariah is an interesting book. It begins with NEAR FUTURE encouragement in terms of the promise that the temple WILL BE REBUILT and WORSHIP WILL RESUME in the city of Jerusalem.

Zechariah began prophesying in 520 BC – at the time when the temple rebuilding project was hopelessly stalled. They had made an attempt at a start years ago, but due to fierce local opposition and massive bureaucratic confusion in the wider Persian Empire, the project had stalled and there was no indication that it was ever going to be resumed. But Zechariah PROMISED that it would – in fact, he went one better: he said God would plunder the nations to pay for the entire project – just like the Israelites had plundered the Egyptians back in the days of the Exodus. And then of course – that was exactly what happened!! Darius found the original decree by Cyrus and he reissued it – along with deadly threats against anyone who attempted to oppose the work – and along with an extremely generous endowment from the royal treasury. So – the temple WAS rebuilt and it was in fact rebuilt with money plundered from pagan nations. In Zechariah 2:9 the prophet says that when you receive this plunder:

“Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.” (Zechariah 2:9 ESV)

So the experience of the NEAR FUTURE ENCOURAGEMENT – just as it was promised by the prophet – will solidify their confidence in the FAR FUTURE ENCOURAGEMENT which he began to talk about in the LATTER half of the book. The FAR FUTURE encouragement had to do with the coming of a Messianic King. That was the FAR BIGGER DEAL, Zechariah said. The temple is great, but the temple is just a start and a sign – something bigger is coming! Something better is coming! We already had a temple and that didn't fix what was wrong with us – but something is coming! Some ONE is coming and he will do what the temple never could. He will fix what is wrong with us, he will repair what is broken apart, he will fulfil all the promises of God and he will usher in the Kingdom of God – so look for him! Wait for him! And never stop believing that he's coming!

And that was a big ask because the house of David was totally and utterly fallen down. There hadn't been a Son of David on the throne for 70 years – and there was no apparent prospect of that happening any time soon, given the circumstances. Israel did not control their own destiny at this point in the story. They were a subject people. Darius the Persian was the king of the land in those days.

But – the promise about the temple had come true so the people treasured up the words of the prophet about this coming king.

So what exactly did Zechariah say? What is this blueprint that Jesus seemed to know about and that the Apostles clearly recognized after he done and accomplished all things?

Well in Zechariah 9:9 the prophet spoke about a King who would come to the Royal City of Jerusalem in peace, humble and riding on a donkey – we talked about that on Palm Sunday.

He went on to speak about a King who would be the Good Shepherd but who would be rejected by the leaders of his people. Those in charge would plot and scheme against him saying:

“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7 ESV)

Jesus cited that prophecy in Mark 14:27.

“You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” (Mark 14:27–28 ESV)

Zechariah also spoke about how the life of the Good Shepherd would be treated cheaply by the leaders of the people – they would value him at 30 pieces of silver – the price in the Old Testament associated with the redemption of a slave.

“And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver.” (Zechariah 11:12 ESV)

This of course was the price accepted by Judas for betraying Jesus into the hands of the Jewish authorities – a price quoted and highlighted by Matthew in Matthew 26:15:

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14–15 ESV)

Zechariah also said that the Good Shepherd would come and do his duty, all the while knowing that he would be brutally killed. He records him saying:

“I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders.” (Zechariah 11:7 ESV)

His death was a decision and a gift he was willing and pleased to give. Jesus evidently knew this Scripture very well when he said:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11 ESV)

He did this to rescue his people from the pit and to establish a Kingdom that would eventually stretch from sea to sea:

“his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.” (Zechariah 9:10–11 ESV)

He came to save his people – and to shock his people because they didn’t understand the holiness of God or the seriousness of sin. So he came to show them. He came break and heal their stubborn hearts.

“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. ¹¹ On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹³ the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴ and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

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.” (Zechariah 12:10–13:1 ESV)

That’s the Good Shepherd that the prophet Zechariah had said was coming! That’s the ULTIMATE HOPE and the DEFINITIVE CURE that he told the people of Israel to look forward to. The temple was great, the nation was great, the sacrificial system, the prayers, the liturgy – all that was great!!! But the real hope – the real game changer was Messiah! The Son of David, the Good Shepherd, the long awaited King. Wait for him. Watch for him. Look upon him and see the salvation of the world.

That’s what was happening when Jesus was hanging there on that Roman cross. He was fulfilling a blueprint, he was keeping a promise, he was planting a flag on the exact spot PROPHESED and FORETOLD in Holy Scripture. And he knew exactly what he was doing when he did that. It was all part of the eternal plan. He said:

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32 ESV)

Now the disciples saw it only with the benefit of hindsight. But once it happened they understood that Jesus had just acted out – in living colour – right before their eyes – the entire blueprint and script for the life, death and resurrection of Messiah as contained in the length and breadth of Scripture. They saw that everything he ever did and everything he ever said – and everything that was said and done about him and to him – ALL OF IT - was in accordance with Holy Scripture.

He is the centre and climax of God's LONG, SLOW, PATIENT PLAN to redeem and restore a people for himself. The whole Old Testament points forward to him. The whole New Testament looks back upon him. Like twin spotlights they shine their light RIGHT HERE - RIGHT THERE - so that we all – Jews and Gentiles alike – might look upon HIM – might look upon ME, the text actually says. Listen again:

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. (Zechariah 12:10 ESV)

Did you catch that?

HIM is ME – God says!

When the people of Israel look at HIM whom they have pierced and they see ME – then they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son.

That's how people get saved – Jew or Gentile. When you look at Jesus on the cross and you see God.

That's the issue today. The issue is not how well you've got your life put together. The issue is not how often you've been to church. The issue is not how much charitable giving you declared on your tax return. The issue is: when you look at Jesus on the cross WHAT or BETTER WHO do you see?

If you see God – in all his holy hatred of sin – if you see God in all his love and mercy toward sinners – if you see God satisfying himself by substituting himself – if you see God even the Son of God come to serve his people by giving his life as a ransom many – if you see that – if you see HIM today, and understand, you mourn, you believe, you receive, you trust, you love and you

worship him and as your Lord and Savior – then I promise you, in accordance with all the Scriptures, you will be saved!

Lord, I pray right now, for a Spirit of grace and for pleas of mercy to be poured out on this place , on this gathering, that we might look upon the one whom we have pierced and MOURN as one mourns for an only son that all who are here in this place today may be truly, gloriously and eternally saved – we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Worship team, will you come and lead us?