

Matthew 27:37-50 (Jn 3)

“Behold what Manner Of Love”

There’s an interesting event that takes place in the wilderness wanderings of ancient Israel. They’ve been delivered from Egypt, but they’ve not taken the Promised Land. & As you know, what was meant to be an 11 day journey ultimately ended up being a 40 yr death march due to unbelief as God sentenced an entire generation to wander in the wilderness until they died because they refused to trust Him & to take the land He’d promised to them (w/the exception of 2, Joshua & Caleb because they believed God & had it in their heart to act upon His word).

But we find them in their journey (there in Num 21) & we read that the soul of the people became discouraged along the way. They began to speak against God & against Moses saying, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt only to die in this wilderness? There’s no food, there’s no water & our soul *loathes* this worthless bread!” (They were tired of eating manna everyday).

So we read that God sent fiery serpents among the people (it doesn’t mean they were on fire, but that their bite burned like fire: poisonous) & they would bite the people & as they did the people were dying. & So the people cried to Moses saying, “We’ve sinned! We’ve spoken against the Lord, & against you; pray to the Lord that He take away these serpents from us!” So Moses prayed & God said to him, *“Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”*¹

You say, “How does that work?” I don’t know. It makes no sense intellectually, medically, I can’t connect the dots rationally. All I can tell you is that in order for the transaction from death to life to take place, you had to believe the word of God & by faith *act upon the word of God looking to that bronze serpent raised up on that pole...*

Flash forward some 1440 yrs (give or take) & we find ourselves in the 3rd Ch of the gospel of John listening in on a conversation that takes place between Jesus & a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. He has questions, Jesus has answers. So Jesus tells him, “Nick, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nick is all, “How can a man be born again when he is old? Is he to enter into his mother’s womb a 2nd time?” Jesus begins to school him concerning the things of the Spirit but Nicodemus just can’t connect the dots...
Look at Vs 9

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Nu 21:8-9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 9-17

Wait. What? Did you see it? There in Vs 14? Jesus just reached back some 14-1500 yrs & applied that situation w/Moses & the serpent to Himself! He's saying that just as Moses lifted up that serpent in the wilderness, even so, He Himself would be lifted up, so that if people would by faith look to *Him* they'd never perish but have *eternal* life.

He's saying, "Nicodemus, here's how the transaction takes place that transitions us from death to life (spiritually). All of mankind has been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin, & they're dying. But God has provided an escape, away to live again. I will be lifted up (a reference to the cross) & if people will just trust the word of God & by faith look to *Me*, they'll be forgiven of sin & given new life." Now I can't explain it rationally, medically, intellectually, it's a transaction that takes place *spiritually* & it happens by faith.

As we enter today's text Jesus has been betrayed, tried, tortured & crucified. When we last left off, there He was, suspended between heaven & earth, upon the cross (Jacob's ladder, right?). *That* picture is painted for us in Gen 28 in Jacob's dream where he saw a ladder set up on the earth & the top reached into heaven, & the angels of God were ascending & descending upon it. **The cross of J.C. is the "ladder" (if you will) that bridges the gap between heaven & earth, it's man's only access into heaven. Jesus said that *He* was the door, that *He* was the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, that *He* was the way the truth & the life & no one comes to the Father except through Him.**

So we understand that the cross wasn't plan B, it wasn't a contingency plan that God threw together. The bible declares that the cross was ordained from the foundation of the earth. **It's a place where beauty & brutality meet, unparalleled brutality & unmatched beauty in the love of God, in the Person of J.C. for you & me. When the depravity of man was at its lowest, the display of God's love was at its highest...**

This is what Paul was talking about when he said, **"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."²**

We see it in Vs 35 of Matt 27, "Then they crucified Him..." & It's not that He simply died for us, but as Paul points out to the Philippians (2:8) He died *even the death of the cross*.

I mentioned to you last week that I would brief you on some of the physical effects of the cross. In Matt's day there was no need to go into it, they were all too familiar w/it.

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ro 5:7-8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But in his article in the Journal of the American Medical Association entitled, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” Dr. William Edwards says this, (I’ll just share a few excerpts) “Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.”

“Driving the nail through the wrist severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve caused bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and often resulted in a claw-like grip in the victim’s hands.” “Beyond the severe pain, the major effect of crucifixion inhibited normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to lock the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, thus hindering exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which hindered breathing even further. To get a good breath, one had to push against the feet and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced more pain, and flexing the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back (*torn open from the scourging*) against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a sooner death.”

He speaks of the insects that would often burrow into the eyes, ears, or open wounds... One final comment, “Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss; being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration; stress-induced heart attack; or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe.” --- “Then they crucified Him...”

Vs 36-37

They didn’t want anyone taking pity on Him, or perhaps try & rescue Him, so they would sit & keep watch over Him until the end.

Last week I mentioned to you that they would commonly either hang a sign around the neck of the criminal or have a herald carry the sign spelling out their crimes as a deterrent to would be offenders toward Rome. Here in Vs 37 we read what Pilate nailed to the cross above the head of Jesus, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”.

Of course Jesus was much more than the King of the Jews (though that was completely accurate) He was/is the King of the universe, of all creation. But the Jews objected to this, they asked Pilate to change it to say, “He said He was the King of the Jews.” But after all his vacillation Pilate held the line on this one...

He said, "What I have written, I have written..." Paul the apostle, in writing to the Colossians picks up on this same imagery of writing the things one is guilty of & nailing it to the cross when he speaks there of the forgiveness that we've found in the cross of J.C.

He writes, *"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."*³ Everything that was against you, that was "contrary" to you God has taken out of the way. He's taken every accusation against you (that should rightfully crucify/condemn you) & has nailed it to the cross of Jesus. His righteousness/justice has been totally satisfied in the perfect sacrifice of His own Son on our behalf.

Vs 38-44

Matthew is careful to note humanities complete rejection of J.C. Even the criminals being crucified on either side of Him were reviling Him... He could not have attained a lower position, a lower status. This is what Paul was talking about in the book of Phil saying that Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. & *Having humbled Himself more than any other God has also exalted Him more than any other & given Him the name which is above every name... that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow... every tongue should confess that J.C. is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

Now we know that one of the thieves actually/eventually repented & trusted in Jesus, but the other did not (Luke 23:39-43). However; that's not Matt's emphasis. He's highlighting the fact that Jesus was being blasphemed & rejected & actually tempted to come down from the cross...

In the midst of His staggering display of love, rather than being honored & worshipped, He was blasphemed & mocked. "Save Yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross!" ---

Wait a minute... there's something in that statement that sounds familiar isn't there? "If you're the Son of God..." Where have I heard that before? It was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, wasn't it? When Satan was tempting Him in the wilderness.

You know, I've heard a lot of sermons where people say that it was Satan's agenda to get Jesus on the cross, but he didn't know that it was *at the cross* where he would be defeated...

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Col 2:13-14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

My only contention w/that is that the bible doesn't say that anywhere. It's true that Satan is a murderer from the beginning, we see Satan inspiring people to try & kill Jesus all throughout His mission. Herod tried to have Him killed as a small Child, the people were influenced to try & stone Him, there was a time when they wanted to throw Him off a cliff!...

But when it comes to the cross, it was no secret that Jesus came for this purpose. God spoke of Satan's defeat as early as Gen Ch 3, Ps 22 prophesies the cross, Isaiah speaks of being #'d w/transgressors (as we see Him crucified between thieves)... Jesus spoke of it multiple times... It seems more accurate to me that Satan sought to get to Jesus *before* the cross (even inspiring Peter to encourage Jesus to avoid it). Remember, Jesus turned to him (Matt 16:23) saying, "Get behind Me Satan! For you are an offense to Me..." & Now that He's *on* the cross the temptation is to come down *off* the cross, to *save Himself*... Look at **Vs 42** (read)

Notice they're mocking Him as a Savior, as a King, in Vs 43 as One who trusted in God & as the Son of God... They're mocking Him for who He is...

But they've missed the point of His coming altogether. They say that if He saves Himself they'll believe Him, yet they testify of the truth & they don't even know it. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." No truer words have ever been spoken.

Had Jesus saved Himself, He couldn't have saved you... or me. However, in choosing to save others, He could not save Himself. But He didn't come to be served, but to serve & to give His life as a ransom for many. It's precisely because He *is* the Son of God that He can't come down from the cross. He's paying the price for the sin of the world. **It's interesting though, He'd do something even greater than come down from the cross, He would rise from the dead, yet they still wouldn't believe... Faith isn't birthed by miracles, faith comes through hearing & hearing by the... word of God (Rom 10:17).**

So don't be surprised when people heckle *you*, or mock you for trusting in God when your life is in a mess. "I thought you trusted God?" They did the same thing to Jesus on Friday, but Sunday was comin. You wait, you watch & you'll see.

Vs 45

By this time Jesus has been on the cross for 3hrs. Mark tells us that He was crucified at 9:00 in the morning. For 3hrs He hung in open shame for all to see. This wasn't someone else, no one was crucified in the place of Jesus, He was there for all to see. @ Noon darkness came upon the land & it lasted for 3 additional hours.

This wasn't a solar eclipse (that requires a new moon, Passover hosts a full moon so it's technically impossible) not to mention it lasted for 3hrs, which is much longer than any solar eclipse could last.

This was simply a supernatural transaction that took place (having rejected the light of the world, the land was shrouded in darkness). Most pastors, theologians, scholars believe that it was at this point that Jesus became the sin-offering for the world & was forsaken of the Father. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*⁴

We like to emphasize that Jesus was never a sinner, yet the bible declares that He *became sin* for us. Somehow & in some way He bore our sins in His own body & paid the penalty, bearing the wrath that they are due. Paul said, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*⁵ Peter, in regard to Christ said, *"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—"*⁶

Vs 46-49

Interesting isn't it? Jesus was misunderstood at every turn even unto the bitter end. As a child, Mary & Joseph misunderstood Him when having left Him in Jerusalem He told them He must be about His Father's business. His motives were misunderstood when after He'd heal someone, others accused Him of doing it by the power of the devil. Because He was the friend of sinners He was called a drunk. People misunderstood His words when He said, "Destroy this temple & in 3 days I will raise it up." They took it as a terrorist threat against the temple when He was speaking of His own body... Over & over Jesus was misunderstood & now here on the cross He cries out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" & Bystanders think He's crying out to Elijah to come to Him... Listen, if you're a follower of Jesus you can expect at times to have your ways, your words &/or your motives misunderstood... A student is not above his master.

After 3hrs of darkness (6hrs having hung on the cross), suffering as the sin bearing sacrifice Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What does the bible say, Is 59, *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you,"*⁷ Jesus is suffering as the sin bearing sacrifice for the sin of the world...

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 53:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 5:21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Pe 2:24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 59:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This is that which He dreaded more than anything else about the cup of the Father's wrath to be poured out upon Him. As terrible as the physical suffering was, it was the spiritual suffering that wounded Him more than any other thing...

But there's something more going on here as well. Most scholars (& I'm no scholar but I tend to agree) believe that Jesus is trying to turn attention to the 22nd Ps. The 22nd Ps graphically depicts the horrors of crucifixion hundreds of years before it was ever devised. The very 1st Vs of the Ps? *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*⁸ A few Vs down we read this, *"All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"*⁹ Wait didn't we just read that? Yup. Still later we read these words, *"They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."*¹⁰ He speaks of his bones slipping out of joint (just as happened during crucifixion as the muscles fatigued from hanging on the cross).

Jesus, clear up until He dismisses His spirit continues to demonstrate that God is in control & all this had been carefully constructed in the heart of God long before... Jesus' death upon the cross was no accident. It was an appointment.

But knowing the agony of Jesus upon the cross should affect how we see sin, shouldn't it? Sin murdered the Prince of Life, how is it that we can love it? So quickly go after it? God help us to turn from it...

Vs 50

John tell us exactly what Jesus said in this moment. One word, "tetelestai" or "It is finished!" "Paid in full!" The sin debt once & forever satisfied...

Then He "yielded up His Spirit". What that means is that Jesus dismissed His spirit. Jesus had never sinned, He had to surrender to death, it had no hold on the sinless Son of God. He voluntarily laid down His life. In Jn's gospel He said it like this, *"...I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."*¹¹ We might say that Jesus laid down His life because He willed it, when He willed it, & as He willed it. Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us... Reconciling the world to Himself in the Person of J.C.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 22:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 22:7-8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 22:16-18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 10:17-18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus Your love overwhelms us. The extent to which You have gone that You might redeem us. Words fail us in expressing the gratitude, the thanksgiving, the honor that You deserve. Thank You for loving us, for giving Yourself for us. Teach us what it means to give ourselves for You, to lay down our lives, our will, our desires & ambitions at Your feet & say, "Lord, have Your way." Fill us fresh w/Your Holy Spirit.

God loves you w/an everlasting love. What more could He possibly have done *for* you to prove to you that He loves you? The door is open, trust in the Lord J.C. Look to Him & live, be forgiven of your sin through faith in Him.