

**The One Who Conquered Death**

**John 19:30-37**

**Part One**

Death is not necessarily something people in the world want to talk about or even think about. But for the world not thinking or talking about death certainly does not make it any less real, does it? It is estimated that 155,000 people die each day around the world. Of those 155,000 deaths 6500 of them occur right here in our own United States. Therefore though the world might not want to talk about death or even think about death it does not make death any less real.

Therefore the question that everyone must ask at some point in their lives is this, when a person physically dies will they live again?

What is the answer to that question? Let me share with you the answer that Christ gave to His disciples in **John 14:19**. He told them, **“Because I live, you shall live also.”** Christ very clearly communicated to His disciples by these words that they, based on His own personal mastery of death, could expect to live again even though they, like Himself, might physically die. So how did Christ demonstrate His mastery or His power over death? This brings us back to our study of the Gospel of John.

And where are we in this study? We are now transitioning from John’s account of Christ’s crucifixion to John’s account of Christ’s death. John’s account of Christ’s death begins in **John 19:30** and will continue all the way down through **John 20:10**.

In this particular account of Christ’s death we will repeatedly see His overwhelming power and control over it.

So, what is my prayer for these messages as we consider Christ’s overwhelming power and control over death? My prayer is this: that as we consider Christ’s manifestation of power and control over death, it might provide for us, as the disciples of Christ, hope. And what is that hope? It is this: that though we may physically die, one day we will like Christ live again, not in pain or in agony, but in the blessedness of His presence. This truly is a blessed hope for every true disciple of Christ, a hope that certainly

will make the ups and downs of this life far more tolerable if we would simply choose to focus upon it.

So how was Christ's power over death manifested in John 19:30 to John 20:10? Christ's power over death in John 19:30 to John 20:10 was manifested in three different ways. So, what was the first way?

Christ's power over death was first of all manifested in His dying (John 19:30-37). Let us begin with **John 19:30**. **"Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit."**

In **John 19:28** Jesus had recognized that all of the prophecies concerning Himself, at least up to the point of His death, had been fulfilled except for one prophecy from **Psalms 69:21**, which indicated He would in fact drink vinegar or sour wine. Knowing He had to fulfill that one prophecy, He said, **"I thirst."** The soldiers therefore in response to this statement in **John 19:29** provided Him vinegar to drink thus fulfilling the last prophecy.

It was at this moment when, according to **John 19:30**, that Christ cried out from His cross **"It is finished!"** And what exactly was finished? His work as God's sacrificial lamb was finished. And then what does it say? It says this in **John 19:30**. **"And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."**

Jesus was not a victim. His life was not taken from Him. Rather, Christ, according to **John 19:30**, knowing that everything that needed to be done had been done, simply **"gave up His spirit."** Christ was death's master. In other words, death could not take Christ until Christ had given permission for death to do so (John 19:30).

But there is much more to this story of Christ's dying and how it demonstrated Christ's power over death than simply that Christ had to give permission. It was also a matter of the timing.

We already know that Christ could not have given permission for death to take Him until the last prophecy concerning the drinking of the vinegar was fulfilled. But what we may not yet fully appreciate is how important it was, once Christ took the drink of vinegar, that He would immediately and without haste give up His life. In other words, there could not be any dilly-

dallying around. His death had to immediately follow the drinking of the vinegar. Why?

In order to answer this question we need to continue our examination of the text. So now let us go and read **John 19:31** and consider the next thing that John said happened after Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit. **“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.”**

The Jews asked Pilate to break the legs of Christ and those crucified with Him to hasten their deaths so that their bodies could be removed from their crosses and be taken away and buried (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

So why was it so important to the Jews for the body of Christ and the bodies of those crucified with Christ be removed from their crosses and buried? It was important because **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** makes it clear that if an individual were put to death and hung on a tree that his body would not be allowed to remain on the tree overnight, but would be buried before nightfall. And of course to the Jewish mind the possible violation of this law, particularly on a Sabbath day or even worse on the Passover Sabbath, was unthinkable.

Therefore the Jews needed Christ to die and those crucified with Him to die soon, within a matter of hours. And in order to make sure that this happened they asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and those crucified with Him broken.

Now this might seem rather strange to us that such a request might be made, but this was not an uncommon practice in respect to Roman crucifixion when the Roman did in fact want those being crucified to die quickly. In fact, this practice was given a name. It was called “CRURIFRAGIUM.” So how would this be done?

The Roman soldiers, when breaking the legs of those being crucified, would use a large mallet to shatter the bones completely.

So how would the breaking of the legs in this manner hasten death? Breaking the leg bones of those being crucified would eliminate any support that held the individual up on the cross, resulting in the slumping of the body followed by suffocation.

So how did Pilate respond to the Jews request? He apparently agreed to this request. How do we know this? We know this because we see the Roman soldiers actually breaking the legs of those who were crucified with Christ in **John 19:32.**

So let me read this verse for you. “**So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him.**” So here in these verses we see the Roman soldiers, most likely under Pilate’s direction, approaching the thieves who were being crucified on either side of Christ. And seeing that they were in fact still alive used the mallet to do exactly what they had been ordered to do and that was to crush their legs.

But their work still was not complete was it? There still was the matter of Jesus who they, for some reason, chose to approach last. So, what did they see when they came up to Him? Let us now read **John 19:33.** “**But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.**” Now is this what the soldiers would have expected? Would the soldiers have expected Christ to be already dead? No, they probably did not expect this. Why?

The reason why the soldiers probably would not have expected Christ to be dead was because death by crucifixion normally would have taken much longer. In fact, death by crucifixion could last as long as several days. So how long had Christ been on the cross? He had been on the cross for approximately six hours. So in light of this I believe you can see why I might say that the soldiers probably would not have expected Christ to be dead when they came up to Him in order to break His legs.

So why had He died so quickly? Was it because He had been scourged? No, the others who had been crucified with Him had also been scourged? Was it because He was unusually weak or sickly? No, how could this be? He had never been sick a day in His life. How do we know this? We know this because sickness is the result of sin and Jesus was sinless. So again we must ask ourselves the question. Why did Christ die so quickly?

Christ died quickly because He chose to die quickly in order to make sure that His bones would not be broken thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20).

And how do we know this to be true? Let me read for you **John 19:36**. “**For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be broken.’**” So now do you see why Jesus needed to give up His life so quickly after drinking the sour wine? There was no time to waste and He didn’t. As soon as He needed to give up His life He gave up His life. And why was He able to do this at precisely the right time. He was able to do this because He had complete mastery over death.

So, what were the specific passages in the Old Testament that were fulfilled when the Roman soldiers chose not to break the bones of Christ? There are several different passages.

Let me first of all read for you **Numbers 9:12**. “**They shall leave none of it [in other words, the Passover lamb] until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.**” Now why would this passage be considered prophetic? It would be considered prophetic because the Passover lamb was a type or a picture of the coming Messiah and therefore in light of the words of John in **John 19:36** should be considered prophetic in nature. But this is not the only prophetic passage. We also have a very clear verbal prophecy.

Let me now read for you **Psalm 34:20**, which is speaking specifically of the coming Messiah and this is what it says, “**He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken.**” Did Jesus have power of death? Absolutely! Death could not take Christ without His permission and when death did in fact take Christ it would have to be at the precise moment that Jesus dictated so that all the prophecies concerning the events surrounding His death might be fulfilled. And one of those events of course was recorded for us in **John 19:33** when the soldiers finding Jesus dead chose not to break His bones.

So let me ask you this question. If the Roman soldiers who came up to Christ after looking at Him believed that He was in fact dead, how likely do you think that He was dead? I would have to think that the likelihood of Him being dead would have been very high. They were Roman soldiers very

familiar with the look of death, and when they looked at Christ in **John 19:33** they concluded that He was in fact all of that.

But just to make sure one of the soldiers went on to do something that would certainly have removed any doubt about whether or not Jesus was alive or dead. So, what did the Roman soldier do? Let us now read **John 19:34**. **“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”** Once again we see John recording an event that would not have taken place if Christ had not chosen to give up His life to death so quickly. Was this particular event of having His side pierced by a Roman spear significant? Absolutely! So, what was so significant about this Roman soldier piercing the side of Christ?

The Roman soldier choosing to pierce the side of Christ was significant because this action fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 12:10).

How do we know this to be true? Let me read for **John 19:37**. **“And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’”** The fulfillment certainly is not in reference to the looking since this looking is referencing a future time period of national repentance of the nation of Israel, but rather the fulfillment in respect to this verse in **Zechariah 12:10** is in relationship to the piercing. And what was the specific piercing that was in view when Zechariah penned these words? Based on the words of John in **John 19:37** that specific piercing that was in view was the piercing by the Roman soldier in **John 19:34**, which of course would never have taken place if Jesus had not given up His life so quickly at the very time He needed to give up His life in order to produce this result.

So now I would like to take just a moment and make a comment about the significance of the blood and water coming immediately from His side. The significance of the blood and water immediately coming from Christ side when pierced with the spear was that it proved that what the soldiers had deduced was correct. Christ was dead.

So why is the Apostle John in his account of Christ’s death making sure that we know that Christ was dead? The soldiers seeing Christ as dead and confirming it by piercing His side with the spear was important in order that when people later saw Christ alive they would know He had been resurrected.

So after John has given us this amazing detail surrounding the death of Christ and how it related to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, then what did he say? Let us now read **John 19:35**. **“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.”** In other words, The Apostle in John 19:35 made it clear that he was an eyewitness of the events he recorded for us in John 19:30-34 and that his record of those events is trustworthy.

And why is it so important for us to accept his record of these events as trustworthy? According to John it is important that his record of these events be viewed as trustworthy in order that people might come to believe; or in other words, that people might come to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, which according to John in John 20:21 is the very purpose for him writing this Gospel.

Does Christ have absolute power over death? Yes! And how do we know this? We know this because He Himself manifested it. And how did Christ first of all manifest His power over death? He first of all manifested His power of death in respect to His dying when He bowed His head and gave up His spirit at the very precise moment that He had to give up His spirit in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies related to the events surrounding His death.

Though the world may not want to think about death or talk about death this should not be true of us as the followers of Christ.

Thinking about death and talking about death should be easy for us since death is not a threat to us? Why? Death is no threat to us because the one who has complete and total control and mastery over death told His disciples that if He lived they would live also.

We will live again even though we may die? Absolutely! And what will our lives be like when we are in the presence of Christ? There will be no more pain, sorrow, tears or death. Rather our hearts will forever be filled with praise as we enjoy fellowship with Christ as we dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

May God give us the grace to understand that Christ does in fact have absolute power over death, and though we may die, we know, based on His promise to us, that we will live again.