***The Crucifixion
RO30-02***

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Thus far in our study concerning the subject of justification by faith, we have spent several sessions now concerning the matter of the atonement for the sins of the world, and we have pointed out that this atonement required the shedding of the literal blood of Jesus Christ, and His actual, physical death. There is no debate about the fact that Jesus Christ had to die spiritually on the cross in order for us to be saved. There is some debate as to whether he had to shed His literal blood and die physically in order for the atonement to be provided. The blood that Jesus Christ actually shed on the cross in the process of dying for the sins of mankind, we've been going through step-by-step.

**The Bleeding of Jesus Christ Prior to the Crucifixion**

First, we pointed out the bleeding which took place by the breaking of the capillaries in the sweat glands in the Garden of Gethsemane so that He literally dripped drops of blood. We pointed out that there was bleeding from the facial blows by the Jewish Sanhedrin members, and by their guards when they were interrogating Jesus. We pointed out that there was considerable bleeding from the whipping at the hands of the Roman soldiers at Pilate's orders. And, finally, in the fourth place, there was the bleeding with the placing of the crown of thorns on His head, and the repeated blows with a stick on the head of Jesus Christ, driving the thorns, and opening scalp wounds.

Pilate had proceeded to order this kind of brutalizing of the physical body of Jesus Christ in order to try to gain sympathy on the part of the Jews who so hated him, so that Jesus would be a very pathetic looking figure. But that didn't work. They still screamed for His death. So, at that point, Pilate washed his hands of the matter, and he ordered Jesus crucified and Barabbas released. The Jews in turn declared that they and their children (their posterity, henceforth, forever as a nation) would be responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

**The History of Crucifixion**

That brings us now to the fifth reading, which was one of the most traumatic of all the moments in which Christ actually shed His literal blood. And that, of course, was the bleeding of the crucifixion. Before we get into that, let's look a little bit at the history of crucifixion. Crucifixion was the most brutal and the most hideous method of execution ever designed by man. It was actually used in human history from about the sixth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D., when it was stopped by the Emperor Constantine, who purportedly became a Christian. The method basically originated with the ancient Assyrians, and then spread from there to other nations of the ancient world. The original Assyrian method of crucifixion was actually impalement on a stake, and this was done in this fashion:

A tree would be found of a suitable diameter, and the branches would be loped off. Then the top of the trunk of the tree would be sharpened to a razor, razor sharp point. The victim then would be stripped naked; taken to the site of the execution (to this pole – this tree which had been sharpened at the top; and, three or four very strong, powerful soldiers would take hold of the legs and the arms of this man. Then they would, with a one-two-three, swing them above the sharpened stake, and ram him down on top of that stake in an upright position. The stake would enter the body through the intestines and would pierce through the diaphragm.

The soldiers perform and the execution would try to perform this with such finesse that they did not strike the heart, in order that the victim, who had been screaming wildly and twisting at the moment of impact, would continue to writhe and to scream in agony on that stake. The whole point was to have a method of execution here which was so horrible, and so fearful, and so frightening, that people could be controlled, lest they should receive this kind of treatment. The impaled body would be left on this stake to rot, and to be eaten by the vultures. It was a method, as I say, that was purposely brutal in the extreme to strike fear in the hearts of the enemies of those who were using it.

The name of the ancient Syrian leader, Ashurbanipal, became an international byword for the agonizing deaths which he ordered by impalement. He boasted himself of the great slaughter that he had caused, and how he would cover a hillside with impaled enemies, all of them sitting there writhing, screaming, and twisting.

This stick was called a "stauros." It means "cross." That's what was referred to as a cross. A "stauros" was an upright stake for the impalement of a human being. The Jews refer to this stake as a "tree." You could see how they would because, of course, this was once a tree, from which the branches had been loped off and the top sharpened. So, when the Jews think about hanging on a tree, this is what they're talking about. They're talking about a human being being impaled.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 gives direction for handling the person who has received this kind of execution: "And if a man, having committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree. But you shall surely bury him that day, for he who is hanged is accursed by God, that your land be not defiled, which the Lord your God gave for an inheritance.: Anybody who was executed by impalement in this way was viewed as a person who was under a unique curse of God. A person receiving this kind of execution was under the supreme judgment of God, and this person was considered in such a position of condemnation that he was not even to be permitted to hang on this all night. He was to be buried that same day.

This, of course, was the background in the Jewish mind of the method of crucifixion. Remember that this is crucifixion. Now, the technique changes, but we're talking about crucifixion, and first, it was this business of impalement. This was hanging on a tree. So, the Jews continued to refer to this as hanging on a tree, even when it went to the Roman method where they use the upright stake and the cross beam, and they all the victims to it. But this is the meaning, when the Jews looked upon Jesus Christ, who had been crucified, when they would say that He had been hanged on a tree, as the Jews would speak of it. That very treatment of Jesus Christ indicated that he must be under the supreme curse of God. If you experienced crucifixion, you were viewed as under the supreme curse of God.

This is what Galatians 3:13 refers to when Paul says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.'" And Paul is speaking to these Jewish oriented people in terms that they could understand – that if you saw a person hanging on a tree in terms of execution on a cross, you know that that person automatically is under the curse of God. And his point was that Jesus Christ, when He hung on that tree, thereby gave evidence that He was under supreme condemnation of God. Why? He was an innocent man. He was perfect. Well, how could he be on that cross? And of course, that's the line of reasoning to point out that He was not set for Himself. He was there because He was paying for the curse that was on other people for the sins of the world.

Now you perhaps can appreciate what we read last week in Acts 5:30, after Jesus had resurrected, and the disciples were brought in before the Jewish authorities a second time, and told that they were not to preach about Jesus. They were filling Jerusalem with their doctrine, and they were actually intending to bring this man's blood upon the Jewish people, when that was the very thing that they had declared at Pilate's judgment hall when they said, "Well, that's what we'll do. We'll take responsibility for his death." Peter answers them, "That they must obey God rather than men." Then he makes that statement in Acts 5:30, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you hanged on a tree."

Perhaps you appreciate a little more now what a terrible thing that was for Peter to say that to these Jewish leaders. Here is Jesus being presented as the Son of God, the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (all of the promises to Israel as a nation), and these people say, "You're making the city think that we are responsible for the death of this man.: And Peter turns around and says, "You hanged him on the tree, and God raised him up. You demonstrated what you thought of Him, and God demonstrated what He thought of Him.

Now, the Persians picked up this method of execution from the Assyrians, and they changed from the method of impalement that drove the stake up into the victim's body. They changed it to where they put the victim's hands up, and they pierced his hands through that sharp point. And they tied him in such a position that he could not wiggle loose. Then they left him to die. Or they added a variant where they continued with the upright, but they put on a cross arm, and they would nail the victim to the cross arm.

Now, none of this was done by the Persians to add a humane quality to execution. This was only done in order to cause a more lingering and agonizing death. A person would die much more quickly by impalement than he would if only his hands were pierced, and he was left there to hang, because he'd go on for days that way; or, if he was nailed through his hands and his feet, he'd go on for days. But this instrument was still called "the cross" (still call a "stauros"), and it was still called a "tree" by the Jews.

The purpose of all this was to create even greater fear in those that they sought to conquer.

Well, Alexander the Great came along, and he picked up the Persian technique of crucifixion. They used the "T" shape where the bar was at the top. That's what the Persians used. Alexander the Great picked up that method of using a crossbar, and he carried it to the Mediterranean world. From him, the Egyptians, the Carthaginians, and the Phoenicians adopted the practice of crucifixion as a method of execution. The Romans learned about this method of execution from the Carthaginians. They promptly added other refinements of torture and terror of their own, such as that which preceded the treatment of the victim before he ever got to the cross itself.

So, through the centuries, literally thousands upon thousands of people have died by the method of crucifixion upon the cross – sometimes hundreds at a time. During the Spartacus rebellion, the main street into Rome was lined for miles with crosses like telephone poles, with victims hanging there in various stages of dying or death or decaying. These victims had been ordered upon these crosses by the Roman emperor because they had followed Spartacus in the attempted rebellion against Roman authority. And they literally lined the streets into Rome for miles with these victims on the cross. So, crucifixion was used thousands and thousands and thousands of times.

The Romans actually used five types of crosses to execute.

One was the one for impalement that we've already looked at.

A second one was called the "crux immissa." The "crux immissa" was the cross that we are perhaps most familiar with where you had the crossbeam where it was about one-third of the way down from the top. This is called the Latin or the "long cross."

They also use another cross called the "crux commissa." This was the cross with the beam at the very top. This usually was handled such that the upright stake was, again, a sharpened stake, and they had a hole in the crossbeam, and they would drop that crossbeam into the hole so that it was balanced on the very top of the pole, and the victim was simply then crucified in that way. Well, this is called the "crux commissa" or the Saint Anthony or the "tau" cross to you because it forms the letter "T."

Then there was a fourth one that the Romans would use: the "crux decussata" The "crux decussata" was in the form of what we would call an "X." Tradition believes that this is the kind of a cross upon which Peter was crucified, so that he was crucified upside down, by his request. The "crux decussata" is also called the St. Andrew's Cross.

Then there was a fifth kind of cross that the Romans used, and that's what we call the Maltese cross, where the cross arms come completely equidistant from the top and bottom and sides. And they would sometimes use that kind of a cross on which they would stretch out the victim and, again, either tie him on, or drive metal stakes through the hand areas and the feet.

The Latin word "crux," as we have indicated, is the word from which we get our English word "cross." This method of execution was called "crucifixio" in Latin, from which we get our word "crucifixion." The Romans viewed crucifixion as the most agonizing; the most degrading; and, the most loathsome form of execution, and therefore they only used it on slaves and aliens. They never use this on Roman citizens. When a Roman citizen, such as Paul, was to be executed, he was beheaded.

Now, when they used the long cross or the "tau" cross, they either tied their victims to it, or they nailed them to it with metal spikes. They didn't nail through the palms. They generally nailed through the wrists. And the executioner would feel his way between those bones so that he went right between them, so that there was a better anchor point in order to hold the victim on the cross. With the hands, it was more likely that the flesh would tear out. So, they did not drive the stakes through the hands, but through the wrists, and that's probably what they did to Jesus.

The death, once a person was put on the cross, of course, took days, and death resulted from gangrene setting in; pulmonary breakdown; and, exposure to the elements, because the victim was always hung on the cross completely nude. And they died from dehydration, and of course, the loss of blood was continual because of the movement of the person on the cross in trying to get himself into a less agonizing position, thus opening the wounds. Then, eventually, there was enough loss of blood that shock set in.

**The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ Himself**

So, now let's look at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ himself in terms of this practice on the part of the Romans. We find that after the failure of Pilate to appease the Jews by brutalizing Jesus, he finally felt compelled, for his own political safety and his own political reasons, to actually order the execution of Jesus Christ. So, we read in Matthew 27:26 where the order is given down to execute Jesus: "Then he released Barabbas unto them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified." Mark 15:15, tells us this, as well as John 19:16.

Jesus was probably forced to carry on his shoulders only the crossbeam. This in itself weighed up to 100 pounds, and it would be quite a load for a person to carry, particularly after He had gone through the kind of physical brutalizing that Jesus had gone through. They did not generally carry the whole cross. That would be a very heavy thing to carry indeed. They didn't make these things just out of two-by-fours. This was substantial beams that these crosses were made out of. So, probably all He carried, in following Roman history that we had records of, was the crossbeam on His shoulders.

Jesus, of course, was so weak from these super beatings that He had taken, and the loss of blood that He had suffered, that He staggered under this load and was unable to carry it. So, they snagged a visiting Jew from Cyrene, a territory in North Africa, who was standing along the street, and they forced him to carry the crossbeam to the execution site on Calvary's Hill.

**Calvary**

When they came to Calvary, they stripped Jesus Christ of all of His clothing. They forced him to lie flat on the ground, and they stretched His hands over His head, and they put one hand on each end of the crossbeam. Then they proceeded to nail Him to that crossbeam. In Luke 24:39, we read, "Behold My Hands and My feet, that it is I myself." Here, after Jesus is resurrected, the evidence to His disciples of proof that it was He indeed who was crucified (the Jesus they knew). The proof was the wounds that were in his hands. And concerning the word "hands," the ancient world spoke about the hands as including the wrist. So, he's probably showing them the holes in His wrist, and it indicates here that there were holes in His feet.

Verse 40 says, "And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. So, from this verse, we know that Jesus was secured to the cross by the use of spikes (square, rough, iron spikes). They were driven into the hand area, and into the area of the feet.

So, what they did was they had Him on the ground, and they attached his hands overhead, first of all, to this crossbeam area. Of course, you can see that there was a tremendous loss of blood right there again. The upright shaft was then pulled up (hoisted up) to the top by some method, and then was secured at the proper point.

It would make no difference whether he was on the "tau" cross or whether he was on the Romans long cross. In either method, He would be raised on this crossbeam into position.

He was hauled to where he would be something like nine to twelve feet above the ground. Apparently, He was on a very, very tall cross. So, He was raised up quite high on this cross. It was their custom to write the crime of the victim overhead. We are inclined to believe that Jesus was crucified on the "crux immissa," the Roman long cross, because it would lend itself more readily to nailing something in the form of His crime above His head. However, it is not exactly certain because they could have also added to the "tau" cross a sign on a stake and nailed it to the back of the upright beam, and they could have listed his crime there. So, in either case, the sign of His crime could have been attached to either kind of cross.

There was halfway up the cross a ledge, it was really generally just a peg that came out for the victim to try to straddle, to bear some weight of the body. There was not a ledge at the bottom. Generally, the artists have drawn pictures of Christ on the cross, and under His feet you see a little platform that He's bearing His feet against. But that was not the way it was done. The peg was actually halfway up to give some support for the body, because they didn't want the flesh (when it began to rot, particularly) to tear away from those nails or from the ropes. They wanted the victim to hang there as long as possible.

The feet were placed together, and they were nailed to the upright shaft. Of course, this, again, caused considerable bleeding.

In the process of all this, you can imagine that there is excruciating agony of the position on the cross. A person in this position is hanging there with a little weight from the pig that he's straddling, with most of the pressure on the hands and the feet which have no support at all, but simply pegged through with that nail. He is going to be pushing himself up (trying to pull himself up, and trying to stretch his body up), because the only pressure point he has is this peg that he's sitting on to try to take the strain off his hands. Every time he moves, the wounds are broken open afresh. The main point of pressure downward to release that strain is going to be where the feet have been nailed. So, those wounds are going to be opened again.

Breathing practically becomes impossible until the person is almost driven out of his mind with trying to gasp for a breath to release the pressures that are build up internally, because it's very hard to breathe in this kind of a hanging position.

The loss of blood was very great here. We have a little medical proof of this, because one thing that accompanies a person who has been wounded, and has lost a large amount of blood, and who is approaching the borderline of shock, is that he becomes very thirsty. You often see movies and television programs about people in battlefield conditions where some soldiers sustains a severe wound. And he says, "I'm thirsty." So, they give him a drink of water. And because that's a very natural thing, that is exactly what happens. When there is great loss of blood, and when there is the impact of physical shock, it is evidenced by thirst.

So, in John 19:28, John takes the trouble to point out to us that Jesus was suffering extreme thirst: "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst.'" We can conjecture as to why he made a point of His being thirsty at this particular juncture, because this is just about where he is to die, and He's about to make His final declarations on the cross. So, some have conjectured that He wanted the water to moisten his parched tongue because, again, you must understand that He perspire profusely in a position like this. And a person just dehydrated in no time flat, and his tongue, undoubtedly, and his mouth area, was completely dry. So, he could perhaps hardly speak. And the water, very logically, could have been because He wanted to be prepared for that final declaration that He was going to make when He committed his spirits to God the Father.

The heart, of course, was under a terrific strain. Psalm 22 is an amazing song because it was written anywhere from 800 to 1000 years before Jesus Christ died on the cross. But it is an exact description about the death of Christ on the cross, even to the words which were used. Psalm 22 is one of the most broken chicken-bone pieces in the throat of the liberal unbeliever, or the liberal theologian, or the liberal Christian who does not believe that the Bible was a book written by God. That is because here you have a song which describes a method of execution that is clearly crucifixion, and yet, here the Messiah is being executed, and the description of that in Psalm 22, hundreds of years beforehand, to the precise letter. The only way that could have been done is because God, who knew what His plan was, could tell the psalmist what the plan was, and he could write it out.

So, Psalm 22 includes this reference to what is happening to the heart of Jesus Christ. In verse 14, it says, "I am poured out like water (meaning that He is dehydrated), and all my bones are out of joint." I don't have to explain that to you. If He's hanging here on this cross, you can imagine the strain on the shoulder joints. And literally what happened was, at one point, they were just a pop, and the bones of Jesus Christ were torn loose from the joints. And that added a fantastic agony in itself, because that was not uncommon to have in the course of crucifixion.

So, His bones were out of joint, and: "My heart is like wax." It's just losing its shape; losing its strength; and, just melting away to nothing. What He was describing there is the fact that his heart was now under such terrific strain that it was rapidly moving to the point where it was going to stop.

From noon to 3 P.M., we know that Jesus was under the additional trauma of bearing the sins of the world. That's when it really began on the spiritual death part. The physical death part began in the Garden of Gethsemane. The spiritual death part began at high noon when the sins of the world of all mankind were poured out upon the Savior. At that point, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit turned away from Christ; separated Themselves from the Son; and, He died spiritually. Spiritual death means separation from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And that is the time when He repeatedly (not just once, but repeatedly) cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" And the agonies of the human Jesus were crying out with the separation that He was now experiencing. He was a perfectly sinless man who, in the moment at high noon, became the vilest; the filthiest; and, the most covered with sin that any human being had ever lived. All of what Hitler had done; all Genghis Khan had done; all the worst tyrants of history; and, all that Ashurbanipal had done – it was all poured out on Jesus Christ. And all of that you and I have done was all poured out on Him at that point. And Spiritual death took place then.

That added to the physical trauma in a way that you and I can't enter into. We've never been sinless. We don't know what it is to never sin until one moment in time, and then to experience that sin, and the complete change that that brings about in a person.

**Psalm 22**

So, the addition of the horror of bearing the sins of the world, and the spiritual death that resulted, added greatly to His physical collapse. The whole 22nd Psalm is one, of course, that is fascinating to read, because, as I say, it proves to us that the Bible is a book that came only from God. This is one of the great prophetic areas. It proves that man could not have written it. The opening sentence is impressive when he says, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me.?" Those were the words of spiritual death: "Why are you so far from Me, and from the words of my roaring? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear. In the night season, I am not silent." This is because at high noon, the sun was clouded over, and there was intense darkness, as you remember, from noon until 3:00 pm.

So, Jesus, who was in agony during those daylight hours from 9 A.M. until 12 noon, is also in agony from noon to 3:00 P.M. in the dark season: "But You are holy, and You who inhabits the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You. They trusted, and You delivered them. They cried until You, and were delivered. They trusted in You, and they were not confounded."

Here is Jesus. We have a little opening to what He was thinking to Himself on the cross. He's reviewing doctrine. He is reviewing the history of Israel. He's reviewing the essence of God; the character of God; and, the way God has treated Him. And here at the moment of death, and at the moment of this traumatic experience, He's saying, "I'm going to come through. All is well with my soul." But He says, "Now I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of man, and despised by the people. All who see Me laugh me to scorn."

That's what Pilate was trying to get them to do. They did it when He was on the cross. He couldn't get them to do it before, so they'd relent, and let Jesus go: "They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." Logic rules supreme at the cross. They said, "You delighted in God so much Jesus. You're so confident. Let God take you off that cross."

"But You are He who took Me out of the womb. You made Me hope upon my mother's breast." Here again is the emphasis upon the physical body of Jesus Christ, which was so critical in the atonement. He had to die physically.

"I was cast upon You from the womb. You are My God from my mother's body. Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed Me." Again, here you see what Jesus is thinking. He's looking down at the cross and seeing these people, the religious leaders and others, raging around Him. They constantly were shouting insults; constantly yelling blasphemies; constantly shaking their fists at Him, and, constantly trying to spit on Him again, like a bunch of mad bull surrounding Him. And Jesus looked at them and said, "This is like being in a stampede of mad bulls surrounding Me."

They have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths." And again, from that position, as Jesus is looking down, this is exactly what He would see. He would see these heads lifted up, and these open mouths yelling and gaping at Him. And He's describing, again, a sight on the cross that He sees that no one else would see.

"Like a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water (perspiration), and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd punctured; and my tongue cleaves to My jaws." His tongue was literally dried and stuck to the roof of His mouth. It makes a lot of sense as to why He needed the water just before His final statement.

"You have brought me to the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me." This is another observation of Jesus Christ. He looked down, and He said, "This is like being surrounded by a bunch of yapping mad dogs who are barking; snarling; and, seeking to gouge their victim.

The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierced My hands and My feet. They count all My bones. They look, and they stare upon Me." He was physically debilitated. And in that position, of course, hanging and stretching, it was not hard to see every bone in the chest cavity, and in His body. They just stood out – the strain against the skin. The bones were easily visible.

"They part my garments among them. They cast lots upon my vesture. But be not far from Me, O Lord: O My strength, haste to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My only one from the power of the dog. Saved Me from the lion's mouth, for You have heard Me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will declare Your name to My brethren. In the midst of the congregation I will praise you." Here, again, what is Jesus thinking? Jesus is thinking, "This is going to be OK. I'm going to come through this. God's going to carry Me through. And the time will come when I'll stand up and I'll testify to the grace of God functioning in My life. I'm going to testify to the great things He did, when, in My moment of greatest darkness, bearing the sins of the world, He carried Me through when I'm surrounded by sinners who are acting like stampeding bulls and mad, snarling dogs.

"You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you, the seed of Jacob glorify Him; and fear Him all you, seed of Jacob. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hidden His face from him. But when he cried unto Him, He heard. My praise shall be of You in the great congregation. I will pay Him My vows before them that fear Him." Jesus is saying, "I'm going to worship You again, as was My custom;" and, so on.

The whole 22nd Psalm is a sound of a declaration of great, great victory.

Now, we see Jesus in that situation, and I hope you have a little appreciation for what was involved in what was being done to Him. But there is one thing I want to establish, and that is that He was not in all that suffering and all that agony as a helpless victim. Do not fall into the trap of accepting the beautiful, lovely word "martyr" that, again, the liberal and the unbeliever like to apply to Jesus Christ. Don't get caught up in the Jesus Christ superstar statement of Judas when he goes to Jesus and says, "How could you let things get out of hand like this?" He is acting as if Jesus were some kind of helpless victim in all of this? I get that out of your mind. He was not.

**Jesus Controlled the Time of His Death**

Before we close this session, let's establish the fact that Jesus Christ controlled the time of His death. He did not permit Himself to die physically until the proper moment relative to His mission in atoning for the sins of the world. I want to stress that. He did not allow Himself to die physically until a critical moment relative to the work of atonement, because the physical death of Jesus Christ was important. He had to die physically at a certain point in time. And that was when the sins of the world were being borne by Him, and when He was paying the price for our justification – when He was establishing propitiation with God, satisfying God's justice and righteousness.

Please remember that the enemies of Jesus Christ wanted to kill Him all along. This in itself demonstrates the fact that Jesus had complete control over the point in time of His death, because all along this is exactly what they wanted to do to Him.

Let's read a few passages. Listen to John 5:16-18, which says, "And therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to slay Him because, He had done these things on the Sabbath day? But Jesus answered them, 'My Father and I work hereto.' Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

**Jesus is God**

These were the Jewish leaders. These were not the dummies. These were the people who understood the Old Testament Scriptures. When you read a verse like this, you have to shake your head in amazement at the high-IQ liberal theologian who will actually look you in the eye, without batting an eyelash, and say, "Jesus never claimed to be deity. That was something that was imposed upon by others. They said that He said that He was God. Jesus never said that He was God."

You have no idea how many books you read that in which are written by liberals. They are ignorant men with high IQ because these Jewish leaders who stood there, and who knew the Old Testament Scriptures, knew exactly what Jesus was saying. He was very clearly saying, "I am God." You remember from the last session that when Caiaphas couldn't come through and pin anything on Jesus through the witnesses, because they were contradicting one another, he finally said point blank, "Are you God?" And Jesus said, "You have said it. I am." That's what he latched onto and said," OK, let's execute Him." There's no doubt that Jesus claimed to be God.

John 7:1: "After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill Him." When the Scripture says, "The Jews," it means the leaders.

Verse 19: "Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keep the Law. Why do you go about to kill Me?"

Verse 25: "Then some of them of Jerusalem said, "Is not this He Whom they seek to kill?" Who is "they?" Their leaders.

Verse 32: The Pharisees heard that the people murdered such things concerning Him (that is, Jesus). And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.

Notice verse 43-45. Here is was the order given by the Jewish leaders to go out and bring Him in: "So, there was division among the people to go out and bring Him in" (these who were listening to Jesus). They were arguing: "Yes, He is the Messiah. He's not the Messiah. Yes, He is. You just listen to Him. Did you ever hear a man teach like that? We know that the Old Testament says that the Messiah is going to do that."

Verse 44: "And some of them would have taken Him, but no man laid hands on Him." Why? Well, Jesus was a strong man, and He was capable of defending Himself, but and not against a mob.

Verse 45: "Then came the officers to the chief priest and the Pharisees, and they said to them, 'Why have you not brought Him?'" Even the guys that they sent out could not take Him. Jesus had a way of just evading them. They asked them, "Why didn't you bring them in?" They are talking to soldiers. He was talking to people with big biceps and weapons. The officers answered, "Never a man spoke like this." What kind of an answer is this? They asked, "Why didn't you bring Him in?" They said, "Well, man, I tell you. Nobody ever spoke like that." Well, the significance of that is that when Jesus Christ looked at people, you were looking into the eyes of a godly sinless man, and He literally bowled you over. He did it in Gethsemane, literally. He literally bowled you over.

That is something to look into the eyes of a godly man. Those of you who are more godly than others, you're more staggering to us. But when you find a sinless person, I think this is exactly what they meant.

They came up and they said, "Hey, there He is. Let's take Him." Jesus stood there speaking to the crowd, and He sees these guys coming up, and He looks at them eyeball-to-eyeball. Pretty soon, the guards say, "Well, OK, take Him. Go ahead. Take Him." And the soldiers say, "You take Him. You're in charge." And he says, "What do you mean I'm in charge? I'm in charge, and I'm telling you to take Him. You go take Him. That's why I'm in charge." They couldn't do it, and they had to come back.

They said, "Well, why don't you take Him?" And they said, "Well, nobody ever spoke like that before." What are they saying? They're saying, "This man speaks the truth of God. We hate Him. We hate His guts. We want to tear Him to shreds. We want to grab Him. We want to take Him. We can't do it. There's something such that we can't lay our hands on Him."

Well, they didn't understand, like you and I understand: His time had not come.

John 8:37 adds a little more to that. These people were constantly after Him: "I know that you are Abraham seed, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."

Verse 40: "And now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Abraham did not do this."

Verse 59: "Then they took up stones to cast at Him." Now, here they've got Him. Now they have rocks in their hands. Now He is surrounded by a mob, and they're coming after Him. It doesn't take many rocks to be hit with to be able to incapacitate a person, and then to be finished off: "They took up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Again, He had the capacity simply to elude them.

John 10:31: "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." It happened more than once. "Jesus answered them: 'Many good works have I shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?'" Poor Jesus! He had never been to seminary to learn never to be sarcastic. (I wish that wasn't in there. We better erase that one from the Bible!) Boy, this enraged Him. It brought out just what Jesus wanted: a reaction.

And the Jews answered Him, saying, "We don't stone You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Again they had no doubt that He was claiming to be God.

Verse 39: "Therefore they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands." This is the repeated pattern.

Let's look at a couple more. John 11:53: "Then from that day forth, they took counsel together to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went from there into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples." Now, at this point in John 11, a contract is put out upon Jesus Christ by the religious authorities of the Jews. That's what it means when it says that: "From that day forth, they took counsel together to put Him to death." There came a certain point in time.

One of the things that contributed greatly to this was when he raised Lazarus from the dead. That's what happens here. When they saw what the reaction was of the confirmation of His Messianic claims by raising Lazarus from the dead, that's when the Jewish leader said, "OK, let's put a contract out on him. We will now systematically lay a plan by which we will be able to put Him in a position where the Roman government will have to kill Him." They could have killed Him in a mob vengeance, and that's what they tried to do several times (to stone Him). They could not kill him in an official way, and that's what they were proceeding to do.

John 11:57: "Now both the chief priest and the Pharisees had given a commandment that if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him." Now Jesus evaded them publicly, at least away from a sympathetic crowd. So, the plan now was: "Well, we've got to catch him at a time where He's isolated by Himself," because a lot of the people were sympathetic with Him: "We must get Him where He's off by himself, but we don't know where He goes. We have no way of knowing where He meets with His disciples, and what His secret rendezvous are. We've got to get on the inside, and get somebody who knows where he goes." And, of course, Judas was their man.

So, Judas was able to tell them at a critical point where Jesus would be in a rendezvous with His disciples – where He would be isolated, where they could take Him away from the crowd.

Now, all this time, again and again, they were trying to kill Him, but they could not. I hope that you will understand that the life of Jesus Christ could not be taken. The reason for it was that it could not be taken until the time such that when His physical life was taken, it would produce the payment for the sins of the world.

We'll close with John 7:2-8, which explains that to us: "Now, the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers (that is, the brothers of Jesus – the other children of Mary and Joseph) therefore said unto Him (who were not believers in Christ), 'Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You do.'" His brothers are being snotty to him: "'For there is no man that does anything in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show Yourself to the world,' For neither did His brothers believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them (and here's why they couldn't kill Him), 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hate Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. Go up until this feast. I won't go up to this feast yet, for My time has not yet fully come." That was why they could not take Him.

We have one more reference to stress that. Notice verse 30: "Then they sought to take Him. But no man could lay hands on Him because His hour was not yet come."

John 8:20 stresses the same principle: "These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple, and no man laid hands on Him for His hour was not yet come."

So, this establishes for us that the time of the physical death of Jesus was critical to the work of atonement. And He did not permit Himself to be killed physically until a certain point in time. And at that point in time, the payment of His physical death was very, very vital. God gave a message from heaven at the moment of His physical death that said, "Now, and only now, has atonement been established. It was not when He was breathing alive, but when He was physically dead – now, and only now."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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