

Everybody in this world wants good leaders.

We all want a president, or a king, or a prime minister who is amazingly good, powerful, just, and wonderful. For 6,000 years people have been crying out for such a leader.

And there have been some who are better than others. And some have been very bad indeed.

But what makes a king or president good?

What is the difference between a leader who is effective and one who is really great?

I will tell you. A truly good ruler is one who puts his people before himself.

Self-sacrifice is the mark of a truly good and great leader.

And so, Jesus, the King of Kings, the Son of God, is the greatest of all time. He gave His life for you.

The King of Kings died a criminal's death for you.

Of course, it was always Jesus' purpose to go to the cross and die.

We call this His substitutionary atonement, and it is very difficult to describe.

I think of it as a many faceted jewel, filled with beauty, value, and mystery...

Each facet shines forth one of the great themes that are displayed at the Cross.

We describe these themes with words:

Language of the altar – perfect Lamb slain, great High Priest

Language of the courtroom – He is our advocate, bearing our sentence, so we are justified.

Language of the marketplace – bought with His blood, we are redeemed, a price paid, no longer slaves.

Language of the battlefield – He has defeated sin and death, conquered the world and Satan.

Language of relationship – We were enemies, now reconciled, at peace, He calls us His friends.

Language of the family – We were orphans, alone, He has made us brothers, adopted sons of the Father.

This all concerning what He has accomplished on the Cross. But who was it there on that cross?

And this is what John brings out in these verses – with powerful irony – It is the King who died there.

And what is irony? We see it throughout John 18-19.

The greatest priest in the history of Israel is opposed by the priesthood!

The greatest prophet the world has ever known is taunted by ignorant men, “prophesy the one who hit you.”

The greatest King who ever ruled is tortured and killed by those who enjoy His blessed rule...

And those who kill Him identify Him as King while He is dying.

They mean to mock Him. But actually, in spite of themselves, they only emphasize His Royalty.

I. Jesus is the King of the Jews.

John 19:17-22

What we read in these verses is an example of emphatic irony.

Irony = An expression using language or actions that actually signifies the opposite of what is intended or understood, typically for humorous or emphatic effect.

Pilate meant to mock the Jews and their so-called King. Clearly, they feel the mockery. They don't like it.

But actually, what Pilate meant as mockery is really the opposite.

Jesus is precisely who Pilate wrote, and more. It's just that Pilate and the Jews don't yet know it.

But God knew it and had planned it.

Jesus was King at His birth:

Jeremiah 23:5-6 The Jews knew they were looking forward to a King.

Micah 5:2-5 This text is quoted by the priests and scribes to Herod in Matthew 2:6. They knew it.

Zechariah 9:9 This is what we celebrate on Palm Sunday

Luke 19:37-40 The people are quoting from Psalm 118. Why? Because He is the King of all creation.

John 1:49 Nathaniel got it right because he knew what the prophets had spoken.

He was King at His death:

John 18:33-37 Jesus is the King of the only Kingdom that matters.

John 18:39 Notice: the local recognized authority is calling Him “King.”

John 19:2-3 The Roman soldiers mock Him as King. How stupid they must feel now.

John 19:14-15 Do they realize what they are saying? Accusing Him of blasphemy, now they blaspheme.

We have seen in John's gospel up to this point the authority and deity of this King, the Son of God. What is utterly amazing about this moment is what the King is here doing.

John 19:17 "bearing His own cross" = each criminal was required to carry his own cross to the crucifixion.

This is his punishment; the weight of his crime placed upon his back.

It increases the criminal's agony, to feel the weight of his own sin.

But, there is a problem with the picture. Jesus has no sin. So, whose weight was he bearing? Ours.

John 19:18 "there they crucified Him" = horrible, humiliating.

All the more horrible because He was innocent of the charges, and they all knew it.

Worse yet, He was completely innocent of any wrongdoing, the most perfect man who ever lived.

Worse still, He was there of His own choosing.

Furthermore, He was there of His own choosing out of love for you and me.

And, He was there as the sovereign King of the universe, humbled, even to the point of death.

John 19:19 The tradition: the crime was written and posted above the head of the criminal on a cross.

The Latin word for such a placard is "titulus."

So significant was this "titulus" in this moment that we have an English word derived from it. Title.

This is the title Jesus bears forever, "Jesus the Nazarene, The King of the Jews."

John 19:20 Written so that everyone could read it.

Thus did Pilate announce to Jews and Gentiles that the Lord is King.

John 19: 21-22 Lit. = "what I have written, I have written, forever" As if it were now law.

Little did they all know, He IS King forever, the one who created Pilate's hand that would write His title.

F.F. Bruce wrote, "The Crucified One is the true king, the kingliest king of all; because it is He who is stretched on the cross, He turns an obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory and "reigns from the tree."

II. Jesus' death is the fulfillment of prophecy.

John 19:23-24

God loves to do what He says He will do. We call it (sometimes) the fulfillment of prophecy.

Over 20 Old Testament prophecies find their fulfillment at the Cross.

Do you know how difficult this would be to engineer?

But, lest we see the fulfillment of prophecy with a sort of cold inevitability,

as if Jesus only did it only because He was bound to, forced to,

realize that Jesus fulfilled prophecy because this was His plan, and His Father's plan from the beginning.

Let us consider just the prophetic fulfillment that John draws our attention to here. There are four.

The prophecy of the garments (vs. 23-24)

This comes from Psalm 22:18, but it is helpful to read some context.

John, the author, and God is not merely thinking of vs. 18. He is thinking of the whole passage.

Psalm 22:11-18 Certainly, David is describing his own situation as he cries out to God for help.

But he is doing so with words that will someday apply with even greater accuracy to the Son of David.

So as John quotes from Psalm 22, he is thinking of the entire Psalm, as we shall see.

The prophecy of the drink (vs. 28-28)

Now Jesus is thinking about **Psalm 69:19-21**. Another Psalm of David, again the cry of the afflicted king.

Of course, those who are doing this do not know that they are fulfilling divine prophecy.

They are only sinners unjustly torturing a man who deserves their worship. But God knows.

The prophecy of the bones (vs. 31-33, 36)

Now, after Jesus is dead, John makes a connection to **Psalm 34:17-20**. God is preserving Jesus.

You might notice that this reflects Psalm 22:17 as well.

The prophecy of the piercing (vs. 34, 37)

This is a reference to **Zechariah 12:10**. Notice that Zechariah is looking back to David in Psalm 22:16.

This moment also demonstrates that the Messianic King is really dead. John saw it himself. (vs. 35)

III. Jesus thought of His mother even as He died.

John 19:25-27

It is an astounding moment, amid all the injustice and abuse.

Jesus, while dying, is thinking of His mother.

Here He is, in incredible pain, taking on the sins of the world for you and me.

And then, this little conversation, rather one-sided, for only Jesus speaks.

He is providing for His mother's livelihood.

And I say this to you: Here is our King!

This is how He thinks.

This is how His kingdom operates, and how those in it think.

And now we get to the last little bit for this morning.

IV. Jesus thought of you when He died.

John 19:28-30

As we have already considered the prophetic fulfillment that we read about here, now I want to focus on vs. 30.

The last words of Jesus that John records, "It is finished."

Just what is finished?

The story of Jesus? I think not.

The life of Jesus? No. We all know that that is not the case.

The suffering of Jesus? Well, maybe. But this is so obvious, why bother saying it.

No. It is something else that is finished.

What Jesus is saying is finished is the sacrificial offering of Jesus in which He pays for our sins.

It is Jesus' substitutionary atonement as the sin-bearing Lamb of God that is finished as He dies.

If you read the Bible, beginning with the Old Testament you find that it is one long lesson...

in just how it is that God has planned to do this, and how it is that He does this, and what it means for you.

The place where God's justice and love meet is a place called the Cross.

We are taught how to think about Christ's sacrifice long before it is made.

This is one principal reason for the whole Old Testament.

First, it is important to see that the idea of sacrifice has been placed deep in the human heart.

We value it. We honor it tremendously. We give people medals for their sacrificial service.

We know that this is somehow important.

Of course it makes no evolutionary sense. It must point to something else.

There is something powerful to this idea of sacrifice.

If we pay attention to God's lessons we will find out why.

Genesis 22:7-18 On the very mountain where Jerusalem would be built, a substitutionary sacrifice.

The ram died in Isaac's place. He needed a sacrifice. God provided it.

Skip ahead to that moment when God's people were in captivity (not to sin, but to the Egyptians).

Exodus 12:5-7, 12-13 A perfect lamb had to be slain, and they were to remember this forever.

After this, look to the Law that God gave to His people Israel, the foundation for their relationship with Him.

Many of the sacrifices required in the Tabernacle and then the Temple had to do with atonement.

Why? It is because we human beings are sinful, rebellious, and corrupt. We offend God.

We reject God and His words in so many ways. The torture and murder of Jesus is just one.

This offense must be atoned for. Sin deserves death. A debt is owed. The debt must be paid.

So serious was the need to deal with sin that God mandated an annual day of atonement. (Leviticus 16:15-19)

Hebrews 9:11-14, 23-28 Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. Once, for all time.

He is God's perfect sinless sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He is the loving King who gives His life for His people, and He takes His life up again.

So now there is no more need for a sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ, our King, the Son of God, has done it!

You cannot pay this price for yourself, nor add anything to it. You just need to accept it and trust Him.

This is why we call this the gospel, which means "good news." Is this not good news!?