

# The Gospel of John, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 25: The Crucifixion and Burial

### John 19:17-42

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

John 19:17-42 is the account of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, the center of the gospel. Doctrinally, the chapter proclaims Jesus' kingship even at the cross, emphasizes the careful fulfillment of Scripture (showing God's sovereign plan), records Jesus' triumphant cry "It is finished" (the completed work of salvation, a debt paid in full), and gives careful eyewitness testimony that Jesus truly died. The teacher should help students grasp the seriousness of sin, the depth of God's love, and the finished work of salvation. The heaviest doctrinal block belongs at Question 9, with major weight at Questions 5 and 7.

The teacher should handle two emphases carefully and positively. First, "It is finished" establishes that salvation rests on Christ's completed work, not on anything we add; we receive it by faith and obedience, never earning it, which is the heart of the gospel against any system of self-salvation. Second, the careful testimony to Jesus' real death guards the gospel against any view that He did not truly die. These truths are precious and should be taught with both clarity and reverence.

At the same time, the chapter is deeply formational. Christ's provision for His mother even while dying reveals His heart and calls us to love even in our suffering. The courage of Joseph and Nicodemus calls secret disciples into open devotion. So aim at both: a clear grasp of the finished work and real death of Christ, and a heart that rests in His finished work and lives in grateful, open devotion. The disciple we are forming does not rush past the cross.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*Pilate's inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was written in three languages and he refused to change it (vv. 19-22). What is significant about this public proclamation of Jesus' kingship at the cross?*

##### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Pilate fastens an inscription over the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (vv. 19-20). When the chief priests object, Pilate refuses to change it: "What I have written I have written" (v. 22). Unwittingly, Pilate proclaims the truth to the whole world.

Draw out the irony and the truth. Pilate intended the sign perhaps as a jab at the Jewish leaders, but God used it to declare the truth: the crucified man is the King. And it is written in the three major languages of the world, a public proclamation to Jew, Roman, and Greek alike. The kingship of Jesus is announced precisely at the moment He seems most defeated.

Stress the paradox of the cross. Jesus reigns from the cross. The world saw a condemned criminal; the sign declared a King. His throne, in a sense, was the cross, and His crown was of thorns. This is the upside-down glory of the gospel: the King conquers by dying, and His kingship is proclaimed over the place of His death.

Apply it. Help students see that the crucified Christ is the reigning King, and that the cross is not the defeat of His kingship but its strange enthronement. The proclamation in three languages also points to the worldwide scope of His reign. Ask students how seeing the cross as the throne of the King reshapes the way they view both the cross and Christ's kingship.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The public proclamation of Jesus' kingship at the cross (John 19:19–22).
- God using even Pilate's sign to declare the truth.
- The paradox of Christ reigning from the cross.
- The worldwide scope of His kingship in the three languages.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is significant about the inscription proclaiming Jesus King?
- How does the cross become the throne of the King?
- How does this reshape the way you view the cross?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*John repeatedly notes that events at the cross happened "to fulfill the Scripture" (vv. 24, 28, 36–37). What does this careful fulfillment of prophecy teach us about God's sovereign plan in the death of Jesus?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

John repeatedly notes that events at the cross happened "to fulfill the Scripture": the dividing of His garments and casting lots for His tunic (v. 24, from Psalm 22:18), Jesus' thirst (v. 28), the unbroken bones (v. 36, from Exodus 12 and Psalm 34), and the pierced side (v. 37, from Zechariah 12:10). The cross fulfills Scripture in detail.

Draw out God's sovereign plan. The crucifixion was not an accident or a tragedy that caught God off guard; it was the fulfillment of what God had foretold centuries before. The detailed correspondence between prophecy and event shows that the cross was God's deliberate, long-

planned purpose (compare Acts 2:23). Even the actions of soldiers and enemies served to fulfill God's word.

Stress what this means for the cross. Because the cross fulfills Scripture, we know it was always God's plan to save us this way. The death of Jesus was not Plan B; it was the purpose for which He came (compare 12:27). The God who foretold it accomplished it precisely, which assures us that our salvation rests on God's sovereign, faithful design.

Apply it to confidence in God's word and plan. The careful fulfillment of prophecy strengthens our confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture and in the sovereignty of God over even the darkest events. Ask students how it strengthens their faith to see that the cross was foretold and fulfilled in detail, and how this assures them that God is sovereign even over the hardest things.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The cross fulfilling Scripture in detail (John 19:24, 28, 36–37).
- The crucifixion as God's deliberate, long-planned purpose (Acts 2:23).
- The cross as the purpose for which Christ came, not Plan B (John 12:27).
- Confidence in Scripture and God's sovereignty from fulfilled prophecy.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does the fulfillment of prophecy teach about God's plan in the cross?
- How does it assure you that the cross was always God's purpose?
- How does fulfilled prophecy strengthen your confidence in Scripture?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*From the cross Jesus provided for His mother, entrusting her to the beloved disciple (vv. 26–27). What does this tender act in the midst of His agony reveal about the heart of Christ?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

In the midst of His agony, Jesus provides for His mother: "Woman, behold, your son!" and to the beloved disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his home (vv. 26–27). Even dying, Jesus loves and provides.

Draw out the heart of Christ revealed here. Crucifixion was among the most agonizing deaths ever devised, and Jesus was bearing not only physical torment but the weight of the world's sin. Yet He notices His grieving mother and makes provision for her care. His love is not so consumed by His own suffering that He forgets the needs of those He loves.

Stress what this reveals about Christ. The same self-giving love that brought Him to the cross is at work even on the cross, attending to one grieving woman. This is the consistent character of Christ: love that thinks of others, that provides, that does not stop even in the extremity of suffering. The Savior dying for the world makes a home for His mother.

Apply it to the students' trust. The Christ who cared for His mother from the cross cares for His people still. His love does not fail us even in His own suffering, and it does not fail us in ours. Ask students how it stirs them to see Christ loving and providing in the midst of His agony, and where they need to trust that same caring love right now.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Christ's love and provision even in the agony of the cross (John 19:26–27).
- The self-giving love that brought Him to the cross at work on the cross.
- The consistent character of Christ: love that thinks of others.
- The caring love of Christ for His people still.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does this tender act reveal about the heart of Christ?
- How does it stir you to see Him loving while suffering?
- Where do you need to trust His caring love right now?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Jesus suffered the cross for us, yet still thought of others' needs (vv. 26–27). When you are suffering or under pressure, how does it tend to affect your care for others, and what would it look like to love like Christ even then?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-examining question takes Christ's example, providing for His mother even while suffering, and turns it toward the student. Jesus, in the extremity of His own pain, still thought of and cared for another's need.

Draw out the contrast with our usual response. Suffering and pressure tend to make us turn inward. When we are in pain, stressed, or under pressure, our care for others often shrinks; we become preoccupied with ourselves. This is understandable, but Jesus shows a higher way.

Hold up Christ's example. Even on the cross, Jesus looked outward in love. This does not mean we ignore our own real needs or suffering, but it challenges the self-absorption that suffering can produce. By His grace, even in our hard seasons, we can still notice and love others.

Press for honest reflection. Ask each student how their own suffering or pressure tends to affect their care for others, and what it would look like to love like Christ even then. The aim is not to add guilt to those who are suffering, but to point to the grace that enables even hurting people to love. Ask where, even in a current pressure, they might look outward in love this week.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Christ loving others even in His own suffering (John 19:26–27).
- The tendency of suffering to turn us inward.
- Grace that enables even hurting people to love.
- Looking outward in love even in hard seasons.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does your own suffering tend to affect your care for others?
- What would loving like Christ even in pain look like?
- Where might you look outward in love even in a current pressure?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*Jesus' final word was "It is finished" (v. 30), a term for a debt paid in full. What was finished at the cross, and why is it crucial that the work of our salvation is complete in Christ?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Jesus' final word is one of the most important in Scripture: "It is finished" (v. 30). In Greek it is a single word, *tetelestai*, a term used in the ancient world to mark a debt paid in full or a task completed. Jesus declares that the work of salvation is complete.

Draw out what was finished. The work the Father gave Him to do (17:4), the bearing of sin, the paying of the debt we owed, the accomplishing of redemption, was now complete. Every prophecy was fulfilled, every requirement met, the price of sin paid down to the last penny. There was nothing left to do. "It is finished" is a cry of completion and victory, not defeat.

Stress why it is crucial that the work is complete. Because Christ finished the work, our salvation does not depend on us finishing it. We cannot add to a finished work. The debt is paid; we do not pay it again. This is the heart of grace: salvation is accomplished by Christ, received by faith, never earned by our efforts (compare Colossians 2:14, where the record of debt is nailed to the cross).

Apply it. Help students rest in the completeness of Christ's work. They are not trying to earn what is already paid for; they are receiving and living out of a finished salvation. This does not eliminate the response of faith and obedience, but it locates salvation in Christ's accomplished

work, not our performance. Ask students what it means to them that Christ's work is finished, and set up the next question on the temptation to add to it.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- "It is finished" as the completed work of salvation, a debt paid in full (John 19:30).
- The work the Father gave Christ now complete (John 17:4).
- Salvation accomplished by Christ, not finished by us.
- The record of debt nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What was finished at the cross?
- Why is it crucial that the work of salvation is complete?
- What does "It is finished" mean for the way you relate to God?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Because the work is finished, there is nothing we can add to earn our salvation, only a finished work to receive in faith and obedience. Where are you tempted to try to earn or add to what Christ has already completed, and how does "It is finished" speak to that?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-examining question takes the truth of the finished work and turns it inward. Because Christ's work is complete, there is nothing we can add to earn our salvation; there is only a finished work to receive in faith and obedience. Yet we are constantly tempted to try to add to it.

Name the temptation clearly. Many believers, even after coming to Christ, slip into trying to earn or secure their standing with God by their performance, their religious activity, their goodness, their efforts. This is the subtle return to self-salvation, and it robs us of the rest the finished work provides. We act as though Christ's work needs our supplement.

Be careful and precise here. Resting in the finished work does not mean faith and obedience are optional; Scripture is clear that we must respond to the gospel and live faithfully. But our faith and obedience are the way we receive and live out of Christ's finished work, not a way of earning or completing it. We obey because we are saved by His finished work, not in order to finish it ourselves.

Apply it. Ask each student where they are tempted to try to earn or add to what Christ has already completed, perhaps in anxious performance, in trying to be good enough, in basing their sense of acceptance on their spiritual track record. Let "It is finished" speak to that temptation:

the work is done; rest in it. Ask what it would look like to stop striving to earn and start resting in Christ's completed work this week.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Nothing to add to Christ's finished work; only a finished work to receive.
- The subtle temptation to return to self-salvation by performance.
- Faith and obedience as receiving and living out of the finished work, not earning it.
- Rest in the completed work of Christ.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where are you tempted to earn or add to what Christ completed?
- How does "It is finished" speak to that temptation?
- What would resting in His finished work look like for you this week?

### **Question 7**

#### **Student Question:**

*John gives careful, eyewitness testimony that Jesus truly died: the blood and water from His pierced side, and his solemn statement, "he who saw it has borne witness" (vv. 34–35). Why does it matter so much that Jesus really died, and how does this guard the truth of the gospel?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

John gives careful, emphatic eyewitness testimony that Jesus truly died. A soldier pierced His side, "and at once there came out blood and water," and John adds, "He who saw it has borne witness, his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth, that you also may believe" (vv. 34–35). John insists on the reality of Jesus' death.

Draw out why John stresses this. The flow of blood and water, and the soldiers' confirmation that Jesus was already dead (so they did not break His legs), establish beyond doubt that Jesus really died. He did not merely faint or swoon. The Son of God truly died. John, an eyewitness, bears solemn witness to it "that you also may believe."

Stress why it matters so much. The reality of Jesus' death guards the heart of the gospel. If Jesus did not truly die, then He did not truly bear the penalty of sin, there was no real atonement, and the resurrection is no triumph over death. The gospel stands or falls on the reality of His death and resurrection (compare 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). The death of Christ for our sins is a historical fact, attested by eyewitnesses.

Apply it to the students' confidence. We do not rest our faith on a myth or a vague spiritual idea but on the historical death (and, next lesson, resurrection) of Jesus, attested by those who saw it. Ask students why it matters that Jesus really died, and how John's careful eyewitness testimony strengthens their confidence in the truth of the gospel.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Careful eyewitness testimony that Jesus truly died (John 19:34–35).
- The reality of His death guarding the heart of the gospel.
- No real atonement without a real death (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).
- The death of Christ as an attested historical fact.

## **Discussion Prompts**

- Why does it matter so much that Jesus really died?
- How does this guard the truth of the gospel?
- How does John's eyewitness testimony strengthen your confidence?

## **Question 8**

### **Student Question:**

*Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, once secret disciples, came openly to bury Jesus (vv. 38–42). What moved these fearful men to courage at last, and where is Christ calling you to step out of hidden discipleship into open devotion?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

After Jesus' death, two secret disciples find their courage. Joseph of Arimathea, "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews," asks for the body, and Nicodemus, "who earlier had come to Jesus by night," joins him, bringing a costly amount of spices (vv. 38–39). Together they bury Jesus openly and honorably.

Draw out the transformation. These were fearful, hidden disciples. Nicodemus first came to Jesus under cover of darkness (chapter 3). Joseph kept his discipleship secret for fear. Yet now, when even the bold disciples have fled, these two step into the open, publicly identifying with the crucified Jesus at real risk to themselves.

Ask what moved them. Perhaps it was the cross itself. Witnessing the death of Jesus seems to have melted their fear and stirred a courage they had not shown before. The love of Christ, displayed at the cross, has a way of drawing hidden disciples into the open. What fear had long suppressed, the cross brought forth.

Apply it to hidden discipleship. Many believers keep their faith hidden out of fear, like Joseph and Nicodemus once did. This passage holds out hope that fearful, secret disciples can find courage, especially as they grasp the love of Christ. Ask students where Christ is calling them out of hidden discipleship into open devotion, and what the cross might stir in them to make that step.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**



- The transformation of secret disciples into open devotion (John 19:38–39).
- The cross drawing hidden disciples into the open.
- Courage to identify with Christ even at personal risk.
- Hope for fearful believers to find boldness.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What moved these fearful men to courage at last?
- Where are you a hidden disciple Christ is calling into the open?
- What might the cross stir in you to make that step?

### **Question 9**

#### **Student Question:**

*This chapter is the account of the death of the Son of God for our sins. Putting together the fulfilled Scriptures, the kingship proclaimed, the finished work, and the reality of His death, what does the cross teach us about the seriousness of sin, the love of God, and the way of salvation accomplished there for us?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, gathering the meaning of the cross. Putting together the fulfilled Scriptures, the kingship proclaimed, the finished work, and the reality of Jesus' death, the chapter teaches us about the seriousness of sin, the love of God, and the way of salvation accomplished at the cross.

First, draw out the seriousness of sin. The cross shows what our sin actually costs. It required the death of the Son of God. Sin is not a trivial flaw to be overlooked; it is so serious, and God's holiness so real, that the forgiveness of sin demanded the suffering and death of Christ in our place. If we want to know how grave our sin is, we look at what it took to deal with it. The cross forever silences any casual view of sin.

Second, draw out the love of God. The same cross that shows the seriousness of sin shows the depth of God's love. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christ did not die for the deserving but for sinners, even for those who crucified Him and those who reject Him still. The cross is the supreme demonstration of love: the Son of God laying down His life for us. Help students hold these two together; the cross reveals both the horror of our sin and the wonder of God's love.

Third, draw out the way of salvation accomplished there. At the cross the debt was paid in full ("It is finished"), the sacrifice for sin was made (the true Passover Lamb, whose bones were not broken), and the way to God was opened. Salvation is accomplished by what Christ did, not by what we do. We do not earn it; we receive it. The proper response to the finished work is to receive it in the obedience of faith, believing in the crucified and risen Lord, repenting of sin,

confessing Him, and being baptized into His death (compare Romans 6:3–4), and then living in grateful faithfulness. The cross is the ground of the entire plan of salvation: there the price was paid that our faith, repentance, confession, and baptism lay hold of.

Bring it to reverent reflection. Help students not to rush past the cross. Here is the seriousness of their sin, the depth of God's love, and the accomplishment of their salvation, all in the death of the Son of God. The only fitting response is worship, repentance, and grateful trust. Ask students how a fresh look at the cross deepens their sense of sin's gravity, God's love, and the salvation Christ accomplished for them.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The seriousness of sin shown by the cost of the cross (the death of the Son of God).
- The depth of God's love displayed at the cross (Romans 5:8).
- Salvation accomplished by Christ's finished work, received not earned (John 19:30).
- Christ as the true Passover Lamb, His bones unbroken (John 19:36; Exodus 12).
- The cross as the ground of the whole plan of salvation, laid hold of by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Romans 6:3–4).
- Worship, repentance, and grateful trust as the fitting response to the cross.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does the cross teach about the seriousness of sin?
- What does it reveal about the love of God?
- How was the way of our salvation accomplished there, and how do we receive it?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Look back over this account of the cross. What is one specific way Jesus is forming you to rest in His finished work and to live in grateful devotion to the One who died for you?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

The capstone question gathers the lesson into a personal aim: to rest in Christ's finished work and to live in grateful devotion to the One who died for us. Both flow from a real encounter with the cross.

Help students see the two responses. The finished work calls us to rest, to stop trying to earn what Christ has completed and to trust His accomplished salvation. And the love displayed at the cross calls us to devotion, to grateful, wholehearted love for the One who died for us. Rest and devotion belong together: we rest in His work, and out of that rest flows glad devotion.

Make it concrete. Ask each student to name one specific way Jesus is forming them to rest in His finished work (perhaps laying down a particular striving to earn God's favor) and one way they

will live in grateful devotion to the One who died for them (a response of love, obedience, worship, or open confession).

Close at the cross, reverently. Let students not rush away. The Son of God died for them; the debt is paid; the love is proven. Let them leave both resting in that finished work and stirred to grateful devotion, echoing the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus, who would no longer keep their love for Christ hidden. Everything we have depends on what Jesus finished there.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Resting in Christ's finished work and living in grateful devotion.
- Rest from striving and devotion as twin responses to the cross.
- Devotion flowing from rest in His accomplished salvation.
- Concrete, specific formation as the goal of the lesson.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How is Jesus forming you to rest in His finished work?
- How will you live in grateful devotion to the One who died for you?
- What would it look like not to rush past the cross this week?