Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (20)

Jesus’ Death

**Scripture Reading:**

14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, Behold, your King! 15 They cried out then, Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him! Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king except Caesar. 16 Therefore at that time he delivered Him to them that He might be crucified. Therefore they took Jesus.

17 And bearing the cross for Himself, He went out to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 Where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, on this side and that, and Jesus in the middle. 19 And Pilate wrote a notice also and put it on the cross; and it was written, JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 This notice therefore many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Do not write, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am the King of the Jews. 22 Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. 23 The soldiers then, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, a part for each soldier, and they took the tunic as well. But the tunic was seamless, woven from the top throughout. 24 They said therefore to one another, Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots for it to see whose it shall be, that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says, “They divided My garments among themselves, and for My clothing they cast lots.” So then the soldiers did these things. 25 And there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother’s sister and Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary the Magdalene. 26 Then Jesus, seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing by, said to His mother, Woman, behold, your son. 27 Then He said to the disciple, Behold, your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had now been finished and so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. 29 There was lying there a vessel full of vinegar; therefore, they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and brought it to His mouth. 30 Then when Jesus had taken the vinegar, He said, It is finished! And He bowed His head and delivered up His spirit.

31 Then the Jews, since it was the day of preparation and so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath day was a great Sabbath), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other man who had been crucified with Him. 33 But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He had already died, they did not break His legs; 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. 35 And he who has seen this has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he says what is true, that you also may believe. 36 For these things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “No bone of His shall be broken.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” (John 19:14-37)

**Ministry Reading:**

When the Lord was on the cross He spoke seven words. These seven words from the cross are quite famous. The first word the Lord spoke was, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34); the second was, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43); and the third was “Woman, behold your son....Behold, your mother” (John 19:26-27). These three words were spoken during the first three hours of the Lord’s crucifixion. The Lord was on the cross for six hours—from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is recorded very clearly in the four Gospels. During the first three hours, everything that was done to Him was done by man. The people persecuted, mocked, and crucified Him. But during the final three hours, everything that happened to Him was done by God. God looked upon Him as the sinner and as the substitute for sin, and judged Him. During the second period of three hours, He spoke four other words. In Matthew 27:46 the Lord Jesus said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” This was the fourth word spoken from the cross. The fifth word was, “I thirst” (19:28); the sixth was, “It is finished” (19:30); and the seventh was, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46).

The word, “Father, forgive them,” is a prayer for sinners. Likewise, the word, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise,” is a gospel promise to saved sinners. But here, in 19:26-27, the Lord said to His mother, “Behold, your son,” and to His disciple, “Behold, your mother.” These words indicate the union of life, because John’s Gospel testifies that the Lord is life imparted into His believers. It is by this life that His loved disciple could be one with Him and become the son of His mother, and she could become the mother of His loved disciple. According to John’s record, Jesus was crucified for the transfer of life, for the imparting of His life into His disciples.

In Luke the Lord died to redeem sinners from the curse of sin. Although we may be as sinful as the thief, we too can be redeemed from the curse and go immediately to be with the Lord in Paradise. Thus, in Luke we have a gospel concerning the Lord’s redeeming death to preach to sinners. But in John the Lord Jesus died to release and impart Himself as life into the disciples, thus making all the disciples identified with Him.

One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and “immediately there came out blood and water” (19:34, 37). Although the Lord’s resurrection life was not broken, He Himself was broken that His divine life might be released. Here, water signifies life. This is portrayed in the Old Testament by the smitten rock out of which the living waters flowed to quench the thirst of the children of Israel (Exo. 17:6). The Lord is the rock who was smitten on the cross. He was broken so that His divine life could flow out of Him as living water. Not only did water come out of Him but also blood, the symbol of redemption. Before we can take the Lord as the living water of life, we must firstly be cleansed. Thus, blood is mentioned as the first item and water as the second. After we have been cleansed by the blood, then we are enabled to receive the Lord as life.

The blood which flowed out of the Lord’s side is for redemption (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rom. 3:25). Hebrews 9:22 says, “Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” The blood here signifies the redemptive aspect of Christ’s death (John 1:29). The blood which flowed out for our redemption was typified by the blood of the Passover lamb (Exo. 12:7). As Zechariah 13:1 indicates, this redeeming blood formed a fountain for the washing of sins. Hallelujah for such a fountain! This fountain is not for drinking but for washing. The blood which flowed out was also for purchasing the church (Acts 20:28). The blood which formed a fountain for the washing of sins was the price of the purchase of the church. The water which flowed out of His side signifies the life-imparting aspect of Christ’s death. Water is for the imparting of life, typified by the water flowing out of the smitten rock (Exo. 17:6). This water became “the fountain of life” (Psa. 36:9). While the blood formed a fountain for washing, the water formed a fountain for drinking. The blood was for the purchase of the church, whereas the water, signifying the eternal life, was for the producing of the church.

When the Lord Jesus said that He was a grain of wheat falling into the ground to die that many grains might be produced (12:24), He was referring to the life-imparting aspect of His death. The dying of this grain of wheat was not for redemption; it was absolutely for imparting into the many grains the life that was in the original grain. On the negative side, Christ’s death removed our sins; on the positive side, it imparted the divine life into us. As we believe in Him today, our sins are removed by His redemptive death, and eternal life is imparted into us by His life-imparting death. This life-imparting death is also the life-releasing, life-propagating, and life-multiplying death. It is the generating and reproducing death.

The life of wheat is confined within the grain. By death, the life in the grain is released. Likewise, by His death on the cross, Christ’s divine life was released. Hence, His death was the life-releasing death. Since His divine life was not only released out of Him but also imparted into us, His death was the life-imparting death. On His side, it was the life-releasing death; on our side, it is the life-imparting death. Moreover, it is the life-propagating death, for by it life is spread in many directions. Furthermore, it is the life-multiplying death, causing the multiplication of life. It is also the life-reproducing death, for the one grain has been reproduced in the many grains. How we need to be impressed with these wonderful aspects of the Lord’s all-inclusive death.

Question for Discussion: What are the two aspects of the Lord Jesus’ death? Share with one another your knowledge and appreciation of His death.

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 43