



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 19:28-42 Commentary **New Revised Standard Version**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

Commentary Note: If you have not already done so, you may want to download and read about The Medical Aspects of the Crucifixion in the article: [On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ](#).

(John 19:28) After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.”

After Jesus entrusted His mother to the Apostle John, from that moment forward she was John's mother to care for; then, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” Jesus always cared for others before caring for His own needs. For example, before Jesus ate the food His disciples brought Him to eat, Jesus insisted on meeting the spiritual needs of the Samaritans who were leaving their city to meet Him (see John 4:1-43). In John 4:34, Jesus said to His disciples, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.” Indeed, Jesus always sacrificed for others and made the ultimate sacrifice for us as He hanged on the cross. Jesus revealed His full humanity as He suffered and died, for His suffering did make Him thirsty—as it would anyone hanging from a cross—which required great exertion even to breathe. Jesus revealed His full divinity as He suffered and died, for no

matter how much He suffered, Jesus first and foremost wanted to obey His Father in heaven and fulfill all the prophecies in the Bible that foretold His coming. Jesus wanted to “complete His work.” Jesus’ death on the cross fulfilled Psalms 22:14-15, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.” Only the divine Son of God could and would willingly go through the pain of crucifixion and death to fulfill every aspect of Biblical prophecy that the Father and He knew He must suffer after He came into the world to save all who would repent of their sins and believe in Him as Lord and Savior.

(John 19:29) A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When the soldiers gave sour wine (vinegar) to Jesus, He fulfilled the prayer in Psalms 69:19-21, “You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” None of the soldiers, priests, or passersby gave Jesus any comfort. His brothers had abandoned Him; one of His disciples betrayed Him, and all the rest but John had fled in fear. Only four women and John the Apostle gave comfort to Jesus with their presence, but they were forbidden to help Him. Jesus, the Lamb of God, died during preparations for Passover when the Passover lamb was slain. The soldiers gave wine to Jesus on a branch of hyssop, and in Exodus 12:21-23, we learn how the blood of the lamb and a branch of hyssop were used to protect God’s people from the destroying angel as it passed over their homes: “Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel

and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down.” David prayed in Psalm 51:7, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” but only the shed blood of Jesus can remove our guilt and forever cleanse us whiter than snow (see Isaiah 1:18).

(John 19:30) When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

In John 2:10, even though His hour (or time) had not yet come, in Jesus’ first miracle He changed water into wine, and the host told the bridegroom, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” When His hour finally came, the soldiers gave Jesus the worst wine to drink. From those who were evil, Jesus received evil, but as Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.” In John 10:17-18, Jesus prophesied, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” Jesus fulfilled His own words and obeyed His Father’s command when He willingly “gave up His spirit” and died on the cross. Death means separation. Jesus separated His spirit from His human body when He died on the cross according to His timing, according to the moment (time) He chose. Only the divine Son of God could and would do that to save us from our sins and grant us eternal life. He declared “It is finished,” because He had completely obeyed His Father’s commands and He had finished what they had agreed He would do in the world. He had died a once and for all sacrificial death on the cross to save believers in Him from eternal death. The Lamb of God is also the Good Shepherd. In John 10:11, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” The chief priests, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers had not taken Jesus’ life from Him on the cross; rather, on the cross at the precise moment Jesus chose, He laid it down according to the Scriptures and He would take it up again three days later, on a Sunday, the first day of

a new week. Only the divine Son of God could and would die and live again according to His own perfect timing in accordance with His Father's command and will. Jesus glorified God by finishing the work that His Father gave Him to do. Each day, Jesus finished the work that God gave Him for that day (and night). In John 17:4, Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer, "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do." Believers in Jesus can glorify God when they do the work He has given them to do as followers of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(John 19:31) Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.

Once again, the religious leaders showed their concern to obey their ceremonial laws while completely disregarding the moral laws of God, the Ten Commandments that God gave them through Moses, the Law of Love that Jesus taught, demonstrated, and fulfilled. The religious leaders would not defile themselves ceremonially by touching a dead body. But religious ceremonies cannot atone for anyone's sins, cleanse anyone from sin, or make anyone right with God; only the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can make this possible. When Jesus was crucified for us, He fulfilled the Law of God, the Law of Love. When Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross, he fulfilled the Law of Love. In Deuteronomy 21:22-23, we read this command of God, "When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession." In certain cases, after a convicted person was stoned to death, their body could be hanged on a tree and then taken down at sundown. The Romans chose to hang their criminals on a cross while they were alive so they would suffer more and longer than would be the case from stoning. Thus, the religious leaders wanted Jesus to suffer as much and as long as possible, but then they

wanted His body removed and buried according to their ceremonial law.

(John 19:32) Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.

The medical aspects of crucifixion (see above) indicate that to breathe a crucified person must push themselves up with their legs to take a breath. If their legs were broken, they could not breathe, and they would suffocate.

(John 19:33) But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

The soldiers saw no need to break Jesus' legs, which would have been done with a hammer; hopefully, with only one quick blow to each leg,

(John 19:34) Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

The medical aspects of crucifixion (see above) explain why blood and water would have come out of Jesus' side when they pierced His side. The Church has often interpreted this event symbolically to refer to two sacraments or ordinances: water (baptism) and blood (communion). In the Letter to the Hebrews we read, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). John made clear that Jesus shed His blood for us.

(John 19:35) (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)

John testified that he personally saw what he wrote in his gospel about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. John was present with Jesus' mother and they stayed at the cross of Jesus to see Him die and what would happen after His death. John told the truth that people might believe the truth. If we believe the Bible and the good news about Jesus Christ and call ourselves His followers, we do so because the Bible is true. The first step in saving faith is believing the Bible is true, so John testified that he knew he was telling the truth and nothing he wrote was a figment of his imagination. The Bible

teaches the truth and nothing but the truth regarding Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Giver of eternal life to believers in Him.

(John 19:36) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.”

In John 1:29, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” God told Moses how the Hebrews were to prepare the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:46, “It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the animal outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones.” The Bible teaches that Jesus fulfilled all the Passover lamb pointed toward when He died to save us from death. Jesus’ bones were not broken to fulfill Scripture (He had already given up His spirit). Furthermore, His bones were not broken because God sent Jesus into the world as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. In the Book of Revelation, John described Jesus as he saw Him in heaven, as the Lamb of God. He wrote in Revelation 5:11-14, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, ‘To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.” Even the fact that Jesus’ bones were not broken has eternal significance for believers.

(John 19:37) And again another passage of scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

Almost continually, John emphasized how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures. John wrote the word “scripture” eleven times compared to the word “scripture” being used only three times in the other three gospels. John wrote the word “scriptures” one time, and the other three gospels use “scriptures” a total of nine times. Please read Psalm 22 entirely, for it foretells many details about Jesus’ death on the cross and His great victory

when He rose from the dead. Most prefer the KJV, the NASB, and the NIV translations of Psalms 22:16, “For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.”

(John 19:38) After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body.

In John 12:32-33, Jesus prophesied, and John explained, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.” The Romans physically lifted up Jesus upon a cross. In John 19:38, we begin to see Jesus’ words fulfilled, for He began to draw believers to himself. As members of the Sanhedrin (the religious council), Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had been secret disciples of Jesus. After Jesus died on the cross in disgrace, they drew closer to Jesus, and they proclaimed their faith in Jesus by their actions. They were Jesus’ disciples, and they would treat Jesus as He deserved—as the Messiah. Their actions would not have gone unnoticed by those they once feared on the council, for they treated Jesus as the true King of the Jews. Jesus’ family and His disciples were too poor to bury Jesus. A common criminal would have been taken down from the cross, thrown in a trash heap, and devoured by birds and animals. But Joseph and Nicodemus could financially afford to bury Jesus with high honor. Joseph and Nicodemus became the first of millions to be drawn to Jesus because He was lifted up on a cross for the forgiveness of sins. Later, Jesus would be lifted up to heaven as John described Him in his Book of Revelation.

(John 19:39) Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.

Nicodemus must have believed Jesus’ words to him in John 3:16-18, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not

condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Joseph and Nicodemus showed that they believed in the “name of the only Son of God,” Jesus. According to God’s law, Jesus had to be buried before the Sabbath began at sunset, so Nicodemus came to bury Jesus when all could see him. A hundred pounds of spices to bury someone would only have been used for a king or wealthy person. In death, Nicodemus declared for all to see that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the true King that God had promised to send.

(John 19:40) They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Joseph provided a new tomb for Jesus, and Nicodemus provided the linen cloths and spices. It was not the custom of the Jews to embalm someone as the Egyptians did. According to the law, all these preparations had to be done before the Sabbath began, so that may be why they were unable to complete their preparations beyond wrapping the body of Jesus.

(John 19:41) Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

This is the third time John has spoken of “a garden” in his gospel. Jesus prayed in a garden, was crucified in a garden, was buried in a new tomb in that garden, and rose alive from that garden tomb. To learn more about “the garden” in the death and resurrection of Jesus and its relationship to “the first garden” in Genesis 3, see the commentary on John 19:17, in the *International Bible Study Commentary* on John 19:17-27.

(John 19:42) And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Late in the day before the Sabbath and the day of preparation for Passover, Joseph and Nicodemus were able to complete the initial preparations of Jesus’ body for burial. John described how the Jews buried people, and Luke described how the women prepared the spices, rested on the Sabbath, and returned with the spices on Sunday morning (see Luke 23:50-24:1).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Give two reasons why you think Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”
2. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “It is finished”? How did Jesus die?
3. How did the soldiers make certain Jesus had died? What did their action teach?
4. What did John say about his testimony? What does his testimony mean to you?
5. Who helped with Jesus’ burial? What did they do?

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