

How Is Christ's Murder Glorious?

John 19:16-37

Introduction: Did the Romans and the Jews kill the creator of the universe on the cross? Yes they absolutely did. The Jews had every reason to believe that Jesus was their long awaited Messiah, but they conspired to kill Him and incited the Romans to carry it out. God will hold them both responsible for the greatest crime in history...BUT....that being said.... at the Cross they were actually carrying out God's plan. What appears to be evil running amuck has been carefully planned in every detail by God Himself.

Because of this truth, the Cross reveals more about the excellence of Christ than it does about the depravity of man. In fact, the crucifixion was designed by God to put the Son on display for Israel and the world to see. John Piper has said that God's Glory is God going public with Himself! How then is the Cross glorious? How can the place where evil triumphs over purity bring Glory to God? We want to try to answer that question today.

God cannot be known by man. This is the great fallacy in all religion....that man can reach up to God or discover God. This has never been true. Adam and Eve were made by God who initiated their existence and shared His very life with them. Unlike every other living creature, men were made in the image of God and received the breath of God's life. But after their rebellion, steps were taken to bar the way back to God.

Genesis 3:24 ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The knowledge of God has always been initiated by God and never mankind. What men are able to do is idolatry and religion. God is able to give true knowledge of Himself which was the main purpose of the Son's incarnation.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Likewise even today. The whole world has the Bible but God must act to make Himself known to men. This is why you should not be discouraged to pray and speak of Christ. It is God who acts and when He does men are absolutely convinced of Him.

Matthew 16:15-17 ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 2:7-13 ⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹ but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." ¹⁰ For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

John 6:37 ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 19:16-37 ¹⁶ So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified. ¹⁷ They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." ²⁰ Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." ²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it shall be"; *this was* to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." ²⁵ Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*. ²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon *a branch of* hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. ³¹ Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; ³³ but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE

OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN." ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

To reveal that this event was planned in eternity past and carried out by God at a precise time and place, God wrote about it in the Scriptures centuries before it occurred. This is an authentication of the Old Testament as the Word of God and the New Testament assertions of Jesus Christ Himself.

They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross [17a]: After having been beaten to within an inch of life, Jesus carries the very instrument of His death for His executioners. Although the Romans made condemned men carry their own Cross Jesus goes willingly and not kicking and screaming. Isaiah had said 500 years before that it would be like this...

Isaiah 53:7 ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

To the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. [17b]: This was a well known site outside the city walls. The sin offerings that God instituted for Israel were required to be offered outside the camp.

Exodus 29:14 ¹⁴ "But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

Hebrews notes how Jesus fulfilled this aspect of the Law of Moses, being the "once and for all" sin offering for humanity.

Hebrews 13:11-13 ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

There they crucified Him [18a]: Jesus said His manner of death would be fulfill the imagery of Moses lifting up a bronze serpent on a pole in the wilderness. Jewish execution involved casting people down to the ground and stoning them to death. Roman required lifting up and displaying the victim.

John 3:14 ¹⁴ "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

David under inspiration describes the unknown act of crucifixion in great detail.

Psalms 22:6-8 ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, *saying,* ⁸ "Commit *yourself* to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

And with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. [18b]: Isaiah said that the Messiah would be considered a criminal and treated like one.

Isaiah 53:12 ¹² He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. [19a]: It was common to put the crime of the condemned man on a placard attached to the cross. But remember...Pilate is executing a man that he believes is totally innocent. He is murdering Christ because it is easier than standing up to the Jews and having to deal with their riots. So...he decides to join in the mockery of Christ while at the same time irritating the Jews as much as possible. The sign reads...

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." [19b]: The inclusion of Nazarene in the title of King, just infuriated the Jews all the more. Every culture has places they consider to be so provincial and back water that nobody of intelligence or talent could come from there. In America it is the deep south, in Italy it was Sicily and in Israel it was Nazareth.

John 1:45-46 ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek. [20]: The city is filled with pilgrims from all over the empire so Pilate makes sure that everyone can read the mockery. He puts it in the local language and in the two predominating languages of the empire. Everyone knew one of them.

So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" [21]: And it did have the desired effect. It got a rise out of them. Even though they had gotten everything they wanted they were very upset by the assertion of Christ's Kingship and hence His Deity as well. They knew that Messiah would be the Son of God...God the Son and they objected to an official government sign stating that it was so. Pilate made it an official title and they both knew it.

Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." [22]: Pilate is enjoying their discomfort and anger. John MacArthur comments:

"Here again is an example of God using sinful men to accomplish His sovereign purposes. Neither Pilate nor the Jewish leaders believed that Jesus was the king of Israel. Yet the animosity between them ensured that the governor would write an inscription proclaiming that Jesus was Israel's King---as in fact He is. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords." [Rev. 19:16] And "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and ...every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Phil. 2:10-11]" *MacArthur*

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. [23]: Again...who orchestrates the crucifixion? Who knew every detail before the players and perpetrators were even born? God...and He has proven that He knew by instructing His prophets and even His song writers to tell a detail like this.

Psalm 22:18 ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

John 19:24 ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it shall be"; *this was* to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

Therefore the soldiers did these things. [25a]: Details that God knew because He had planned this moment and wanted you to know His sovereign rule over all creation.

"..... God was over all that was done, so directing things that His will was accomplished, and not that of puny man. It was because of this that the soldiers acted as they did" **Leon Morris**

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [25b]: Here is a startling contrast inserted into the text. The Jews are sneering and mocking like a bunch of jackals. The Romans are carrying out one of the cruelest methods of killing ever devised and are gambling for His cloak right at the foot of the Cross. Others are standing around challenging Jesus to come down from the Cross. BUT...also standing nearby the cross in the middle of all this malice and hatred are four women who loved Him and served Him in life and in death.

When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, [26a]: We are not surprised to see Mary are we? No...but remember how all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled in the garden? Well two of them found enough courage to come back. John and Peter both followed Jesus right into Caiaphas' palace. There an overly confident Peter denied Jesus which God always knew he would do. Perhaps you have struggled with you own sin and wondered if Christ was sorry He had saved you after the way you have failed Him time and again.

If you have then consider this....All your sins were future on this day of Crucifixion....and Christ was aware of everyone. This is how Peter can record that....

1 Peter 2:24 ²⁴ He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" [26b]: John was still owning Christ at the time of His death. While Peter went out and wept bitterly John kept following Christ.....into Pilate's Praetorium and then out to the place of the Skull....Golgotha.....Calvary.

Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. [27]: Mary had other physical sons and daughters in spite of what the Catholic Church says.

Matthew 12:46-47 ⁴⁶ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

But they could not care for Mary's spiritual needs, because they were unbelieving. Jesus in His greatest agony reveals the compassion, mercy and love He has for His own. Satan has made a career out of convincing many believers that they are so weak and sinful that they are a disappointment to Christ. "He is probably sorry that He ever died for my sins. And He certainly does not love me as He would if I were not so spiritually weak." **But this is simply not true.** Nothing about you has ever been hidden from Christ and it is not hidden now. But He still loves you, and has tender compassion for you in your sinful fallen state. Yes...you are a sinner. BUT....Jesus died for sinners. Jesus came seeking sinners and Jesus bought those sinners with His sinless blood. He knows you to the core.

What is more, He experienced your humanity with its trials and temptations. He Himself did not sin being God the Son, but He knows firsthand the beating that you take in your heart and life and marriage and work and....well whatever else you can name. Our entire lives are open and laid bare before Him and yet He loves us and calls us to come to Him and He will give us mercy and grace in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:12-16 ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. ¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." [28]: The All Knowing Son of God knows that there is one last prophecy about His death left to be fulfilled.

Psalm 69:21 ²¹ They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. [29]: This was cheap wine that the soldiers commonly drank. It was closer to wine vinegar than to wine. It is not the stuff that they had previously offered him which was a concoction intended to dull the pain. Jesus refused it because He wanted to drink the cup of the Father's wrath against your sin and mine in the fullest possible way.

Matthew 27:33-34 ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting *it*, He was unwilling to drink.

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" [30a]: Jesus fulfills the final prophecy about His coming to die for you and then shouts...IT IS FINISHED!! [Matt. 27:50]

And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. [30b]: They did not just kill Him. He gave up His spirit! LOUDLY! He was not physically at the point of death to be able to shout like this. Imagine this. The Romans were not expecting Him to die then....as we will see. But He just up and dies on them because He was in charge of this. They were not killing Jesus. He did NOT just “incidentally” die for your sins. He was giving His life for yours...just like He said He would do.

John 10:17-18 ¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

The Jews were concerned about their precious feast and rituals. They didn't want the body of the holy Son of God to be hanging on the cross when the sun set and the Passover began. So....

John 19:31 ³¹ because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him [32]: Pilate instructed his soldiers to break the prisoners legs because it would hasten death. The victims could not hold themselves up with their legs to breath and the weight of their bodies would cause death.

But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. [33]: Again...They are not determining how and when Jesus will die. He is doing that! This is so important to you. Jesus didn't just accidently die for you! He wanted to die for you. He knew your name before Creation and came to die that day for you on the cross. Yes Christ loved the world, but He died for you, willingly and on His own terms.

But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. [34]: Jesus fulfilled every prophecy in life and now the pagan soldiers that murdered Him will take over and fulfill the prophecies concerning His death. John says he saw all this happen with his own eyes.

And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. [35]: John was there. This is an eyewitness account and he is writing so that you can believe the very things we have been

saying today. The Cross is appallingly gruesome and yet it is paradoxically the means to draw men to Christ. But it is not the Cross but Christ displayed there that is powerful.

John 12:32-33 ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."
³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN." [36]: Even in death every detail was known to God and orchestrated by Him. When God instituted the passover he was thinking about this day. The day in which Jesus, His Son... your Savior would become that Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Speaking of that lamb to Moses, God said....

Exodus 12:46 ⁴⁶ "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.

And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED." [37]: On that day Israel scoffed at her Savior and killed Him, but there is another day coming. It is the day of His return in glory and power and in redemption for His people. I am find it fascinating that God ends this account of Christ's murder at the hands of Israel with a prophecy of Israel's future repentance and salvation.

Some say that Christ is done with Israel because she rejected Him ...as if gentiles never did! That their sin is so bad that God can never show them grace or mercy.... As if gentile sin never was! That Israel had to prove her worthiness by her good works... as if gentiles ever did? BUT... this inspired account of Christ's Crucifixion ends by catapulting us through the future to the time when **Jesus will do for Israel what He has done for you and me.** He will seek them! He will open their eyes to see Him. He will wash them and give them life and faith. I am constantly amazed that those who believe that God acts with sovereign grace to save the church insist that He will not do the same for Israel whom He also chose. Listen to how you were saved...

Titus 3:5-7 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Why do so many think that He will not show this same Sovereign Grace to Israel in the end time...when He has clearly said He would. As the world, at the end of history, musters its armies to blot Israel from the face of the earth...

Zechariah 12:8-10 ⁸ "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David *will be* like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. ⁹ "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ **"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.**

This is Sovereign Grace Salvation! Israel does not deserve it and neither do we. God provides it at the Cross and mentions Israel's predetermined hour of repentance and salvation in the final verse of John's account. Today they are killing Him, but in the future...at the time determined by God and not men.... they will be saved. Zechariah goes on

Zechariah 13:1 "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

The washing of regeneration...Just like for you and me. This is consummate mercy. It is the Glory of God's grace seen at the cross. It extends its power to the very end of time. Still speaking to Israel, God tells them that He will rescue them from the malice and murderous armies of the world.

Zechariah 14:1-4 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. ⁴ In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

This is the exact spot from which Jesus left the earth and His disciples watched Him go!

Zechariah 13:9 ⁹ "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

What an awesome and glorious Savior is displayed on the Cross. The revelation of God's mercy and grace explodes on His creation as He gives His life for lost and hopeless sinners that He has loved and chosen. Amazing Grace....how sweet the sound!