

EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Death on a Cross

John 19:16–37

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There can be no more ominous words in all biblical literature than John's succinct description of this final journey for Jesus: "So they took Jesus away. Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called the Place of the Skull" (John 19:16–17).

One can only imagine the thoughts running through the Savior's mind as He stepped closer to that place of horror—His final appointment in carrying out His Father's will on Earth. Yet it was there on that cruel tree where humanity's redemption was paid in full by the precious blood of the Lamb, Jesus, God's Son.

What wonder and deep contemplation these scenes evoke in our hearts! As you study, don't forget to pause and worship, offering a word of gratitude to Him whose death made eternal life possible for the vilest of sinners. Praise Him! Praise the Lamb that was slain!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

By reading like accounts of this passage in the other gospels, you can gain a fuller understanding of the deep meaning of Christ's death. Take a few minutes to read the corresponding passages in the other gospels and jot down your thoughts and impressions.

Matthew 27:26–34

Mark 15:16–23

Quotable

For Jesus, the cross was not a place of despair and defeat but of hope and victory—the altar on which the spotless Lamb of God would bear our sins and from which He declared His triumphant words, "It is finished."

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Luke 23:23–31



Observation: Jesus Nearing the Cross

Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation. John provided some compelling details in John 19. Using what you know about observing the text, make some notes in the spaces below about *what you see*.

Historical Orientation: How Time and Geography Frame the Story

The biblical writers used details regarding time and place as literary devices to shape meaning and move their narrative forward. In fact, geography as a theme plays a huge role in the unfolding of the entire biblical story—from Genesis to Revelation. It makes sense for us to pay close attention to those markers in the text.

The Importance of Time

According to John 18:28, Jesus' trials began and ended “in the early hours of the morning.” Trace the account from John 18:28 to John 19:17. What significant things occurred during this brief span of time?

What happened around the noon hour (John 19:13)?

Meditate for a brief time on all that Jesus had endured to this point. What comes to your mind? What emotions do you feel?



Make some notes about how those thoughts may be incorporated into a lesson or small group Bible study on this passage.

The Significance of Geography

The biblical writers skillfully employed geography to emphasize meaning. Read back through John 19:16–37. Write down all the places and geographic clues John included as he described the scenes.

Orienting yourself geographically is critical for understanding the meaning of a biblical passage. One of the best ways to do that is to consult a Bible atlas or set of maps in your study Bible. Go to the back of your Bible and locate a *map* titled “New Testament Jerusalem” or something similar. Spend some time studying the map and locating Herod Antipas’ Palace (right in the middle). Then trace your finger slightly southwest to find Herod’s Palace. This is likely the place John mentioned in John 19:13 . . . “the Stone Pavement” or in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*.



Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 19 provides a record of events that led to the crucifixion of Jesus. John carefully chronicled each agonizing moment of Christ’s suffering all the way to the cross. Let’s look closely at what John desired for us to understand about the significance of His death.

A Scouring of the Victim—John 19:1

Although completely unwarranted, Pilate had Jesus scourged (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15). There were two kinds of scourging in Jesus’ day: Jewish and Roman. Jewish law specified that the victim could not receive more than forty lashes (Deuteronomy 25:1–3). Roman law was not so humane. A man trained in torture, called a lictor, administered the merciless scourging.



Contemplate the pain and agony Jesus endured because of this violent form of punishment. Why would John include this detail for his readers?

Mocking by the Soldiers—John 19:1–3

Cruel soldiers, who circled around Christ's bloody body like vultures, harassed Him with vile words (Matthew 27:27–31).

Reflect for a few moments on the emotional wounds that can result from verbal abuse or mocking. What emotions come to your mind?

After suffering the violent punishment of the lictor's whip, what must Jesus have felt as He was then pummeled by these vicious verbal attacks?

Walking to the Site—John 19:17

After Pilate pronounced judgment on Jesus, Jesus was led away and carried His own cross to the place of execution (John 19:17). Why is it significant that John included this detail of Jesus carrying His own cross?



What does it indicate about Jesus' willingness to endure this suffering and ultimately death?

Nailing on the Cross—John 19:18–22

Crucifixion was a barbaric form of capital punishment that began in Persia. Criminals were fastened by iron spikes to vertical shafts of wood and suspended above the earth to die from exposure, exhaustion, or suffocation. Death was painfully slow and publicly humiliating.

What images do you have in your mind of Christ's crucifixion based on John's account in John 19:16–37?

Lifted above the earth, Jesus could look down from the cross and see the soldiers gambling for His clothes, unknowingly playing their part in the fulfillment of Scripture (John 19:23–24).

Why is this significant to John's story?

Jesus could also see His mother, Mary, tortured by watching the brutality of her Son's execution. In Jesus' words about His mother which He spoke while hanging on the cross, what do we learn about His thoughts and emotions in those final moments (19:25–27)?



Dying from the Pain—John 19:28–30

Excruciating pain accompanied every upward push for breath and downward release from fatigue. Each movement cut deeper into tendons and raw muscle. And in time, flies and other insects found their way into the open, bleeding wounds. Jesus knew He had accomplished everything the Father had sent Him to do. To fulfill one last prophecy from Scripture (Psalm 69:3, 21), He said:

“I am thirsty.” A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it to his lips. When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28–30)

Reflect for a moment on the significance of John recording these final, agonizing moments of Jesus’ life. How do you think John must have felt as he watched Jesus die and then later as he wrote down his account of Christ’s death?

What do you believe Jesus meant when He declared “It is finished”?

Dealing with the Body—John 19:31–37

John, the only disciple at the foot of the cross, provided an eyewitness account of what was done with Jesus’ body.

What details of Jesus’ death did John include in verses 31–37 that corroborate His death?



What is the significance of John quoting from Zechariah 12:10 in verse 37?

How does this detail contribute to John's goal of wanting everyone to believe in Jesus as God's Son?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

By comparing other passages of Scripture with the passage you are studying, you can confirm and verify your interpretation. Often, the New Testament writers would draw upon a passage from the Old Testament to strengthen their theological point.

Read carefully and prayerfully Isaiah 53 in its entirety. As you do, make some notes about what images and descriptions remind you of the scenes and events John described in John 19:16–37. Be as specific as possible.

How does Isaiah's prediction about the suffering of the Messiah help you understand the meaning and significance of John's account?





Application: Jesus Took Our Place

Reflecting on the death of Jesus comforts us with the knowledge that He suffered the penalty of sin so we would be free. Two important applications can be drawn from this study to encourage us in our walk of faith.

1. When we focus on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, we have confidence that our salvation is secure (Hebrews 12:2–3).
2. When we meditate on His suffering and death, we gain a new perspective on our own circumstances and trials. We have hope in Him and find rest from our own weary struggle knowing He has already tread that path for us (1 Peter 2:21).

How does this study of Christ's death give you confidence and hope in light of your circumstances today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for sending Your one and only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die in my place. I receive Him as Lord and Savior of my life. Thank You for giving to me His righteousness and offering to me the gift of eternal life in His name. I praise You for His wonderful gift of grace. In Jesus' name, amen.



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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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