

1. High Profile Death:

- a. Preparation Day was the day before Passover feast. Though God was moving history to the point of Jesus' death so as to pass over our sins, The Pharisees had moved to execute Jesus so that He would be dispelled and themselves secured in their perceived power. Jesus death would seemingly eradicate their problems, His public execution on a holy day would serve to discredit Him further. "Presumably this would be viewed as doubly offensive if the day on which the desecration took place was a 'special Sabbath'. Carson footnoted: 'On the other hand, there was nothing to prohibit the execution itself from taking place on the Passover itself. Indeed, Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 11:4) insists that the execution of a rebellious teacher *should* take place on one of the three principal feasts, as a salutary lesson to the people (*cf.* also Dt. 17:13; SB 2. 826).'"¹
- b. Another Tragic Irony: just as the Pharisees refused to enter the Praetorium so as not to be ceremonially defiled whilst damning themselves by falsely accusing Jesus, they again are more concerned with the curse of the land (*cf.* Deut. 21:23) than their sins. Therefore, they seek expedition of the execution. "The normal Roman practice was to leave crucified men and women on the cross until they died—and this could take days—and then leave their rotting bodies hanging there to be devoured by vultures. If there were some reason to hasten their deaths, the soldiers would smash the legs of the victim with an iron mallet (a practice called, in Latin, *crurifragium*). Quite apart from the shock and additional loss of blood, this step prevented the victim from pushing with his legs to keep his chest cavity open. Strength in the arms was soon insufficient, and asphyxia followed."^{33 2}
- c. Foreseen Affirmation: God used their perverted priorities to prove the validity of Jesus actual death. What is known as Docetism had its beginnings in John's day and by the time of this Gospel account and Paul's epistles, such had to be refuted. "Already by the time this Gospel was written, there were docetic influences at work—influences that became much worse by the time the Epistles of John were written (*cf.* 1 Jn. 2:22; 4:1–4; 5:6–9). The docetists denied that the Christ was truly a man, Jesus; he only *seemed* (*dokeō*, 'it seems') to take on human form."³ Such is what the Muslims believe about Jesus' crucifixion. John, however, claims that his account is verified "this testimony is true" v. 35. It verifies that Jesus was not an apparition but a real physical human who indeed experienced death. If He had survived, His executioners would have been executed see also Mk. 15:44.
- d. Furthermore, Messianic prophesy continued after His death. The two mentioned prophesies (vv. 36 & 37) were fulfilled after Jesus gave up His spirit.
 - i. V. 36. No broken bones. Jesus – who is acknowledged as the Passover Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6ff.) – was not to have a bone broken. The explicit instructions regarding the Passover Lamb was that it not have any of its bones broken *cf.* Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12. Furthermore, Ps. 34:20 states that the one who fears the LORD, delights in and trusts Him and who is righteous will have God "guard all his bones; Not one of them is broken." This is an obvious metaphorical declaration that God will provide watchcare for those who trust Him and not a literal promise to everyone who trust the LORD will never have a broken bone – unless, of course, one

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 622). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

³³ For independent evidence, *cf.* N. Haas (*IEJ* 20, 1970, pp. 38–59), who reports that archaeologists have uncovered the body of a man crucified in the first century north of Jerusalem. One of his legs was fractured, the other smashed to pieces.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 622). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 623). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

takes it hyper literally and thus it is fulfilled because Jesus is the only true righteous One. But we understand that the application / understanding of the original readers was metaphorical not unlike many of God's promised means of watchcare. Ps. 91 perhaps is the quintessential example of such. John was thus confirming that not only was the unlikely reality of Jesus' legs escaping being broken but that He is the only righteous man who fully trusted and truly delighted in the Father cf. Lu. 23:47.

- ii. V. 37. The LORD, Pierced. Zech. 12:10. Often (if not always) when the LORD spoke to His prophet in third or second person, He was referring to Himself as the promised Messianic figure – including the role of suffering Servant. We can easily detect such proclamations because the double use of pronouns as we read here in Zech. 12:10. The cryptic, mysterious, and astounding prophecies regarding Messiah reveal multiple magisterial, paradoxical, and profound realities. The Covenant LORD (CL) would be a servant. He is multi-personed. He is both King and Servant – both human and divine. He is both Priest and Sacrifice, both Root and Branch, and on and on. Note that in Zechariah's prophesy that the Spirit is poured out in accompaniment with the One pierced. Furthermore, five verses later (13:1) we read that a fountain would be opened for sin and for uncleanness. These prophecies pointed to the results of the slain Passover Lamb of God. And, they pictured details of the means of such viz. via being slain as a Passover Lamb – and here, an actual piercing as in the detailing of no broken bones although all pointed to Jesus' legs being broken due to the Passover Feast. It was no coincidence that Jesus was crucified while the Passover lambs were also in preparation to be slaughtered and consumed. And it is no surprise that God would (and did) provide uncanny details accompanying Jesus' passion and crucifixion long before it occurred.
- e. The prophetic motif of God's self-sacrifice including the description of being stuck and pouring out life-giving and cleansing water goes further back to *Exodus*. The description of the true witness in v. 34 details both water and blood flowing from Jesus' pierced side. Looking back to Exodus, we see that the rock Moses struck provided life-giving water to Israel. Paul confirmed that such was symbolic of Jesus' being struck to provide cleansing and new life to those who put their trust in Him cf. 1 Cor. 10:4. Furthermore, the Spirit was poured out (as promised by Joel) on the day of Pentecost following Jesus resurrection.
- f. Richard Phillips pointed out: Because of the vital symbolism of the blood and water flowing from the body of Christ, it is no surprise that these have provided the themes for many a beloved Christian hymn. Fanny Crosby was inspired to write of this scene:

Jesus, keep me near the cross:

There a precious fountain,
Free to all, a healing stream,
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.¹⁰

Even more familiar to most Christians are the words of Augustus Toplady's famous hymn "Rock of Ages," which so clearly relates both justification and sanctification to the crucified body of Jesus:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,

¹⁰ Fanny J. Crosby, "Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross" (1869).

Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.^{11 4}

- g. Phillips went on to provide lyrics of another song which describes the application to these detailed prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death.

There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;

And there have I, as vile as he, washed all my sins away.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream your flowing wounds supply,

Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die....

Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood shall never lose its pow'r;

Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.^{13 5}

- h. I'll add that when we consider the prophecies e.g. of Joel and Zechariah w/ regard to the pouring out of God's Spirit, the Scriptures also cryptically proclaimed Messiah's resurrection as well – or else Jesus could not have sent the Spirit at Pentecost.

- i. This high profile execution paradoxically had intended to be both secret and public e.g. the Establishment wanted to secretly arrest and charge Jesus but have Him publicly discredited – sound familiar? They intended to display Jesus as a guilty and cursed criminal – yet He was the unblemished Lamb of God paying for the guilt of them and us cf. 2 Cor. 5:21. It seemed that Jesus' mission had miserably failed (if not backfired) yet He calmly assured His followers that He was conquering by willingly laying down and subsequently raising back up the third day. His captors attempted to make Him a spectacle but He prophetically and providentially turned the tables to shame them in His hour of glory (cf. Col. 2:15 & Jn. 12:23)!

2. High Profile & Low Profile

- a. Why did Jesus conquer paradoxically?
 - i. God must work in such a manner because we have it backwards due to sin.
 - ii. He kept the demons in the dark via cryptic prophecies (1 Cor. 2:7-8).
- b. We must follow His example. Just as Jesus took up His Cross willingly, we must take up ours. We need nor ought to seek victory in self-assertion, in numbers, in conventional wisdom, etc. We shan't seek greatness in popularity, sensationalism, nor approval.
- c. Conversely, we seek greatness in serving others and we acquire victory in humble obedience (submission) to God. This does not provide us an excuse to avoid confronting sin in the name of meekness or compassion. Jesus' meekness was displayed in unapologetically proclaiming repentance yet not demanding acclamation.
- d. The power of the Cross. Phillips sites Charles Spurgeon's comments of how Jesus' death was the event which spurred the two esteemed rulers to action. "It is obvious that these two men were changed by what they saw at the cross. Their minds had previously accepted the truth about Jesus, but their reservations were conquered only by the majesty of his atoning death and the love of God that it revealed. So it is for everyone who comes to a full embrace of Christ and his gospel. Spurgeon comments: Is it not a remarkable thing that all the life of Christ did not draw out an open avowal from [Joseph]? Our Lord's miracles, his marvelous discourses, his poverty, and self-renunciation, his glorious life of holiness and benevolence,

¹¹ Augustus M. Toplady, "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (1776).

⁴ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 600). P&R Publishing.

¹³ William Cowper, "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" (1771).

⁵ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 603). P&R Publishing.

all may have helped to build Joseph in his secret faith, but it did not suffice to develop in him a bold avowal of faith. The shameful death of the cross had greater power over Joseph than all the beauty of Christ's life.⁷⁶

- e. Jesus had earlier predicted (foretold) that the Cross would be the means of drawing all men unto Himself (Jn. 12:32).

3. High Profile/Low Profile Burial

- a. "Once the world had removed Jesus, it no longer had any concern for him, just as the world today permits no more than sentimental interest in Jesus. Israel's Messiah was therefore buried without pomp, but not without God's care for his body."⁷⁷
- b. It would seem as if Jesus' life, and influence would end in utter shame, disgrace, and condemnation, with added insult to injury as He had no provision for burial and the Passover Saturday was hours away and no burial could be done after dusk.
- c. And such as God's style, He used two unlikely candidates for the job.
- d. Joe and Nick: both likely members of the Sanhedrin who were set against Jesus. They had secretly followed Jesus but were afforded the opportunity and courage to come forth. They faithfully did so at potential and perhaps actual significant cost. Joe gave up his unused tomb valuing Jesus more than himself and Nick (who once sought Jesus in the dark of night) stepped into the exposing light of day and elaborately contributed 60 to 100 percent more perfume than did Mary in her years' worth of salary value of perfume (Jn. 12:1-8) for Jesus' burial.
- e. Jesus had the burial of a king though He was executed as a criminal. "In the fifth decade of the first century, Onkelos burned about eighty pounds of spices at the funeral of Gamaliel the elder (SB 2. 584; cf. also 2 Ch. 16:14). The implication in the present narrative is that two wealthy men used their servants to carry the spices, help take Jesus' body down from the cross, and then prepare him for burial. At a guess, Joseph saw to the legal steps while Nicodemus secured the spices."⁸
- f. It may not always be necessary (or even prudent) to reveal particular stances of convictions when not afforded the articulation of said convictions. Context is necessary. Consider the strategies of Jn. 18:15ff, 2 Sam. 16:15ff. → 17:14-16ff, and even 1 Kings 22:19-23 where God used a lying spirit to punish Ahab after Ahab's continued rebellion. See also *Joshua* 2:1-6 where Rahab lied to protect the Hebrew spies.
- g. Nevertheless, we ought never deny our Savior nor contradict our confession, we are to be clear what and why our confession is and that it is unapologetically scriptural. We shan't be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, The Word, or His Law.
- h. Just as there is a cost to following Christ, there is an infinitely greater cost to not confessing Christ cf. Lu. 9:26. Earlier in John's Gospel account, he spoke of some authorities who secretly believed in Jesus Jn. 12:42. And he then further commented on why they feared to confess Him openly v. 43. But we are told to fear not men but only God (Prov. 29:25 for fear of man is a snare. It is almost certain that these two men, who took courage when others fled, were among those (if not primarily those) of whom John earlier wrote.

⁷ Spurgeon, *Majesty in Misery*, 3:369.

⁶ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 611). P&R Publishing.

⁷ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 618). P&R Publishing.

SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926–61).

⁸ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 630). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

High Profile / Low Profile Death and Burial (Jn. 19:31-42)

- i. It seems that their ranking among the Jewish rulers was the very thing that gave them access to request Jesus' body from Pilate himself.
- j. Nevertheless, when we keep silent regarding essential salvific matters of the Gospel and fail to share the truth we only hurt ourselves and forsake true riches cf. Mat. 19:24; Mk. 10:29-31, fellowship with believers, loss of reward, and possibly eternal life (Lu. 9:26).
- k. Like the disciples and these two men, we may have kept silent and forsook opportunities to glorify Christ. However, they – the true believers – ultimately did publicly confess Christ with their words, actions, and lives. We may fear embarrassment or ostracization, but we must be careful not to choose the world or anything in it over Jesus as it seems that those of whom John spoke in 12:42-43 chose the praise of men over God and the luxuries of wealth over the poverty of Christ. Indeed, we are soberly warned by Jesus Himself not to love the world (Lu. 6:26; Jn. 15:19; 17:14). See also Jam. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-16.
- l. There are some who keep silent because they are ashamed of the church, proffering such is a den of hypocrites. Well then, why not find another healthier church and/or one you can offer loving correction. Or is it that such a soul is just too holy for such a band of dirtbags?
- m. Jesus was exalted in death after His hour of glory (Jn. 12:23) in that He was afforded a rich man's tomb (cf. Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:9).