

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 66

CHRIST LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

Exposition of the Gospel of John

CHAPTER 66

CHRIST LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE

John 19:25-42

Below is an Analysis of John 19:25-42:— 1. The mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple, verses 25-27. 2. The Savior's thirst, verses 28, 29. 3. The Savior's victorious death, verse 30. 4. God guarding the Savior's body, verses 31-33. 5. The piercing of the Savior's side, verses 34-37. 6. The boldness of Joseph and Nicodemus, verses 38, 39. 7. The Savior's burial, verses 40-42. Each of the Evangelists treats of our Lord's death with more or less fullness of detail. The birth, the baptism, and the temptation of Christ are described in only two of the Gospels; several of His miracles and discourses are found only in one; but the Savior's Passion is recorded in all four, which at once denotes its supreme importance. But though each Evangelist devotes not a little space to the events of the last hours of Christ, there is a striking variation about their several narratives. Nowhere is the hand of the Spirit more evident than in what He guided each Gospel writer to insert and omit. Each of them was manifestly moved by Him to bring in only that which was strictly pertinent to the distinctive design before him. The four Gospels are not four biographies of Christ, nor do the four together supply one. A harmony of the four Gospels reveals great blanks, altogether incompatible with the theory that they supply us with a "life of Christ." Only the briefest mention is made of His birth and infancy, and then nothing more is told us about Him till He had reached the age of twelve. After the few words relating to His boyhood, we see Christ no more till He was about thirty. Even His public ministry is not given us with anything approaching completeness: a journey, a miracle, a discourse, here and there, and that is about all. What, then, are the four Gospels, and what was the principle of selection which determined what should have a place in each of them? The four Gospels give us delineations of the Lord Jesus in four distinct characters: the principle of selection is, that only that which serves to illustrate and exemplify each of these characters was included. Matthew presents Christ as the Son of David, the king of Israel, and everything in his Gospel contributes to this theme. Mark portrays Him as God's Workman, and everything in his Gospel bears directly upon the Servant and His service. Luke depicts Him as the Son of man, hence it is His human perfections, sympathies, and relations which he dwells upon. John reveals Him as the Son of God incarnate, the Word become flesh, tabernacling among men; hence it

is His Divine glories, the dignity and majesty of His person, which are most prominent here. Strikingly is this evidenced in what he has related and what he has omitted concerning the Redeemer's sufferings. John says nothing about the Savior's agony in Gethsemane, but he and he only does mention the falling backward to the ground of those who came to arrest Him. John omits all details of what took place when our Lord appeared before Caiaphas, but he describes the trial before Annas. The fourth Gospel, and it alone, records our Lord's words to Pilate about His kingdom (John 18:36), of His coming into this world to bear witness unto the truth (John 18:37), of his having no power to crucify Him except what God gave (John 19:11). John alone makes mention of His seamless robe (John 19:23), His legs not being broken (John 19:33), and the blood and water which came from His pierced side. John omits altogether the awful cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" and in its place gives His triumphant "It is finished." John says nothing of His being numbered with the transgressors, but does tell us of Him being with the rich in His death. John alone mentions the costly spices which Nicodemus brought for the anointing of the Savior's dead body. Clearer proofs of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures we could not ask for. Seven times the Savior spoke while He was upon the cross, thus exhibiting His perfections as the Word, in death, as in life. The first, the word of forgiveness, for His enemies (Luke 23:34). The second, the word of salvation, to the dying thief (Luke 23:42, 43). The third, the word of affection, to and for His mother (John 19:25, 26). The fourth, the word of anguish, to God (Matthew 27:46). The fifth, the word of suffering, to the spectators (John 19:28). The sixth, the word of victory, to His people (John 19:30). The seventh, the word of contentment, to the Father (Luke 23:46). The third, fifth and sixth of these cross-utterances are recorded by John, and will come before us in our present study. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25). The Jews were present at the crucifixion to satisfy their fiendish craving for His death; the Roman soldiers were there from duty; but here is a group noticed by the Spirit who had been drawn there by affectionate devotion for the central Sufferer. They were not looking on from a distance, nor mingling with the morbid crowds in attendance. They stood "by the cross." A pitifully small company, five in all; yet a deeply significant number, for five is the number of grace, and in contrast from the crowds which evidenced man's depravity and enmity, these were the trophies of Divine favor. This little company comprised four women and one man. The first was Mary, the Savior's mother, who now realized the full force of that prophetic word spoken by the aged Simeon more than thirty years before: "Yet, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also" (Luke 2:35). The second was Mary the wife of Cleophas, of whom we read but little, yet in that little what a wealth of love!—here at the cross, in Matthew 28:1 at the sepulcher; called here "his mother's sister"—evidently her sister-in-law, sister of Joseph, for it is most unlikely that she was a full-blood sister with the same name as herself. The third was Mary of Magdala, out of whom Christ had cast seven demons, and to whom He appeared first when He was risen from the dead. How significant that each of them was named "Mary," which means bitterness! What anguish of spirit was theirs as they beheld the dying Lamb! Equally significant is the absence of another Mary—the sister of Lazarus! A fourth woman was there—Matthew 27:56—the mother of John, though she is not mentioned here. The fifth one was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"—so far as we know, the only one of the eleven apostles who was present. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." "Neither her own danger, nor the sadness of the spectacle, nor the insults of the crowd, could restrain her from performing the last office of duty and tenderness to her Divine Son on the Cross" (Mr. Doddridge). After the days of His infancy and childhood, we see and hear little of Mary. During His public ministry her life was lived in the background. But now, when strikes the supreme hour of her Son's agony, when the world has cast out the Child of her womb, she stands there by the cross! Baffled, perhaps, at the unprecedented scene, paralyzed at His sufferings, yet bound by the golden chain of love to the dying One, there she stands. His disciples may desert Him,

His friends may forsake Him, His nation may despise Him; but His mother is there, where all might see her—near Him in death as in birth. Who can fully appreciate the mother-heart! Marvelous fortitude was Mary's. Hers was no hysterical or demonstrative sorrow. There was no show of feminine weakness; no wild outcry of uncontrollable anguish; no falling to the ground in a swoon. Not a word that fell from her lips on this occasion has been recorded by any of the four Evangelists: apparently she suffered in unbroken silence. The crowds were mocking, the thieves taunting, the soldiers callously occupied with His garments, the Savior was bleeding—and there was His mother beholding it all! What wonder if she had turned away from such a spectacle! What wonder if she had fled from such a scene! But no! She did not crouch away nor fall in a faint. She stood by the cross. What tremendous courage! What love! What reverence for the Savior! "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son? (John 19:26). Occupied with the most stupendous work ever done, not only on earth but in the entire universe; under a burden which no mere creature could possibly have sustained; the Object of Satan's fiercest malignity! about to drain the awful cup which meant separation from God Himself for three hours; nevertheless, even at such a time, the Lord Jesus did not deem natural ties as unworthy of recognition. To the very end He showed Himself both perfect Son of God and perfect Son of man. In boyhood He had "honored" His parents (Luke 2:52), so does He now on the cross. About to leave this world, He first provides a home for His widowed mother. First He had prayed for His enemies; then He had spoken the words of salvation and assurance to the repentant thief; now He addresses His mother. "He saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" Twice do we find our Lord addressing Mary as "Woman": at the Cana marriage-feast (John 2:4), and here. It is noteworthy that both of these references are found in John's Gospel, the Gospel which treats specifically of His Deity. The Synoptics present Him in human relationships, but John portrays Him as the Son of God—above all; hence the perfect propriety of Christ here addressing His mother as "Woman." That this term is neither harsh nor discourteous is clear from a comparison with John 20:13. But there was another reason why He would no longer call her "mother"—as, doubtless, He had addressed her many a time. The death on the cross made an end of all His natural ties: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yet, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we no more" (2 Cor. 5:16)! From now on, believers would be linked to Christ by a closer bond, by a spiritual relationship, and this is what the Savior would now teach both His mother and His beloved apostle. "Behold thy son!" I am thy "Son" no longer. It is a striking confirmation of this that Mary is not mentioned at all in connection with Christ's resurrection: the only other time she is referred to in the New Testament is in Acts 1:14, where we see her taking her place among (not over) believers at a prayer-meeting. "Here it is that our Lord lays aside His human affections. He sees His mother and His beloved disciple near the Cross, but it is only to commend them the one to the other, and thus to separate Himself from the place which He had once filled among them. Sweet, indeed, it is, to see how faithfully He owned the affection up to the last moment that He could listen to it; no sorrow of His own could make Him forget it! But He was not always to know it. The 'children of the resurrection' neither marry, nor are given in marriage. He must now form their knowledge of Him by other thoughts, for they are henceforth to be joined to Him as 'one spirit'; for such are His blessed ways. If He takes His distance from us, as not knowing us in 'the flesh,' it is only that we may be united to Him in nearer affections and closer interests" (Mr. J. G. Bellett). "Then saith he to the disciple" (John 19:27)—the one standing by "whom he loved." In Matthew 26:56 we read concerning the Eleven, "They all forsook Him and fled." This was the accomplishment of His own sad prediction, "all ye shall be offended because of me this night" (Matthew 26:31)—the Greek signifying "scandalized." They were ashamed to be found in His company. But it is blessed to know that one returned to His side ere He died. And which one was it? Who of the little band shall manifest the superiority of his love? Even though the Sacred Narrative had

concealed his identity, it would not have been difficult for us to name him. But the fact that Scripture informs us that it was the writer of this fourth Gospel supplies one of the many silent but indubitable proofs of the Divine inspiration of the Bible. "Woman behold thy son! Then said he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" (John 19:27). First, to His mother, Behold now this one who cares for you, who has taken his place by your side, who would not allow you to stand here alone. Second, to John, Behold thy mother!—regard her henceforth with the tenderest affection; she is My living legacy to you! Thus did the Redeemer give to the apostle who had leaned on His breast, the one on whose breast He had once rested! Thus did He give to John the place which He had filled—a higher place than that which He gave to Peter! The order is indeed striking: Christ bade Mary look to John, before He commanded him to care for her—John was to be the stay of Mary, not Mary of John! "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19:27). First, the Savior's act has forever set an example for children to honor their parents—to the end, not only while they are minors. Second, it marked His tender compassion: He would graciously spare His mother the worst, and therefore made arrangements that she would not witness the awful darkness, hear His cry of agony, or be present when He died. Third, it showed Him Son of God, the Protector and Provider of His people; it was the pledge of His equal care for all He leaves behind on earth—while we are here in the world He will supply our "every need." Fourth, He here confirmed the law of love, under the shadow of the cross. He united together those who loved Him and whom He loved. There was no command, for love needs none; love will respond to a gesture, a glance. The beloved disciple at once understood his Lord's mind. Fifth, He intimated that in providing for His people, He would do so by means of His people; it was John who was to provide hospitality for Mary. Christ is still saying to us: "Behold thy son!... Behold thy mother!"—compare Matthew 25:40. How marvelously are the Divine and human perfections of Christ blended here: as Man, honoring His mother; as God, the Head of the family, making arrangements for the children! "From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Of old it had been predicted that the Lord Jesus should act discreetly: "Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently" (Isa. 52:13). In commending His mother to the care of His beloved apostle, the Savior evidenced His wisdom by the choice of her future guardian. Perhaps there was none who understood Him so well as His mother, and it is almost certain that none had apprehended His love so deeply as had John. We see, therefore, how they would be most suited companions for each other, the intimate bond of spiritual love uniting them together and to Christ. None so well fitted to take care of Mary; none whose company she would find so congenial; none whose fellowship either would more appreciate. "From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Here, as ever, the Roman Catholics err—"not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." From this verse they argue that Mary could have had no other children, otherwise Christ had never committed her, a widow, to John. But the Word of God plainly declares that she did have other children—"Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us?" (Matthew 13:55, 56). The same Word of God also shows us that they were, at that time, ill-fitted to be Mary's companions and guardians—"I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children" (Ps. 69:8), were the Savior's own words. How, then, could they take the Savior's place, and be unto Mary what He had been! "We surely need no stronger proof than we have here, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was never meant to be honored as Divine, or to be prayed to, worshipped and trusted in, as the friend and patroness of sinners. Common sense points out that she who needed the care and protection of another, was never likely to help men and women to heaven, or to be in any sense a mediator between God and man? (Bishop Ryle). How this incident also illustrates, once more, that spiritual bonds have the preference over natural ties! Moreover, what a heart-piercing rebuke to His unbelieving "brethren" (John 7:5) were His words here to Mary and John. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the

Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst" (John 19:28). What a sight is this—the Maker of heaven and earth with parched lips! the Lord of glory in need of a drink! the Beloved of the Father crying, "I thirst!" First, it evidenced His humanity. The Lord Jesus was not a Divine man, nor a humanized God; He was the God-man. Forever God, and now forever man. When the eternal Word became incarnate, He did not cease to be God, nor did He lay aside any of His Divine attributes; but He did become flesh; being made in all things like unto His brethren. He "increased in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52); He "wearied" in body (John 4:6); He was "an hungered" (Matthew 4:2); He "slept" (Mark 4:38); He "marvelled" (Mark 6:6); He "wept" (John 11:35); He "prayed" (Mark 1:35); He "rejoiced" (Luke 10:21); He "groaned" (John 11:33); and here, He "thirsted." God does not thirst; there is no hint (so far as we are aware) that the angels ever do; we shall not in the Glory (Rev. 7:16). But Christ did, as man, in the depths of His humiliation. This fifth Cross-utterance of the Savior, "I thirst," followed right after the three hours of darkness, during which the light of God's countenance had been withdrawn from the Sin-Bearer. It was then that the blessed Savior endured the fierceness of the outpoured wrath of a holy God. It was this which made Him exclaim, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:4). This cry, then, tells of the intensity of what He had suffered, the awful severity of the conflict through which He had just passed. "He hath made Me desolate and faint," He cried (Lam. 1:13). But unparalleled as had been His sufferings, great as was His thirst, it was not desire for the relief of His body that now opened His lips. Far different, far higher, was the motive which prompted Him. This comes out clearly in the first part of John 19:28. Carefully has the Holy Spirit guarded the Savior's glory, with delight has He brought before us His unique perfections. First, the very fact that He did now "thirst" evidences His perfect submission. He that had caused water to flow from the smitten rock for the refreshment of Israel in the wilderness, had the same infinite resources at His disposal now that He was on the cross. He who turned the water into wine by a word from His lips, could have spoken the same word of power here, and instantly met His own need. Why, then, did He hang there with parched lips? Because, in the volume of that Book which expressed the will of God, it was written that He should thirst! He came here to do God's will, and ever did He perfectly perform it. In death, as in life, Scripture was for the Lord Jesus the authoritative Word of the living God. In the temptation He had refused to minister to His own need apart from that Word by which He lived; so now He makes known His need, not that it might be relieved, but that "the Scriptures might be fulfilled"! Observe that He did not Himself seek to fulfill it—God can be trusted to take care of that; but He gives utterance to His distress so as to provide occasion for the fulfillment. "The terrible thirst of crucifixion is upon Him, but that is not enough to force those parched lips to speak; but it is written, 'In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink'—this opens them" (Mr. F. W. Grant) Here, then, as ever, He shows Himself in active obedience to the will of God, which He came to accomplish. He simply says, "I thirst," the vinegar is tendered and the prophecy is fulfilled. What perfect absorption in the Father's will! But mark how His Divine perfections come out here: "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished." How completely self-possessed the Savior was! He had hung on that cross for six hours, and had passed through suffering unparalleled: nevertheless His mind was perfectly clear and His memory entirely unimpaired. He had before Him, with perfect distinctness, the whole truth of God. He reviewed in a moment the entire scope of Messianic prediction. He remembered there was one prophetic scripture yet unaccomplished. He overlooked nothing. What a proof was this that He was Divinely superior to all circumstances! Finally, mark the wondrous grace here: He thirsted on the cross, that we might drink the water of life and thirst no more forever! "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (John 19:29). The act recorded here must be carefully distinguished from that mentioned in Matthew 27:34, being the same as that found in Matthew 27:48. The first drink of vinegar and gall, commonly given to criminals to deaden their pains, the Lord refused; the drink of vinegar or sour wine, He

here accepted—in obedience to His Father's will. The ones who tendered the sponge were, most probably, the Roman soldiers, who carried out the details of the crucifixion. Little did they think that they were executing the counsels of God! In view of the context in Matthew 27 we believe that these Romans had been deeply impressed by the Savior's words from the cross, and especially by that mysterious darkness for three hours, and that they now acted either out of compassion or reverence. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished" (John 19:30). "It is finished"—a single word in the original. It was the briefest and yet the fullest of His seven cross-utterances. Eternity will be needed to make manifest all that it contains. All things had been done which the law of God required; all things established which prophecy predicted; all things brought to pass which the types foreshadowed; all things accomplished which the Father had given Him to do; all things performed which were needed for our redemption. Nothing was left wanting. The costly ransom was given, the great conflict had been endured, sin's wages had been paid, Divine justice satisfied. True, there was the committal of His spirit into the hands of the Father, which immediately followed His word here; there was His resurrection, ascension, and session on high, but these are the fruit and reward of that work which He completed. Nothing more remained for Him to do; nothing more awaited its fulfillment; His work on earth was consummated. "It is finished." This was not the despairing cry of a helpless martyr. It was not an expression of satisfaction that the end of His sufferings was now reached. It was not the last gasp of a worn-out life. No, it was the declaration on the part of the Divine Redeemer that all for which He came from heaven to earth to do, was now done; that all which was needful to reveal the glorious character of God had now been accomplished; that everything necessary for the putting away of the sins of His people, providing for them a perfect standing before God, securing for them an eternal inheritance and fitting them for it, had all been done. "It is finished." The root Greek word here, "teleo," is variously translated in the New Testament. A reference to some of its alternative renditions in other passages will enable us the better to discern the fullness and finality of the term here used by the Savior. In Matthew 11:1 "teleo" is translated as follows, "When Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples." In Matthew 17:24 it is rendered, "They that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute." In Luke 2:39 it is translated, "And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord." In Luke 18:31 it is rendered, "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." Putting these together we learn the scope of Christ's sixth cross-utterance. "It is finished." He cried—it is "made an end of," it is "paid," it is "performed," it is "accomplished." What was "made an end of"?—our sins, our guilt! What was "paid"?—the price of our redemption! What was "performed"?—the utmost requirements of God's law. What was "accomplished"?—the work which the Father had given Him to do! What was "finished"?—the making of atonement! "And he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit" (John 19:30). The order of these two actions strikingly evidences the Savior's uniqueness: with us the spirit departs, and then the head is bowed; with Him it was the opposite! So, too, each of these actions manifested His Deity. First, He "bowed his head"; the plain intimation is that, up to this point, His head had been held erect. It was no impotent sufferer who hung there in a swoon. Had that been the case, His head had lolled helplessly on His chest, and He would have had no occasion to "bow" it. Weigh well the verb here: it is not that His head "fell forward," but He consciously, calmly, reverently, bowed His head. How sublime was His carriage even on the "tree!" What superb composure did He evidence! Was it not His majestic bearing on the cross that, among other things, caused the centurion to cry, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54)! "And gave up (delivered up) the spirit." None else ever did this or died thus. How remarkably do these words exemplify His own declaration in John 10:17, 18: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"! The uniqueness of Christ's action here may also be seen by comparing His

words with those of Stephen's. As the first Christian martyr was dying, he prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). In sharp contrast from Stephen, Christ "gave up the spirit"; Stephen's was taken from him, not so the Savior's. "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (John 19:31). The day on which the Savior was crucified was "an high day": it was on the eve of the regular weekly sabbath and also of the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, from which the Jews reckoned the seven weeks to pentecost; the same day was also the one appointed for the presentation and offering of the sheaf of new corn, so that it possessed a treble solemnity. Hence the Jews' urgency here—the breaking of the legs would serve the double purpose of hastening and ensuring death. Behind this motive and act of "the Jews," zealous for the Law (Deut. 21:22, 23), we may behold, again, the over-ruling hand of God. Seemingly, Pilate would have allowed the body of Christ to remain on the cross, perhaps for several days, after He was dead. But the Lord Jesus had declared He would be "buried" and that He would be in the grave three days. For the fulfillment of this He must be buried the same day that He died; therefore did God see to it that no word of His failed! Once again were the Lord's enemies unconsciously executing the Divine counsels. "Then came the soldiers, and break the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him" (John 19:32). Why did the soldiers first give their attention to the two thieves? We cannot be certain, but most likely because they perceived that Christ was dead already. The Greek word for "break" here signifies to "shiver to pieces." A heavy mallet or iron bar was used for this. On this verse Bishop Ryle says, "It is noteworthy that the penitent thief, even after his conversion, had more suffering to go through before he entered into Paradise. The grace of God and the pardon of sin did not deliver him from the agony of having his legs broken. When Christ undertakes to save our souls, He does not undertake to deliver from bodily pains and conflict with the last enemy. Penitence, as well as impenitence, must taste death (unless the Savior returns first, A.W.P.)" Yet it is blessed to know that these Roman soldiers were also the unwitting agents for fulfilling Christ's promise "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"! "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs" (John 19:33). This affords further evidence of the uniqueness of Christ's death. The Lord Jesus and the two thieves had been crucified together. They had been on their respective crosses the same length of time. But now, at the close of the day, the two thieves were still alive; for, as it is well known, execution by crucifixion, though exceedingly painful, was usually a slow death. No vital member of the body was directly affected, and often the sufferer lingered on for two or three days, before being finally overcome with exhaustion. It was not natural, therefore, that Christ should be dead after but six hours on the cross—observe how that "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead" (Mark 15:44). The request of the Jews to Pilate shows that they were not expecting the three to die unless death were hastened. In the fact that the Savior was "dead already" when the soldiers came to Him, though the two thieves still lived, we have a further demonstration that His life was not "taken from him," but that He "laid it down of himself"! "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs." This was the first proof that the Son of God had really died. Trained executioners as these Roman soldiers were, it is quite unthinkable that they would make any mistake in a matter like this. Pilate had given orders for the legs of the three to be broken, and they would not dare to disobey unless they were absolutely sure that Christ were "dead already." Infidels expose themselves to the charge of utter absurdity if they claim that Christ never died, and was only in a swoon. The Roman soldiers are witnesses against them! "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34). "That blood should flow from one now dead, that blood and water should issue together, yet separated, was clearly a miracle. The water and the blood came forth to bear witness, that God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son (1 John 5:8-12). We have not

here the centurion's confession, 'truly this was the Son of God'; we have not Pilate's wife, nor the convicted lips of Judas, bearing Him witness; Jesus does not here receive witness from men, but from God. The water and the blood are God's witnesses to His Son, and to the life that sinners may find in Him. It was sin that pierced Him. The action of the soldier was a sample of man's enmity. It was the sullen shot of the defeated foe after the battle; the more loudly telling out the deep-seated hatred that there is in man's heart to God and His Christ. But it only sets off the riches of that grace which met it, and abounded over it; for it was answered by the love of God. The point of the soldier's spear was touched by the blood! The crimson flow came forth to roll away the crimson sin" (Mr. Bellett). "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." Here was the second proof that our Lord really died. One of the soldiers determined to make sure work and leave nothing uncertain—in all probability directing his spear at the Savior's heart. He was singled out from the others even while dead between the dying thieves. "He has a place even here that belonged to Him alone!" (Mr. W. Kelly). "Behold now the sleeping last Adam, and out of His side formed the evangelical Eve. Behold the Rock which was smitten, and the waters of life gushed forth. Behold the Fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness" (Augustine). "The blood and water signified the two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ—justification and sanctification. Blood stands for remission, water for regeneration; blood for atonement, water for purification. The two must always go together." (Matthew Henry). "And he that saw it bear record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:35). The reference is to what is recorded in the previous verse: John vouches as an eye-witness for the flowing of the blood and water from the Savior's pierced side. It is evident that he had returned to the cross after conducting Mary to his own home, and it is equally evident that he must have remained there to the end. John's solemn asseveration here plainly intimates that what is recorded in the previous verse is a notable miracle. We believe that the "record" of John includes both what he has written here and that which he says in his first Epistle: "This is he that came by [i.e., was manifest by means of] water and blood" (1 John 5:6). In the Gospel the blood is mentioned first, as satisfying God; then comes the "water" as applied to us. In the Epistle the order is the experimental one: we have to be regenerated before we have faith in the blood! "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36). The Holy Spirit here quotes Psalm 34:20: "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." Marvelously had this been fulfilled. God had kept all the bones of His incarnate Son. Notwithstanding Pilate's order, the soldiers broke not His legs. All the legions of Caesar could not have broken a single bone: they, too, had "no power" except what was given them from above! The preservation of Christ's bones was the fulfillment of an ancient type; "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (Ex. 12:46), i.e., of the paschal lamb. For fifteen hundred years Israel had punctiliously observed this item in the passover observance, and none of them (so far as we know) had any idea of its meaning. Now the Holy Spirit explains it. "And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19:37). In a most striking way the piercing of the Savior's side demonstrated the sovereignty of God—His absolute control over all His creatures and their every act. The soldier had received instructions to break the legs of Christ, but this he did not: had he done so, Scripture had been broken! The soldier had not received orders to pierce the Savior's side, yet this he did: had he not, prophecy had failed of its accomplishment! The quotation is from Zechariah 12:10 and the reference is to a coming day, when Israel shall look upon Him whom they pierced—they pierced Him, though the act was performed by a Roman. Observe here the minute accuracy of Scripture: in John 19:36 the word "fulfilled" is suitably used; but here in John 19:37 it is significantly absent. And why? Because the complete "fulfillment" of Zechariah 12:10 is yet future, hence the "another scripture saith." "After this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take

away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus" (John 19:38). This, too, was in fulfillment of prophecy: "Men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:9, corrected translation). It is blessed to see the Holy Spirit here bringing Joseph to light in connection with the last offices of love to the precious body of the Lord; he was allowed a privileged part in the accomplishment of Isaiah's prediction. How true it is that man proposes, but God disposes! Wicked men had prepared three graves for the occupants of the three crosses, but one of them was destined to remain unoccupied that day. Just as God would not suffer Christ's bones to be broken, so He would not allow His body to be placed in a malefactor's tomb; but instead, in a sepulcher prepared by one who loved Him. Hitherto, Joseph had, through fear of the Jews, been a secret disciple; but though afraid to own the Savior while He lived, now that He was dead, he went in "boldly" (Mark 15:43) and craved His body. What a witness was this to the power of the Redeemer's death! "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight (John 19:39). This also witnessed to the power of Christ's death. Like Joseph, Nicodemus came out into the light but slowly. Timid by nature, yet grace overcoming, here is Nicodemus the only one, apparently, who dared to help Joseph in the holy work of burying the Lord. How great the contrast between his conduct in John 3, when he crept into the Lord's place of lodging under cover of night, and here, where he is not ashamed to openly show himself as one who loved the crucified Savior! The value of his gift testifies to the greatness of his love. "Joseph and Nicodemus had done what they could. That service done for Christ has never been forgotten. The names of these two are embalmed in the volume of inspiration, and the amount in weight of the spices that Nicodemus brought is likewise recorded. Service done to Christ, or in His name, is never by God forgotten" (Mr. C. E. Stuart). "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:40). "They wrapped that incorruptible body in spices, for it is to be fragrant for evermore to all His people as the death like which there is no other" (Mr. F. W. Grant). Here, too, a beautiful type was fulfilled. In 2 Chronicles 16:14 we read, "And they buried him in his own sepulcher, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices." "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid" (John 19:41). Beautifully suggestive is the reference to the "garden." It was in a "garden" that the first Adam sowed the seed which issued in death; so here, in a "garden" was sown the Seed which was to bear much fruit in immortal life. In the "new" sepulcher "wherein was never yet man laid" we have the fulfillment of still another type: "And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer (previously slain) and lay them up without the camp in a clean place" (Num. 19:9). "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand" (John 19:42). Here was the third conclusive proof that the Lord Jesus actually died—He was buried. He who had been born of a virgin mother, was laid in a virgin grave; there to remain for three days when He came forth as the mighty Victor. The following questions are to prepare for our next study:— 1. Why was the "stone" removed, verse 1? 2. What is shown by Mary's words, verse 2? 3. Why seek the two she did, verse 2? 4. Why went not John in, verse 5? 5. What is the significance of verse 7? 6. What was it he "saw" that made him "believe," verse 8? 7. Why did they go "home," verse 10?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/exposition-of-the-gospel-of-john-chapter-66-christ-laying-down-his-life/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net