



## Timeless Truth

Your perception (belief) regarding the cross...  
paints your personal portrait of Christ,  
His Church, and the part you'll *play or not play*  
(pun intended) as a person/people of peace.

**T/S:** ALL of Christianity's claims center on Christ's cross!

How you see the cross...  
directly determines your eternal reality!

Moreover, how you see the cross...  
will directly determine your temporal priorities  
as well as the reality of your personal relationships.

**QT:** **Bonhoeffer** says, true grace is not cheap.

*“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ. ...[Grace] is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "You were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us...”*

**CONTEXT:** Passover (lambs die today... motif throughout!)

**PREVIEW:** We'll look at 3 things... 3 ways today...

\*\*\* **READ John 19:16-27** (read quickly)

\*\*\* Note: 3 eternal essentials to realize...

**A. *Messianic* MANDATE**

**B. *Messianic* MODEL**

**C. *Messianic* MISSION**

**T/S:** Did you discern & decipher the 3 M's?

**Let's try again...**

(watch carefully)

**VIDEO:** "*Gospel of John – John 19:16-27*"

**T/S:** Did you grasp the Messianic Mandate, Model, & Mission?

*This is why we **STUDY** God's Word.*

# I. The MANDATE of Christ's Cross

**16** So he then handed Him over to them  
to be crucified.

## A. John 1:29

*Behold! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

## B. Numbers 21:4-10

**4**From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. **5**And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." **6**Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. **7**And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. **8**And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." **9**So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

C. **John 3:14-15** (cf. v.16)

*...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
**15**that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

- **Sinners were in desperate need of rescue**
- **Divinely-ordained remedy was provided**
- **Remedy defied human logic/expectations**
- **Someone performed an action (*“lifted up”*)**
- **The divine remedy looked like the problem**
- **The Remedy requires a response to work**
- **ALL real responders receive the Remedy!**

## **II. The MODEL of Christ’s Cross**

**17***They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out,  
**bearing His own cross**, to the place called the Place of a  
Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.*

## Model #1 = “Cross-Carrier”

*“Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily & follow Me.”*

**- Luke 9:23**

- THIS is cross-carrying!
- Are you willing to carry YOUR cross?
- How are you: Denying, Carrying, & Following?
- Whose “standards” & definitions are you using?

**18** *There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and **Jesus in between**.*

## Model #2 = “Voluntary Crucifixion”

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**- Galatians 2:20**

- THIS is crucifixion...
- Have you died to self yet?
- Without spiritual death, one cannot be born again!
- Are you in-church OR in-Christ?

**19** Pilate also wrote *an inscription* and put it on the cross. It was written, **“JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**

### **Model #3 = “Bold Banner-Carrier”**

*For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. – 1 Timothy 6:15*

- What in your life “speaks?”
- How is the cross championed in your life?

**20** Therefore *many of the Jews read this inscription*, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and **it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.**

### **Model #4 = “Acts 1:8 message & missionary”**

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

- How are YOU carrying the cross locally, regionally, and to the ends of the earth?
- Do YOU have a “QUILT ministry?” Why/Why not?

**21** So the *chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’”*

### **Model #5 = “How to BE hated”** (love is hated)

*“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* **- John 15:18**

- You: Politically-Correct or Passionate Christian?
- You: “Fall-Festival” or Faithful-Follower?
- You: “Ministry mall” or simple GOSPEL?

**22** Pilate answered, *“What I have written I have written.”*

### **Model #6 = “an Unwavering Witness”**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

**– Rom. 1:16**

- Can you speak with the resolve of Pilate & Esther?
- Will you persevere under pressure?
- Will you carry your cross to the end? (Matt. 24:13)

**T/S:** Don't miss the other examples Christ set...

- A. **Glorification** of God the Father (John 17)
- B. **Obedience** unto death... (Philippians 2:8)
- C. **Sacrificial Love** (cf. Paul in 2 Cor. 11:23ff)
- D. **Loving Servitude/Ransom** (Matthew 20:28)
- E. **Loving "one-another"** (John 13:35)
- F. Persevering in **Persecution** (Matthew 24:9)

**T/S:** vv.23-25 = Example of Sovereign Power/Plan

**Model #7 = "Christ is ALWAYS in Charge!"**

**23**Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. **24**So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." **25**Therefore the soldiers did these things.

**T/S:** What about the mission & it's take away...\

### **III. The Mission of Christ's Cross**

*...But **standing by the cross** of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26**When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" **27**Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple **took her into his own household.***

A. **Empower** *divine discipleship* (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

1. **Eph. 4:1 & 1 Thess. 2:12** (Life worthy of call...)
2. **Acts 1:8 & 2 Peter 1:3** (eliminating Excuses)

B. **Exemplify** *warning & worship*

1. **1 John 2:6** (MUST walk as Jesus walked)
2. **2 Timothy 3:12** (Persevere in Persecution)
3. **Luke 9:23 & 14:27** (MUST pick up cross daily)
4. **Revelation 3:16** (Lukewarms get spit out...)

C. **Ekklesia** *in Koinonia* (**John 17:21**)

**T/S:** Ok... So... let's take a 3<sup>rd</sup> & final look...

**What do YOU see... when you look at the cross?**

**VIDEO:** *“Crucifixion per Passion” (watch prayerfully)*

# What do YOU see?

A. *“What do you want?”*

- ***Christian Cross?***
- ***Church Carnival?***

B. *“Come and see!”*

- ***BE Calvary...***
- ***Church-about-ME***

# What do YOU see?

## 1. Mandate of the cross... **our Miraculous MESSAGE**

Matt. 4:17 “Repent & believe” - 1<sup>st</sup> preached words

## 2. Model of the cross... **our Missionary MESSIAH**

1 Cor. 11:1 “Follow me as I follow Christ...”

## 3. Mission of the cross... **our Marvelous MISSION**

*Whoever does not carry his own cross  
and  
come after Me (daily)  
cannot be My disciple.*

Luke 14:27

Ezekiel 33:1-9

**1**The word of the LORD came to me: **2**“Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, **3**and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, **4**then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. **5**He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. **6**But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.

**7**“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. **8**If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. **9**But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

**Let’s PRAY!**

## Research Notes

IT is very interesting to note the way in which the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in each of the four Gospels. In the Old Testament ritual there were four bloody offerings which the people of Israel were commanded to bring to God, and each of these presented the work of the cross from a different standpoint. When you turn to the opening chapters of **Leviticus** you **read of the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering...**

...in the other three Gospels we have the offerings that have to do more particularly with man and his sin. The *peace-offering* presents Christ making peace by the blood of His cross. That is the way Christ is shown in Luke's Gospel. The *sin offering* presents the Lord Jesus Christ as being made sin for us; who died not simply for what we have done but for what we are; our doings only manifest our true character as sinners. As has been said often, I am not a sinner because I sin, but I sin because I am a sinner. Therefore, the sin-offering is not merely for the acts that I have done, but because of an evil, corrupt nature which unfits me for fellowship with God. So, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." **That is the way the work of the cross is presented in Mark's Gospel**. But there is something more.

The Lord Jesus not only died for our sin, but He died for our sins. Our actual guilt had to be atoned for. He had to make up to the divine majesty for the wrong that we have done, and that is the *trespass-offering*. It is that which **is set forth in Matthew's Gospel**.

So, then here **in the record given us by John** it is particularly **the *burnt-offering* of our Lord, dying to glorify the Father**, which is set forth, and that explains why the three hours of darkness are not mentioned here. God's Word is written with marvelous precision.

In the other Gospels we have those three dark hours in which the soul of the Lord Jesus was made an offering for sin, and we hear His awful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The answer to that cry is that He was forsaken that we might not be forsaken. He took my place, "For man—oh, miracle of grace!—for man the Saviour died."

But that cry of anguish is not recorded in John's Gospel. We simply see the blessed Lord, in perfect subjection to the will of His Father, yielding Himself without spot to God in His death upon the tree. - **H.A. Ironside**

**It is remarkable how the cross of Christ brings out all that is in the heart of man, shows men up as they really are. In the light of that cross Pilate comes before us in all his cynicism and his lack of conscience. In the light of that cross the chief priests were manifested in all their hypocrisy and bitterness and their hatred of the holy, spotless Son of God. And as we follow the story, in the light of that cross we see the callousness, indifference, greed and covetousness of the soldiers who were gambling for the clothing of the crucified One at the foot of the cross; but, thank God, we see brought out in beautiful relief the loyalty, the faithfulness, the tender love of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other women, her companions, who had been blest through the ministry of Christ, and also the fealty of his devoted follower, the apostle John, the author of this book. Where were the other apostles? They had fulfilled the Word that said, "They all forsook Him and fled." But John was there at the cross. Mary, the mother, was there, and Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Cleophas, were there, looking on with loving eyes and breaking hearts as they saw the Saviour dying on that tree, to glorify the Father and to save a guilty world.**

- H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His tunic: now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." They had no idea when they said this, when they gambled for His clothing, when they determined not to tear the tunic in four places that every one should have a part, that they were actually fulfilling a prophetic utterance made a thousand years before in [Psalm 22:18](#); "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." "These things therefore the soldiers did." [Psalm 22](#) is a prophecy of the sufferings of our Saviour on that cross and of the glories that should follow, and when we turn back to it we see it begins with His cry of distress, and it closes with a shout of triumph. It pictures the Saviour suspended on that cross—"I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." And then in that hour of darkness He cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" for with these words the psalm begins. Then it goes on, "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." It tells of the place He took in lowly grace for our redemption...

So we see Him on that cross, bleeding and dying for our sins. **But as we read on in Psalm 22** we come to the last verse where we get this, ***"They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this,"*** but in a more literal translation you find it reads, ***"They shall declare that it is finished."*** So the psalm begins with the cry of distress, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and **ends with the cry of triumph, "It is finished."**

- H.A. Ironside

THIS SECTION OF the Passion story is intimately connected to what has just transpired. Thus our preliminary comments on the nature of John's treatment of Jesus' trial and death (see comments on [18:1](#)) may be applied to these verses. Jesus has been arrested in an olive orchard (or garden) in a valley east of Jerusalem, interrogated by the leadership of the Jewish high council (the Sanhedrin), and handed over to the Roman governor (Pilate), and he now has been readied for crucifixion ([19:16a](#)). Pilate's presence will still be felt as the story continues ([19:19](#), [38](#)) and many of the themes we observed in [18:1-19:16a](#) will continue in John's record. Despite the apparent tragedy of the scene, Jesus is Israel's king, and Pilate will reinforce this in the strongest terms possible. Jesus' cross does not announce that he claimed to be king, but Pilate writes, "JESUS OF NAZARETH. THE KING OF THE JEWS." It is a statement, an announcement, a challenge to the Sanhedrin leaders who want him to change it.

**- NIV Application Commentary**

It comes as no surprise that the chief priests are furious and insulted ([19:20-21](#)). They understand that the sign implies a kind of sarcastic endorsement by Rome of Jesus' royal identity, and they do not like it. "This man said, 'I am King of the Jews'" (NRSV) is their biting alternative, but Pilate for the first time in the story stands up to them. He refuses to publish a lie (even though he did not have the courage to act on the truth). Thus the scene ends and Jesus' kingship stands secure.

**- NIV Application Commentary**

### **The Facts about Crucifixion**

John begins by saying, **And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center** ([vv. 17-18](#)). When John says that Christ

bore His cross, we might visualize, as some artists have in the past, Jesus struggling down the road bearing the complete cross on His shoulders. That's not the way it happened. It was customary for the Romans, when executing prisoners, to prepare the vertical beam of the cross at the crucifixion site before the actual execution. The prisoner was then given the crosspiece, the horizontal beam, and required to hoist it on his shoulders and carry it to the place of execution. So before Jesus made His way from the Praetorium to the Place of a Skull, or Golgotha, outside the gates of Jerusalem, the vertical piece had already been planted in the ground, and Jesus was forced to carry the crossbeam.

On many occasions, prisoners were not able to accomplish the task, depending on the severity of the scourgings they had received immediately before going out to the execution site. We know from the other Gospels that Jesus was not able to carry His crossbeam the entire way, and that a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, was commanded by the soldiers to pick up the crossbeam for Jesus and take it to the hill of execution ([Matt. 27:32](#); [Mark 15:21](#); [Luke 23:26](#)).

Once at the execution site, the prisoner was placed flat on the ground and his arms were either nailed or tied to the crossbeam. In the case of Jesus, nails were used. We don't know whether He was pierced through the hands or through the wrists; that remains a questionable point in the historical record.

John tells us that two criminals were crucified with Jesus, one on either side. Matthew and Mark tell us these men were robbers, but Luke tells us that one of the men repented on the cross and Jesus promised him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" ([Luke 23:43](#)). Jesus' crucifixion alongside criminals happened in fulfillment of prophecy ([Isa. 53:12](#)).

There is something in the original Greek here that I find very special, very touching. Jesus addressed His mother as "Woman," and that sounds somewhat impersonal and disrespectful to our ears. But the word Jesus used in the Greek is *gune*, from which we get our word *gynecology*. This

was the universal term for “woman,” but it also was used frequently as an honorific, a title of endearment. When Jesus addressed His mother as “Woman,” He was using a term of tenderness. He used this same term when He spoke to His mother at the wedding feast in Cana (2:4), and He also used it to address the woman caught in adultery (8:10); in the midst of her shame and embarrassment, He spoke to her with tenderness. This is a side of our Savior we need to see—He was tender and respectful toward His mother and other women.

**- St. Andrew's Expository Commentary**

It was customary for the criminal to carry his cross, or at least the crossbeam, from the hall of judgment to the place of execution. Bible Exposition Commentary - Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Transformed (John 13-21).

The fact that this title was written in Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin is significant. For one thing, it shows that our Lord was crucified in a place where many peoples and nations met, a cosmopolitan place. Hebrew is the language of religion, Greek of philosophy, and Latin of law; and all three combined to crucify the Son of God. But what He did on the cross, He did for the whole world! In this Gospel, John emphasizes the worldwide dimensions of the work of Christ. Without realizing it, Pilate wrote a "Gospel tract" when he prepared this title; for one of the thieves discovered that Jesus was King, and he asked entrance into His kingdom.

**- Bible Exposition Commentary**

**SEE Isaiah 53...** teach/preach parallel to this passage!

NOTE: The Hebrew word *Golgotha* means "cranium, skull"; Calvary is the Latin equivalent.

That Jesus was crucified with two notorious thieves only added to the shame. But it also fulfilled [Isaiah 53:12](#), "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was treated like a common criminal!

**- Bible Exposition Commentary**

It was Passover season and there were thousands of visitors in the city. The place of execution was outside the city where many people would pass. Jesus was a well-known figure, so His arrest and condemnation would be topics for discussion. It was natural for people to gather and watch the grim scene.

**- Bible Exposition Commentary**

At most Roman executions, a centurion would be assigned with four soldiers to assist him. Since Jesus was a popular teacher with many followers, Pilate may have assigned more guards to Golgotha. It was the privilege of the soldiers to share whatever personal belongings the victims had; so they divided up all that Jesus owned—His personal clothing. He would have had a turban, a pair of sandals, an undergarment (the seamless robe), an outer garment, and a girdle. The four men each took a piece of clothing, and then they gambled for the seamless robe. This fulfilled [Psalm 22:18](#).

John does not record it, but the other Gospel writers tell us that some of the people passing by reviled Jesus, no doubt at the instigation of the chief priests and scribes ([Mark 15:29-32](#)). When you read [Psalm 22](#), you see how David used the image of *animals* to describe the people who persecuted our Lord

**- Bible Exposition Commentary**

The first time we meet Mary in the Gospel of John, she is attending a wedding ([John 2:1-11](#)); now she is preparing for a burial. The hour had come! She was experiencing "the sword" that had been predicted years before ([Luke 2:35](#)). Her silence is significant; for if anyone could have rescued Jesus, it was His mother. All she had to do was announce that His claims were false—but she said nothing! What a testimony to the deity of Christ.

- **Bible Exposition Commentary**

Even with these few details, we can begin to visualize the horror Christ endured for us. Still, that agony was just a shadow of the misery he experienced when our sins were poured upon him, and as a result, the infinitely greater horror of separation from the Father.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – John: That You May Believe.

If the cross is a diagram of his love, the positioning of the crosses is a diagram of how his love is dispensed to the world. **The Lord's enemies intended the positioning of the crosses to be his final disgrace—Christ between two convicted robbers as if he were the worst.**

Instead of being a disgrace, however, that arrangement was a fulfillment of [Isaiah 53:12](#)— "numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

- **Preaching the Word**

**Jesus' enemies did not like Pilate's inscription. At the foot of Jesus' cross, while they were gloating in his death, the sign stared back at them: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."**  
**John's use of the imperfect verb tense suggests that the Jews repeatedly asked Pilate to change the sign to read, "This man claimed to be king of the Jews." But Pilate would not change it and answered in the Greek perfect tense: "What I have written, I have**

written." Or, more literally, "What I have written, I have written, and it will always remain written." In disgust he emphasized the permanence of his statement. Christ was still in control. During his infancy, wise men from the East heralded him as King (Matthew 2:2). At the beginning of the Passion week, the multitudes had cried, "Blessed is the King of Israel!" (John 12:13). Before Pilate, Christ himself bore witness to his "kingdom" (18:36-37). And now his royal title was affixed to his very gibbet. Ultimately he will come back as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16) - Preaching the Word

QT: "Christ ruled & rules from the cross." - Kent Hughes

By virtue of his rule from the cross, Christ rightfully made and still makes imperious demands on his followers. Foremost, he demands that we yield to his lordship, which none of us do naturally, as one of Churchill's famous one-liners so well illustrates. It was directed to Sir Stafford Cripps, his austere Socialist opponent. One day as Cripps was passing by, **Churchill said**, "There, but for the grace of God, goes God." How true—for all of us. If it were not for the constant work of God's grace in our lives, we would assume the lordship of our lives. "There but for the grace of God goes a little god." Christ by virtue of his sacrifice on the cross demands absolute submission. He demands to live our lives for us!

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

*Not only that, but he demands that we take up our cross and follow him. Again, the details of the cross were well-known to the people of that day.*

Take up the cross was a colloquialism for dying to yourself, which everyone understood.

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27)

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

"And anyone who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38)

We must have a spirit of submission and commitment to the rule of Christ in our lives. As **Bonhoeffer** says, true grace is not cheap.

**Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ. ...[Grace] is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "Ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us.**

We must not forget that the cross was real. The whip and the nails were real, as was each anguished breath. And above all, his love was (and is) real. May God deliver us from ever seeing these things too casually or with cold hearts.

### **- Preaching the Word**

Our text contains a contrast between this group and another group, itself a microcosm of those under Christ's care. Four others, besides the Roman soldiers, stand at the foot of the cross. [Verse 25](#) identifies them as "his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." Four soldiers. Four women. The contrast is unavoidable. I

believe this was the purposeful work of our sovereign God so that Jesus' loving heart would be clearly seen in his care and provision for his own.

### - Preaching the Word

**Jesus' Final Instructions to His Own (V. 25-27):** Can anyone imagine the pain of those four women? Those of us who have lost loved ones in the spring of life can understand much more than the rest of us. **Mary stood there before her son. When Jesus was an infant, she and his father took him to the temple to present him to the Lord. To their delight and surprise, the aged Simeon, a righteous and devout man, was overcome by the Holy Spirit, took the baby Jesus in his arms, and sang of the blessing he would bring. Then he blessed Jesus and said to Mary:**

*"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."* ([Luke 2:34-35](#))

**There, on the cross, was the baby Mary had nursed, the boy she had held, the man who had brought her nothing but joy. But now a sword was piercing her heart.**

Parallel passages ([Mark 15:40](#); [Matthew 27:56](#)) tell us that the second woman, "his mother's sister," was **Salome, Zebedee's wife, the mother of James and John. She had been severely rebuffed by Christ for her ambition for her sons, but she had seen love in that rebuke.** Now, as Mary's sister, she was experiencing not only personal agony but sister-to-sister filial agony.

We know nothing of "Mary the wife of Clopas," the third woman (though some feel this couple is the same traveling on the road to Emmaus after Christ's resurrection in [Luke 24](#)). But **we do know much about Mary Magdalene. Seven devils had been cast out of her** ([Mark](#)

16:9; Luke 8:2). **Jesus described her as one who had sinned much and loved much. Mary was the one who had come to Jesus in a Pharisee's house while the Savior reclined at dinner. She watered his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with perfume. What misery she experienced at the foot of the cross.**

- Preaching the Word

Jesus' instructions from the cross also reveal just how perfect his love and care are. The phrase in verse 26 describing John as "standing nearby" means John was standing *beside* Mary. Evidently he was the only disciple at the cross, and he stood alongside Mary, supporting her. As **R. C. H. Lenski** said, "These two belonged together because these two were losing in Jesus' death more than the rest. Mary was losing her son, John the master who loved him beyond the rest."

- Preaching the Word

(Mary given to John's care...) **Christ's care for us may come in the form of responsibility. We would like to think that the more we love God, the less he will ask of us, and the lighter our burdens will become. But that is not necessarily so. If we love Jesus, he will make use of our love. Jesus' care for John came in the form of a burden, but that burden was a blessing. Not all the pressures we bear come because we love. Many are simply due to our own sin and stupidity. Unique responsibilities, however, are placed on those who possess great love for the Lord. Some of our burdens are, in fact, blessings.**

- Preaching the Word

The foundation of Jesus' love and care is seen in the words Jesus used (John 19:26-27). As Jesus made Mary John's responsibility, he called

Mary his "mother." Yet in speaking directly to Mary, Jesus addressed her as "dear woman." Some have supposed that Jesus was trying to protect Mary from the possible trouble that might befall her if she was recognized as his mother. Others say Christ did not call her "Mother" because he didn't want to make her emotional pain worse. But actually the reason runs far deeper. As Jesus approached the work of redemption, a new relationship was beginning to develop with Mary. At the commencement of his public ministry in Cana of Galilee, he had said to her, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" ([John 2:4](#)). And now, as the Greek suggests, "on the cross, when emotion was likely to be in evidence, it was in a matter-of-fact manner that Jesus commended his mother to the care of St. John." Their special earthly relationship as mother and son yielded to a higher, holier relationship as he became her Savior. This is the foundation of his love and care for her and for us. Mary, and those with her at the foot of the cross, found their comfort in his atoning work for them. In the ensuing days they would experience the continual refreshment of his having borne their sins, a growing sense of grace and freedom, and an increasing awareness of Heaven. This is the ground of our comfort as well. In this fallen world Christ still offers loving care and provision for his own.       **- Preaching the Word**

### **ILLUSTRATION: (Salvation/Atonement)**

One Saturday morning Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was working in his study when the custodian came in and announced there was a man outside to see him, giving him the man's card. Dr. Barnhouse read the card, which indicated the visitor was the captain of the *Mauritania*, the largest passenger vessel afloat. So Dr. Barnhouse went out to meet the man. The captain said, "You have a very beautiful church here." Dr. Barnhouse replied, "We are very grateful for all that was done by our faithful predecessors 100 years ago."

The captain went on, "It is very much like the Basilica at Ravenna in Italy." Dr. Barnhouse responded, "Actually, it's an architectural duplication. In fact, years ago they brought workmen from Italy to do the tessellated ceilings and the marble columns and the mosaic. But you didn't come to talk about architecture, did you?" The man said, "No. Twenty-three times a year I sail the Atlantic. When I come down the bank of Newfoundland, I hear your broadcast out of Boston. And as I came in this week I thought to myself, 'I've got twenty-four hours in New York, I'm going to go see Dr. Barnhouse.' And here I am."

Dr. Barnhouse was evidently very straightforward because then he said, "Sir, have you been born again?" The captain replied, "That's what I came to see you about." By this time they had reached a chalkboard in the prayer room, and Dr. Barnhouse drew three crosses on the chalkboard. Underneath the first one he wrote the word "in." Underneath the third he wrote the word "in." Underneath the middle cross he wrote the words, "not in." He said, "Do you understand what I mean when I say that those men who died with Jesus had sin within them?" The captain thought and said, "Yes, I do. And I know Christ did not have sin within him." Then over the first cross and over the third cross Dr. Barnhouse wrote the word "on." He said, "Do you understand what that means?" The captain wrinkled his brow. Dr. Barnhouse said, "Let me illustrate. Have you ever run through a red light?" "Yes." "Were you caught?" The man said, "No." "Well, in running that red light you had a sin *in* you. If you would have been caught, you would have had sin *on* you. The thieves were bearing the penalty of God." Then he wrote another "on" over Jesus Christ and said, "He bore your sins. There was no sin *in* him, but the sin was laid *on* him." Then he took the side of his chalk and over the first thief he crossed out the *on*, drew an arrow over to Christ, and said, "His sins rested on Christ by virtue of his faith in Christ." Then he said, "How about you?"

The captain was a very tall, distinguished man of British carriage, and as he stood there for a moment, Dr. Barnhouse could see he was fighting back tears. He said to Dr. Barnhouse, "By the grace of God, I am the

first man." Dr. Barnhouse said, "You mean your sins are on Jesus?" He said, "Yes—God says my sins are on Jesus!" He shot out his hand and said, "That's what I came to find out!" Dr. Barnhouse invited him to lunch and shared further with him, and the man went back to New York City a glowing Christian

## **BRIDGING the CONTEXTUAL GAP:**

AS AN INTERPRETER it is important for me to grasp John's theology of the cross. John is not simply supplementing a larger mosaic begun by the Synoptics. Each of the evangelists is a theologian weaving a tapestry that is very much his own, dependent on the traditional guidelines current in the church but nevertheless bearing marks of its creator's interests and character. If I represent John's story of the cross and lapse inadvertently into a generalized discussion of "Jesus dying on Golgotha," I will miss the unique and unrivaled message John offers. John is asking us to look through his lens. It isn't Luke's lens, nor is it Matthew's. Through John's lens we may gain a new glimpse, a fresh appraisal of an old story.

**John and the Synoptics.** The first hurdle for any interpreter, therefore, is to make a decision regarding John and the Synoptics. This is the same struggle I described in [18:1-19:16a](#), since here in the Passion story we have a significant body of material that overlaps the other three Gospels. But in the present section, it is not so much that we have literary sections that are the same between John and perhaps Mark, but that while John is writing with the same backdrop (Jesus on the cross), he records completely *different* episodes. No crowds mock Jesus on the cross. Simon of Cyrene fails to appear. There is no cry of dereliction.

But John does introduce things we have not heard elsewhere. Different prophecies are fulfilled and different words come from Jesus. Jesus speaks to his mother and delivers her into the care of the Beloved Disciple. When Jesus dies, we read about a spear-thrust and blood and water; this is joined with an explanation of why Jesus' legs are left unbroken. Here we even learn that Joseph and Nicodemus anoint Jesus' body for burial, hardly leaving room for the women to come with burial spices on Sunday.

I am strongly tempted to harmonize these details—and to some degree I must, since I am theologically committed to Jesus' death on the cross as the center point of my salvation. But I have an equally strong reflex to leave them alone, to read the Johannine story on its own terms, and to see what his tapestry looks like without unweaving it and intertwining it with the others.

**Interpretation and symbolism.** The second hurdle—and here I believe we confront a far more difficult challenge—is to place some hermeneutical boundaries on the symbolism of the chapter. It is evident by now that John is a writer who loves wordplay and double meaning. Sometimes he tells us up front what the deeper meaning is (e.g., [2:21](#); [11:49-53](#)); at other times he is subtle, leaving us to guess (e.g., [3:5](#); [4:10](#)). But how do we know when John is simply describing events he has witnessed at the cross ([19:35](#)) and when is he suggesting that we should look beneath the surface, obtaining meanings that are nuanced and figurative?

Two hermeneutical principles must control how we work.

(1) Symbols must be anchored responsibly in the wider cultural context of first-century Judaism or Hellenism, teasing out, as it were, the background John's audience knows well. This is the case when Jesus is dying on the cross. Passover symbolism abounds, and John is likely assuming that his audience (which knows Passover ritual) will recognize it at once.

(2) Symbols must also be anchored in the literary clues John has provided elsewhere in his story. This is true, for example, when we link the water and blood description to other references to water in the Gospel, especially to the one that predicts water flowing from Christ himself ([7:37-39](#); cf. [4:15](#)). In this case, I must treat John's Gospel as a literary whole, employing intratextual links as keys to meaning. John wrote chapter 12 knowing what he would write in chapter 19. When he was finished, he perhaps returned to chapter 12 and revised it, fine-tuning allusions and connections. It is no accident that Joseph of Arimathea is described in [19:38](#) as a secret disciple who feared the temple leaders. One glance at [12:42-43](#) shows that John has in mind a *type* of disciple, one whose image Joseph matches exactly.

**Major ideas.** If we try to organize the chief themes at work in [19:16b-42](#), it becomes apparent that three major ideas are at work. (1) The subject of Jesus' kingship, which played such an important role in [18:28-19:16a](#), continues here. If Jesus is indeed "the king of the Jews" ([18:19](#)), we should expect to see kingship themes at work in the present section. On the cross, he is "lifted up" (not merely crucified), and after he dies he is buried in a manner highly peculiar for a common criminal.

(2) John's theology of the cross incorporates not simply suggestions of glorification, but also the idea that Jesus is a sacrifice dying on the cross, and we must draw our understanding of this imagery from the season in which he dies, namely, Passover. The presence of genuine Passover motifs in chapter 19 has come under debate in recent years, and occasionally commentaries will note it. But we must be clear that it is exegetically reasonable and defensible to see that John has a theology of sacrifice and that salvation and eternal life are dependent on Jesus' death, not merely his revelation of God. This means that John's view of Jesus on the cross coheres with the overall New Testament presentation of Christ's death. In John's thinking, there is no doubt that the "blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin" ([1 John 1:7](#)). Thus, look confidently at the cross in chapter 19 as a place of redemptive sacrifice. – NIV...

## **CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE:**

**Jesus the king.** We discovered in [18:1-19:16a](#) that Jesus is Israel's king *incognito*. John constructs his story to make the regal glory of Jesus the central motif of his Passion story. In the crucifixion and burial scenes, John returns to this theme. For instance, we already know that Jesus is "lifted up" on the cross, lifted as if elevated in glory ([3:14](#); [8:28](#); [12:32, 34](#)). Here the title over the cross ("JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS"), which will *not* be changed, makes the imagery obvious.

It is not that he is merely king over Israel, but John notes that Jesus' title is written for all of the major languages of the Mediterranean: Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. This king is not a provincial ruler, but a supreme monarch, whose authority now sweeps up those people speaking "foreign" tongues. Jesus has "other sheep" not of this fold ([10:16](#)), who also will benefit from his heroic deed as a dying shepherd ([10:17](#)). These are sheep who do not speak Aramaic, sheep outside the flock of Israel. The title on the cross, therefore, anticipates Peter's gigantic step into Caesarea, where he claims one of Jesus' Latin-speaking sheep ([Acts 10:30-48](#)). It also anticipates the Greek-speaking church of Antioch ([11:19](#)), whose place in the kingdom was challenged by other Christians in Jerusalem. Jesus is a *global* king, and in God's eye the cross included countless more languages than these three: Russian, Swahili, Swedish, Bemba, Arabic, Spanish; [19:20](#) suggests that there is no limit. - NIV

[19:17](#), where John emphasizes that Jesus carried his *own* cross to Golgotha. This reminded early church fathers such as Chrysostom of [Genesis 22:6](#), where Isaac carried the wood (laid on his back by Abraham) needed for his sacrifice. In first-century Judaism Isaac was held up as a model who accepted voluntary death, and most interesting, his sacrifice was dated on Nisan 15, the date of Passover. Moreover, the phrase "God himself will provide the lamb" ([Gen. 22:8](#)) became the basis of lamb sacrifice, generally leading Jewish interpreters in the first century to compare Isaac's near-sacrifice with the lamb of the Passover story.

When Jesus bears his wooden cross at Passover—as a lamb whose limbs cannot be broken—Jewish readers may at once have recalled Isaac, the precious son of Abraham, whose story was repeated and cherished at this time of year. [Genesis 22](#) describes Isaac as "the only son," a word translated in the LXX as the "beloved" (Gk. *agapetos*) son.

Viewing Jesus as a sacrifice that covered personal sin was important to John and his followers. Walking in the light means having the blood of Christ as a cleansing for sin ([1 John 1:7](#)). Paul presses this application further. Calling his followers to be righteous, he uses Passover terminology: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)). In other words, it was commonplace among the earliest Christians to look at Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, even a Passover lamb, slain for their benefit.

**Thus, as we view Christ dying on the cross, we too at once should reflect on the benefits of his death for our lives. As Judaism viewed the lamb whose blood in the Exodus story saved them from certain death and led to freedom from captivity, so too Jesus' death brings protection and freedom and life. In his most explicit teaching on his death, Jesus speaks of this gift of his life as necessary for salvation ([John 6:51-58](#)). We cannot simply be enlightened by Jesus; we must see ourselves as *saved*, rescued from a crisis as terrible as slavery to the Egyptians. The pathos of the Passover story—its grim tale of slavery and the thrill of its redemption—must be recreated in our hearts if we are to appreciate the depth of what John saw when he witnessed Jesus dying on the cross that Passover season.**

**Recreating this story for people today requires that we must both dramatically relive the Passover story and Jesus' participation in it as well as generate modern stories that help us reexperience the meaning of costly sacrifice. Books of sermons have these in abundance, and sometimes I fear that they trivialize the depth of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. While many of these stories seem**

**emotionally overcharged, I recently discovered a story that was truly astounding. Albrecht Dürer was the famous artist of the German Renaissance, who lived from 1471-1528 in Nürnberg, Germany. Many Christians will have seen his famous wood cuttings of the horsemen of the Apocalypse. In 1508 Dürer made his famous "Study of Praying Hands," which were modeled on his best friend, Franz Knigstein. These two men were young, poor, aspiring artists who had made a pact. They "drew straws" (or "lots" in that day) and the man who won would go on to art school, supported by the labor of the other. When one artist found fame, he would return and finance the art studies of his friend.**

Dürer won. Later when he returned to his friend in Nürnberg, he found him in ill health from hard work, his fingers so disfigured through labor that he could not study art for the rest of his life. His fingers were so twisted and bent he could not even hold a brush. Dürer was filled with sorrow, and once when he saw his friend praying, he was so moved by his sacrifice and piety that he modeled his "Study of Praying Hands" on Franz's hands. The portrait became a testimony to his friend's sacrifice that marked Dürer for the rest of his life.

### **- NIV Application Commentary**

The theme of the cross runs throughout John's gospel. Sin dooms mankind to spiritual death, which results in eternal separation from God in the never-ending punishment of hell. In [8:24](#) Jesus solemnly warned, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." In [3:36](#) John the Baptist added, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (cf. [Rom. 1:18](#); [5:9](#); [1 Thess. 1:10](#)). The only remedy for sin and its eternal consequences is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the cross. Because "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" ([Heb. 9:22](#)), Christ "has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" ([v. 26](#)). Thus Jesus said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth,

will draw all men to Myself" ([12:32](#)). Those who look to Him in saving faith will be redeemed from slavery to sin, forgiven, and granted eternal life ([1:12](#); [3:15-18](#); [5:24](#); [6:35,40,47](#); [11:25-26](#); [12:46](#)). It was to persuade sinners of the truth that salvation comes only through believing in the person and work of Christ that John wrote his gospel ([20:31](#)).

The unjust, unfair, sham trials of the Lord Jesus Christ were over. Although he declared repeatedly that Jesus was innocent of any crime, Pilate, cowed by the Jewish leaders' threat to report him to Rome ([19:12](#)), caved in to their demands and "handed Him over to them to be crucified" ([19:16](#)).        - **MacArthur New Testament Commentary**