

## Thoughts From Other Minds:

Let us mark, for one thing in these verses, *the frequent fulfilments of prophetic Scripture throughout every part of Christ's crucifixion*. ... All combine to ... prove that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ at Golgotha was a thing foreseen and pre-determined by God. Hundreds of years before the crucifixion, every part of the solemn transaction was arranged in the Divine counsels, and the minutest particulars were revealed to the Prophets. From first to last it was a thing foreknown, and every portion of it was in accordance with a settled plan and design. In the highest, fullest sense, when Christ died, He "died according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3.)

We need not hesitate to regard such fulfilments of prophecy as strong evidence of the Divine authority of God's Word. ... It is impossible to explain so many accomplishments of predicted circumstances upon any other theory. To talk of luck, chance, and accidental coincidence, as sufficient explanation, is preposterous and absurd. The only rational account is the inspiration of God. ... Great indeed are the difficulties of all who pretend to deny the inspiration of the Bible. It really requires more unreasoning faith to be an infidel than to be a Christian. The man who regards the repeated fulfilments of minute prophecies about Christ's death, such as the prophecies about His dress, His thirst, His pierced side, and His bones, as the result of chance and not of design, must indeed be a credulous man.

We should mark, secondly in these verses, the *peculiarly solemn saying which came from our Lord's lips just before He died*. St. John relates that "when He had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." It is surely not too much to say that of all the seven famous sayings of Christ on the cross, none is more remarkable than this ... The finishing of all the known and unknown sufferings which He came to endure, as our Substitute, – the finishing of the ceremonial law, which He came to wind up and fulfil, as the true Sacrifice for sin, – the finishing of the many prophecies, which He came to accomplish, – the finishing of the great work of man's redemption, which was now close at hand, – all this, we need not doubt, our Lord had in view when He said, "It is finished."

One comfortable thought, at all events, stands out most clearly on the face of this famous expression. We rest our souls on a "finished work," if we rest them on the work of Jesus Christ the Lord. We need not fear that either sin, or Satan, or law shall condemn us at the last day. We may lean back on the thought, that we have a Saviour who has done all, paid all, accomplished all, performed all that is necessary for our salvation. We may take up the challenge of the Apostle, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34.) When we look at our own works, we may well be ashamed of their imperfections. But when we look at the finished work of Christ, we may feel peace. We "are complete in Him," if we believe. (Col. 2:10.)

J C Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, Vol, 3, pp. 352-355.

## Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

25 March 2016—Good Friday

**Sermon:** "Coming to the Crucified Saviour"

**Scripture:** John 18:1-27; 18:28-19:16a; 19:16b-42

### Sermon Notes

**Introduction:** Five times as John tells the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, conviction, crucifixion and death he interrupts the flow of events to say events happened 'to fulfil'. (18:8-9, 31-32; 19:23-24, 28, 33-37).

It could be that John was just interested in the fulfilment of prophecy—but given that he consistently uses historical truth to convey spiritual truth (e.g., 'and it was night' (13:30)) we expect that he has a message for us in these 'fulfilments'.

#### 1. The identity of the Victim

While the other three are fulfilments of scripture, the first two are fulfilments of Jesus' words—and they are unique. So what are we to learn from them?

Who was this Jesus who was about to be arrested, condemned and crucified as a criminal? He is the man whose words must be fulfilled; John says that certain things happened so that what Jesus had said would be fulfilled, just as certain things happened so that the scriptures would be fulfilled.

Who is this man whose words are in the same class as scripture? Scripture is God speaking; what scripture says God says, and so scripture must be fulfilled (Isa 57:11). So who is Jesus, whose words must be fulfilled? He is God in the flesh—and he is therefore able to keep those given to him by his Father (Jn 17:12, v. 8)

Some fault John; they say that when Jesus said, 'I have not lost one' he meant 'lost to the evil one', but here 'lost' means 'arrested'; but as Peter's denial shows, their faith was not yet strong enough to endure suffering for Christ; so Jesus protected them from arrest, and so they were not lost.

This promised protection is also for us, if we will follow him as his disciples. How can you know that the Father has given you to Jesus? By coming to him; he said "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (Jn 6:37).

Some might say, "But how can I come to him? God would never have given me to Jesus, for I am a sinner, not fit for his presence; if I came, he would send me away." This question brings us to the next 'fulfilment' (v. 32) Jesus had said (Jn 12:32) "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

'Lifted up' in Jesus' culture meant 'crucified'; Jewish capital punishment was by stoning; to destroy his claims to be Messiah the Jews wanted him crucified; so they replied to Pilate that it wasn't lawful for them to put anyone to death; this was to fulfil what Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

We are right to feel unworthy to come to Jesus; if we had to come to him in his glory we would despair, for there would be no hope for us. Isaiah saw him in his glory, 'high and lifted up' on a throne, with the holy angels celebrating his holiness, and he knew himself a sinner, and said 'Woe is me, for I am lost' (Isa 6:3-5);

Jesus said when he was lifted up, not on a throne, but on a cross, he would draw all people to himself—and so you may come to him, confident that he will not cast you out; he was lifted up; he is drawing you to himself.

## 2. The character of the Victim

If you have lived in John's world you would find this unbelievable. If you were a Gentile, you would know that crucifixion was so horrible it wasn't allowed to be mentioned in polite Roman society; and if you were a Jew you would regard it with greater horror, as death under God's curse (Deut 21:22-23).

So why would anyone be drawn to a crucified man? John answers by framing the crucifixion of Jesus with the third and fourth of his 'to fulfil' statements (19:23-24, 28). The first of these is from Psalm 22:16, the second from Psalm 22:15, or, more likely, from Psalm 69:21.

By these 'fulfilments' John is identifying Jesus as the sufferer of these Psalms—and he is a righteous sufferer; a man who is being attacked by wicked people who nevertheless keeps on trusting the Lord, and who is saved and vindicated by his God (cf. change after 22:21, and the same in Psalm 99, after v. 29).

## 3. The death of the Victim

If in spite of appearances Jesus was not dying as an evil man, under God's curse, why did he die? John responds with the fifth and last of his 'fulfilled' statements.

The Romans usually left bodies on their crosses to rot – but under Jewish law a body hung on a pole had to be buried the same day; so at their request Pilate ordered that their legs be broken to hasten their deaths—but Jesus was already dead, and so a soldier pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water came out.

These things happened to fulfil the scriptures—and firstly they tell us that Jesus' death was a sacrifice; as the Lamb of God no bone of his was broken (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12), but his side was pierced. John the Baptist came with water, but water is not enough to save us; Jesus came with blood and water; he is our Saviour (1 Jn 5:5-6).

Secondly, they tell us that Jesus' death is an available sacrifice; John, by quoting Zechariah 12:10 (looking on him whom they pierced) draws our attention to Jesus' death as the fountain opened to cleanse from sin and uncleanness' (Zech 13:1).

So we need not fear to come to Jesus; we can all sing with William Cowper 'The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.' No matter how far or how often we have wandered from him, his death provides for our forgiveness, our cleansing, our restoration to God.

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## *My Notes:*

### *Questions for Reflection:*

1. Read and reflect upon John 17:12, John 18:1-9 and John 6:35-40; how are we encouraged to believe that if God has given us to Jesus he will not lose us? How can we know that God has given us to Jesus? (cf. also 1 Thess 1:4-5?)
2. How does John put the words of Jesus in the same category or class as the words of scriptures? (Jn 18:9, 32) Where do you think he might have got this teaching? (cf. Matt 5:18, 24:35).
3. Read and reflect upon Isaiah 6:1-7 in the light of John 12:41; why is Jesus as lifted up in Isaiah's vision so threatening to sinners, while Jesus 'lifted up' (John 3:14, 8:28, 12:32) is so attractive and attracting to sinners?
4. Read and reflect upon Psalm 22 and Psalm 69, and find quotations (use a concordance if necessary) from these psalms in the New Testament; what does the way these psalms are used in the NT tell us about them, and how does this fit with John's fulfilment theme? (John 19:23-24, 28).
5. Why was John so impressed by the fact that when Jesus' side was pierced blood and water came out? (John 19:31-37; cf also 1 John 5:5-6)