

Sent: Wednesday, June 03, 2015 2:04 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Last nite we dealt with John's account of the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ (John 17-42)! Kostenberger describes it as "somber and restrained"! Here again, we have to go to the other gospel accounts to put it all together. Interestingly, John is the only one who records that Jesus went out, "bearing His own cross"--although, because of the brutal effects of His beating, Simon of Cyrene had to eventually be "pressed into service" to carry it for Him.

When we think of Jesus "bearing the cross," we can't help but reflect back on the Old Testament story of Isaac, "on whom was laid the wood that was to be used for the burnt offering on which he was to be sacrificed"--before finding that God would "provide for Himself a lamb" (Genesis 22). We are also reminded of Jesus's statement to His disciples, in Luke 14:27, that "whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple!"

We talked a lot last nite about the sign that Pilate had placed on the cross, stating: "Jesus, of Nazarene, King of the Jews," to which the Jewish chief priests and others vehemently objected. Was Pilate just trying to "rub it in" to the Jewish leaders who had intimidated him during the execution process--or did Pilate have some real misgivings about who Jesus really was! John notes earlier that, in response to Pilate's direct question, Jesus confirmed that He was indeed a king, but that His kingdom was "not of this world!" And later, John states (in 19:7-8) that Pilate was "even more afraid" after hearing the Jewish leaders say that He "made Himself out to be the Son of God!" Poor Pilate!

John is also the only one to record Jesus, on the cross, uttering the words "I thirst!"--and then being given vinegar on a sponge, raised on a branch of "hyssop." The hyssop, we learned, was the same plant used by the Israelites to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the lintels and doorposts of their dwellings--thus saving the lives of their firstborn sons--as the Lord passed, as the "death angel," through the land of Egypt, just prior to the Exodus! (Exodus 12). And then there's the contrite prayer of David, in Psalm 51--after his sin with Bathsheba--pleading for God to "purge him with hyssop" that he might be clean and washed "whiter than snow"!

Interestingly, John also focuses on Mary Magdalene, one allegedly with a sordid past, as the first person to whom Jesus appeared following His resurrection! And then the story of "Doubting Thomas," who had to see it all before believing! He's also the only one who specifically named and gave accounts of both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus--both former "secret believers" and prominent members of the Sanhedrin, who dared to "come out of their closets"!

John's writings are obviously primarily "evangelistic" in nature and purpose! The message of salvation is for "whosoever"! And as we have emphasized every week, John clearly states his purpose in John 20:30-31, where he says he included what he did in his gospel that "you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name!" And so, whether we come from a sordid past, have doubts like Thomas, or are blinded by wealth or "religiosity or legalism" like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, we can--and need to--all come to the cross and find salvation through the "finished work" Jesus accomplished there!

Well, next week we're going to talk about the greatest event in human history, other than creation itself and the birth of Christ! John 20 and the resurrection!

Hang in there, men! We're almost through the great book of John!

May God bless your week!

Lowell