

Series: Portraits of Jesus	Reference: <i>John 19</i>	Title: The Crucified King	Date: 06.14.2020
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p>What did Jesus actually suffer for us? What did He mean by, "It is finished," when He died on the cross? What's the difference between the message of Christianity in this story as opposed to all the 'good advice' we can get from others out there?</p>			

I've broken 12 bones, had pins in my arm, surgeries, a concussion & stitches too many times to count. None of it was 'excruciating pain'. Excruciating would be long term unbearable pain - 10 on a scale of 10. I may've experienced a 5 or 6, never 10. Some of you may have, I don't know. However, with the drugs available, pain is often quickly reduced to manageable levels. Excruciating is defined in English as causing intense, agonizing, extreme physical or mental pain. We may say something was excruciating, but we usually exaggerate. We look today at a Picture of Jesus - the Crucified King looking at His excruciating death.

Starting in John 19:16-24...*So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others - one on each side & Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹Pilate had a notice prepared & fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews. ²⁰Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin & Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." ²²Pilate answered, "What I've written, I've written."*

²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them & cast lots for my garment." So this is what the soldiers did.

As we read that, there's very little of the excruciating pain of crucifixion described. John's being polite & innocuous in that sense, focusing much more on the other players in this story. But what happens to a body at crucifixion? This torture was invented by the Persians in 300 BC, and perfected by the Romans in 100 BC - three hundred years of practice made perfect of this form of torture before Jesus came along. Reserved primarily for the worst of criminals, it's been described as the most painful death ever invented. The English word excruciate is traced back to Latin & composed of two parts; 'Ex' which intensifies a verb, and 'cruciare' meaning to torture, or crucify. Hidden in that latin is the word 'crucis' or 'crux' which is the Roman word for 'cross'. Therefore, 'excruciate' is derived from those who suffered crucifixion. A pain so intense, no Roman word could describe it. They had to coin a new word just for this level of pain.

Jesus' back had been splayed open by the scourging & He was tired from carrying His cross & at some point Simeon carried it for Him. By Roman law, when a person was crucified, a wine mixed with gall/myrrh was offered which contained only a very mild analgesic. Jesus refused this. They stripped Him naked & His clothing was divided by the Roman guards in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18 where it says, "*They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*" Nails weren't put through the hands as many suppose, the weight of the body would rip through the flesh. They were put through the wrists, between the bones, where it could bear the weight. Yet, in doing so it severed or damaged the median nerve which runs down the arm producing searing pain in both arms.

Having been nailed to the Cross, Jesus was in an impossible position to maintain. Have you ever done the wall sit where you place your back against a wall & have your knees bent like you are on a chair? I last less than a minute. Jesus was in a harder position. His knees were flexed at about 45 degrees, forced to bear His weight with the muscles of His thighs producing severe cramping in minutes.

His weight was borne on the one nail driven through His feet. As the strength of His legs diminished, the weight of His body was transferred to His wrists, arms & shoulders. Within minutes His shoulders would've dislocated, followed quickly by the elbows & wrists. Eventually, the arms would have extended 9 inches longer than normal. Also a fulfillment of prophecy in Psalm 22:14, "*I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.*"

The weight of His body on his arms caused His rib cage to be pulled up & out. Causing His chest wall to be in a permanent position of maximum respiratory inspiration, kind of like holding your breath under water. In order to breath, Jesus had to force His body up to exhale - breathing was no longer a subconscious activity, but now forced & painful. He would've had to push down on the nails in His feet to raise His body & allow His rib cage to move down & inwards to push air out of His lungs. Imagine pushing down on the nail in your feet, fatigued & with severe cramping.

Hollywood depicts Crucifixions with the person hanging there almost placidly, maybe hot, tired & in some pain, but really not moving around much. The reality is the person was involuntarily & constantly writhing in agony. They were forced to move up & down on the cross, a distance of about 12 or more inches, just to breathe & crosses were usually old olive trees, rough & full of splinters. With every movement it would scrape against the open wounds on His back. And since olive trees don't grow tall, He was probably very close to eye level putting the jeering crowd right in His face.

Just to breath caused excruciating pain, coupled with the absolute terror of asphyxiation. As minutes passed like hours, He was less able to bear His weight on exhausted legs. There was increasing dislocation of His wrists, elbows & shoulders. Further elevation of the chest wall, made His breathing more & more difficult. Within minutes He was severely short of breath. You might think the movements would become

less frequent as Jesus became increasingly exhausted, but the terror of imminent death by asphyxiation would've forced continued struggle.

With excruciating cramps from the effort to raise His body, the pain from His two shattered median nerves exploding with every movement, the nail in his feet, covered in blood & sweat, His movements probably became violent & involuntary in an effort to just breathe rightly.

To add insult to injury, He was completely naked. The Jewish leadership, crowds & thieves on both sides of Him were jeering, swearing & laughing as His mother watched her son die this gruesome death. He was in a state of hypoventilation (inadequate ventilation). His blood oxygen level began to fall & He developed Hypoxia (low blood oxygen). In addition, because of His restricted breathing, the CO₂ levels in His blood began to rise, which stimulated His heart to beat faster in order to increase the delivery of oxygen & remove carbon dioxide. As a result He began to pant uncontrollably.

Jesus' involuntary physical reflexes demanded He take deeper breaths, moving up & down the Cross much faster, despite the excruciating pain. The agonizing movements spontaneously started several times a minute, to the delight of the jeering crowd. However, due to increasing exhaustion, He was unable to provide more oxygen to His starved body. His heart beat faster & faster. His pulse rate skyrocketed.

Jesus was bleeding & dehydrated. His blood pressure fell. He was in First Degree Shock, with low blood volume, an excessively fast heart rate, an excessively fast respiratory rate & excessive sweating. By noon, Jesus' heart probably began to fail. Fluid was building up in the lungs, which only served to exacerbate His breathing. He was in heart & respiratory failure. He said, "I thirst" because His body was crying out for fluids. He was slowly suffocating to death.

At this stage fluids would gather in the space around His heart keeping it from beating properly. Because of the increasing physiological demands on His heart, it may've literally burst. Quite possibly this could've been the cause of His death, if not suffocation.

To slow the process & increase agony, there'd be a small wooden seat on the Cross. It would allow the person to slightly take weight off by resting barely on the sacrum, which is your tailbone. The effect was that it could take up to nine days to die on a Cross. Yet when they wanted to expedite death they'd simply break the legs of the victim, causing the victim to suffocate in a matter of minutes (Crurifragium).

At three o'clock in the afternoon Jesus said, 'Tetelastai' - 'It is finished', gave up His Spirit & died. No need to break His legs, not a bone of His body was broken, in fulfillment of prophecy. Six hours of the most excruciating torture & He was gone. The physicality of that event is so real. It happened to a very real man at one point in history under the hot Palestinian sun.

I was watching Oprah one day, who's become a spiritual guru for many. As I listened, there was little I disagreed with in her advice to Steve Tyler, lead singer of Aerosmith. Her thoughts were full of practical wisdom & good down-to-earth advice. The thought occurred to me, what sets the Christian message apart from Oprah? I could sit with a number of people & give the same council & be spot on. There's a plethora of helps available to us these days. Self-help books, tv shows, articles, conferences, websites, counselors - all giving us very clear direction in life.

I think the answer lies in that one word, Tetelestai, it is finished. A vivid & expressive word. Understanding how it was used may give a better grasp of what Jesus meant when He said, "It is finished!" It has five different aspects to it...

1. A Servant's Word - used when a task was finished.
2. A Priest's Word - used when a sacrificial animal was examined & found worthy.
3. A Farmer's Word - used when an animal was born that was a perfect specimen.
4. An Artist's Word - used when an artist applied the finishing touches to a masterpiece; nothing more could be done to make it better.
5. A Merchant's Word - used when merchant & customer had haggled, a deal was struck, and everyone involved was satisfied. Meaning 'Paid in full'.

Everyone in John's depiction seem self-absorbed with Jesus writhing in the background.

1. The Jewish leaders, concerned with wording on the sign & what it communicated.
2. Pilate, getting a small jab in on them with the wording, 'I wrote what I wrote'.
3. The soldiers, casting lots for clothing, milking sadistic pleasure out of the process.

John's depiction is innocuous, straight forward, devoid of the painful details Jesus experienced which I've painted for you. None of the Gospel writers describe the physical effects in detail as I have possibly since they already knew how painful it was, they'd seen crucifixions before. Rather, the Gospel writers focus on the shame & cosmic results.

Matthew, Mark & Luke recount people walking by, shaking their heads. In Mt 27:38-44, it says, *"You who are going to destroy the temple & build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" Jewish leaders mock,* ⁴² *"He saved others, but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him."*

Using His own words against Him as He struggles against the wood. Sounds pathetic. Yet, 'Tetelestai' is a word of accomplishment. If Jesus had said, "I'm finished," that would be defeat. But He said, "IT is finished." What was finished?

Was the way opened for just good Oprahatic advice? Or, did more happen? I think we see the answer where Matthew & Mark record further details. In Mk 15:33-34 it says, ³³ *At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.* ³⁴ *And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")*

1 Pe 2:24 tells us in these moments Jesus took our sin upon Himself when it says, ²⁴ *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin & live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

Healed of what? Is life perfect for you right now due to this? No. Yet by way of this very excruciating physical death of a very real man, the way is opened once again for personal relationship with God the Father. A gap had been bridged, relationship reestablished.

Darkness enveloped the world, the earth shook, and in Mk 15:38–39 it says, ³⁸ *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* ³⁹ *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”*

Within the Holy Place of the Temple, there was an inner room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. A sacred room. God’s dwelling place in the midst of His people. A thick curtain hung in front of this room. The word “veil” in Hebrew means a screen, divider, or separator which hides. It shielded a holy God from sinful man. Whoever entered into the Holy of Holies was entering the very presence of God. God had a chosen mediator for His people, the High Priest, who could only pass through the veil once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer sacrifice for the sin of the people. The veil was a barrier between man & God, not because God did not desire relationship but rather because He did. Yet, God & sin, like oil & water, don’t mix (Habakkuk 1:13). The veil was a barrier of protection for us until sin could be dealt with in finality & God was making that preparation through Jesus. As the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he had to prepare...to wash, wear special clothing, bring burning incense & blood of the sacrifice to pay for the sin of Israel.

God remained shielded behind this thick curtain. The cross changed that. When Jesus died, the curtain, 60ft high, 30ft wide & four inches thick, was torn from top down, which no person could’ve done. The Holy of Holies opened, God now accessible. Jesus’ death paid for sin making us right with God. The torn veil illustrates Jesus’ body broken, opening the way for us to come to God. As Jesus cried out “It is finished!” on the cross, He was proclaiming God’s plan complete - the ultimate sacrifice had been made. As Hebrews 6:19-20 says, we can now boldly enter into God’s presence, *“the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.”*

In answer to the question, “How are you right with God?,” the Heidelberg Catechism answers. *‘Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments & of never having kept any of them, and even though I’m still inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without my deserving it at all, out of sheer grace, God grants & credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is accept this gift of God with a believing heart.’*

Hebrews 10:19-22 says, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new & living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

The Holy of Holies represents heaven itself, God's dwelling place, to which we now have access through Jesus. As Hebrews 9:24-26 says, *"For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again & again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ...But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

As a result of Jesus' finished work, we've been adopted into the family of God. J.I. Packer says this in his book, *Knowing God* (pp187-188), *"Adoption is a family idea conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family & fellowship, and establishes us as His children & heirs. Closeness, affection & generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved & cared for by God the father is greater!"*

Jesus used a servants word, since His task was finished.
He used a priests word, since He was the perfect sacrifice.
He used a farmers word, since He was the perfect specimen.
He used an artists word, since He'd finished the masterpiece.
He used a merchants word, since the price had been negotiated & paid in full.

Salvation can only be accomplished by a perfect man, but only God could do it. So, the excruciating death of the perfect God-Man, Jesus, sets our message apart from Oprah - we now have access to God through Him. No one else has accomplished that, it is finished. The message of the Gospel is beyond good advice for life, it speaks of a cosmic reality of a reconciled relationship we can have with God through Jesus.

And now having that cosmic gap closed, since you're reconciled to God by this sacrifice, we live on like the Prodigal Son ever surprised by his Grace. Always coming into a deeper realization of our position as adopted children in Jesus. It's not about being perfect, it's about being in safe relationship & resting in the cosmic reality that Jesus bought you back through His own excruciating death.

Community Group Questions

1. Icebreaker: Does anyone in your group have a personal connection to adoption? Either having been adopted themselves, having an adopted family member, or friend, or knowing close friends that have adopted? What have you seen or learned from that experience?
2. Pastor Jason said, “The message of the Gospel is beyond good advice for life, it speaks of a cosmic reality of a reconciled relationship we can have with God through Jesus.” How is Jesus’ life and death more than instructions for a good moral life code and in fact, a pathway to adoption into God’s family?
3. Pray together. In a few minutes of silence and meditation, let the finality of “Tetelestai” settle over you in a prayerful way. (Remember this means “it is finished” and was used by a specific group of people in specific ways.) When Jesus died for you,
 - “Jesus used a servants word, His task was finished.
 - He used a priests word, He was the perfect sacrifice.
 - He used a farmers word, He was the perfect specimen.
 - He used an artists word, He’d finished the masterpiece.
 - He used a merchants word, the price had been negotiated & paid.”

If one of these images touches your spirit in a particular way, share with the group and continue to pray over each other. May the truth of our lives as fully beloved, adopted sons and daughters free us and fill us with love and power in Jesus Christ. Amen!