

The Upside Down Kingdom of Jesus – Part 2

Rich Nathan

April 3-4, 2004

John: The Passion of Christ Series

John 19:17-30

I've been doing a series on The Passion of Christ leading up to Easter. Many of you know that the word "passion" refers to the sufferings of Christ – his betrayal and arrest, his trial and beating, and finally his crucifixion. Last week as we looked at the Passion of Christ, I spoke about how our perception of what was going on in the trial of Christ was utterly opposite of what was really going on. For example, Pontius Pilate sets himself up as judge of Jesus Christ, treating Jesus as the accused, as the defendant in the case. But who is really the Judge, and the accused? As we plunge below the surface we see that one day Pilate, along with every one of us, is going to stand before the Judge Jesus Christ. Jesus' kingdom is an upside down kingdom.

You can't read the gospels for very long without discovering that Christ is the ultimate subversive. He turns every thing on its head. He makes us rethink all of the popular conceptions about the way things work. For example, Jesus once told a story about laborers who were hired to work in a vineyard. Some of the laborers were hired early in the day and were offered a day laborer's pay that they agreed to. Other laborers were hired in the third hour, others in the sixth, others in the ninth hour, others in the eleventh hour. When the owner of the vineyard pays everyone, all of the laborers make the same amount of money, a day's wage. The people who labored all day protested this injustice. What sort of system is this that no matter when you were hired, or how long you work, you get paid the same?

Jesus forces us to rethink the popular notion of a relationship with God. He turns our system of justice on its head. And he introduces us to a different world, God's world, which is a world of grace. Instead of earning more, in terms of acceptance with God, or eternal life, anyone who turns to Christ, whether as a child who serves him their whole life, or on their death bed, they will receive the same pay – eternal life.

In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, it is better to give than to get. What sort of un-American philosopher was Jesus? Better to give than to get? Doesn't he know that that sort of perspective will ruin the economy? We want to create a society of consumers. Just keep ratcheting up every year the needs, the demands, and what is considered necessary.

For example, I saw in Friday's Columbus Dispatch that for many baby-boomers, getting rid of wrinkles is now an absolute necessity. Why would you want a wrinkle on your face just because you are getting older, baby boomers? For about \$500 you can have an area of your face frozen by botox every three months. For just \$700 you could have your face injected with Restylane. This is a direct quote: "It will plump up the soft tissue around your mouth to eliminate lines." Oh sure, it causes stinging, throbbing, burning,

redness, swelling, excess fullness, and allergic reactions, but it lasts for six months and you get rid of those unsightly wrinkles. In the upside down kingdom of Jesus he says, "You know, it is better to give \$700 away to the poor than to have your head injected with bacteria or artificial fat."

Jesus even says it is better to be persecuted for his namesake, than to be celebrated and approved of by people who hate him. Apparently, Jesus never heard of the Academy Awards? What could be better than getting a little statue named "Oscar" from people with such sophisticated viewpoints? In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, he says, "I'll tell you what's better than getting a little statue named "Oscar." It is getting 'well done, good and faithful servant' from me."

No where is the upside down kingdom more evident than in the crucifixion of Christ. Popular perceptions are turned on their head as we plunge into the deeper meaning of the cross. The Upside Down Kingdom of Jesus – Part 2. Let's pray.

We read in verse 17.

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Carrying his own cross, he went out to The Place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

Why it is called "The Skull" is not known. The traditional explanation may be true, that Jesus was crucified on a small hill, which was in the shape of a skull. That could be right. Unfortunately, despite its frequent reference in hymns, "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross," there is nothing in the gospel that tells us that Jesus was crucified on a hill. We simply don't really know what this geographic reference, Golgotha, refers to. In Latin, by the way, it is Calvary, which means "skull." So if you've heard of Jesus being crucified at Calvary, it means he was crucified in the place of the skull.

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Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. The sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The 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." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

You know, one of the things that can happen to people as they watch a movie like The Passion is that they can come away with a feeling that Jesus was a tragic victim of cruel religious leaders and cruel government officials. When we focus upon the great suffering of Jesus, we can begin to believe that a great tragedy occurred to an innocent man. This is the typical liberal Christian view of the cross. What happened was the killing of a good young man. It is compared to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, or

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the liberal Christian version of Jesus, this is what the world does to peacemakers like Gandhi, or Yitzhak Rabin, or Jesus – it kills them.

But in the upside down kingdom of Jesus, John does not portray Christ on the cross as victim, he portrays him as conquering victor! Throughout the gospel of John, John has an interesting way to referring to the cross. He calls it the lifting up of Jesus. For example, in John 3:14-15 Jesus says,

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Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Likewise, in John 8:28 we read,

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So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be.

Perhaps in the clearest reference, we read in John 12:32-33 these words of Jesus:

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But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

John does not see the death of Christ as tragedy, but as glory. In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, Jesus is not cast down at the cross rather he is lifted up. John does not see the cross as Jesus being victim. He views the cross as Jesus being victor. And that is why he spends so much time focused upon the placard that was hung over the cross.

The Romans wrote the crime that the condemned man was guilty of over their heads, so that everyone could look at say, “If I do that particular thing, I could get myself crucified.” In Communist China, by the way, they often will parade criminals or political dissenters through the streets with signs around their necks. That’s what they did in Ancient Rome on the cross. They would write over someone’s head, “Murderer,” “Rebel,” or “Robber.” But Pilate wrote over Jesus’ head, “The King of the Jews.” And he didn’t just write it in Aramaic, the language of the people. He also wrote it in Greek and in Latin.

And it is interesting that his kingship is announced in three languages. It is written in Aramaic, which is the language of ordinary life. In other words, Jesus is not just the king of religion, the king of church, the king of Bible study and prayer and doing the rosary, and baptism. Jesus is the King of ordinary life. He desires to extend his reign over your ordinary life – over your work and what you put in your mouth to eat, and what comes out of your mouth by way of your speech, and your marriage, or if you are single, your relationships. He is the King of ordinary life.

The sign was written in Greek, which was the language of culture and philosophy. Jesus is the king, not only of ordinary life, but he is the King of culture – high culture, intellectual pursuits, university studies, research scientists, the arts, dance, and music. He is the King of low culture – popular entertainment, TV, movies, MTV, Nascar, Pro-wrestling, baseball. Jesus wants to extend his rule and reign over culture, so that at all points of culture people recognize it's Christ who is the King, not Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan or Michelangelo. It is Christ who is King.

Finally, this sign was written in Latin, which was the language of governmental affairs and Roman power. Christ is the King over all governments, all the military forces on earth. George Bush doesn't have the power. John Kerry doesn't have the power. The politicians, lobbyists, and the whole military industrial complex – they don't have the power. Christ is King.

But do you perceive him to be King? That's the question. Let me ask you that. You see a man hanging on the cross. You watch a movie like The Passion. Do you say to yourself, "This man on the cross is the King." In the upside down universe of God it is only the eyes of faith that say, "Yes. That's my King. That's not only my King, that's the King over every realm of life." Not victim, but victor.

We read down in verse 25,

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Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." And to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Jesus was not entirely alone at the hour of his death. Apparently there were four women standing at the cross, along with John the apostle. There is Jesus' mother, Mary, Mary's sister, who would have been Jesus' aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. So there were three Mary's by the cross and Jesus' aunt, who we know from the Gospel of Mark is named Salome. She was the mother of James and John, the apostle who was standing here at the cross, who is also Jesus' cousin.

It is very likely that Jesus' mother, Mary, was a widow at this time since we read nothing of her husband Joseph after Jesus was 12 years old. This scene makes sense if Jesus was the oldest son in his family and his father, Joseph, had died. According to Jewish custom, the oldest son was responsible for financially providing for his widow mother. But now Jesus was dying. Mary, at this time, had to be comparably old for that day. She was probably 48 or 50 years old. She was not the beautiful young woman that we see in the paintings, or in the statues, and a 50-year-old woman didn't have a lot of job options in the 1st century.

So to whom should Jesus entrust his widowed mother's care? In the 1st century when people often lived with extended families, it made total sense for Jesus to entrust his mother to her sister Salome and her nephew John. But perhaps we see in this entrusting of Mary to her nephew John something of the upside down kingdom of Jesus. Because Jesus here is prioritizing spiritual family over physical families. Mary had other sons. We read about them in several places in the gospel. But these sons were not yet followers of Jesus. They did not believe that their older brother was the Christ, the Messiah sent by God. John, on the other hand, who was more distant in physical relationship was a true disciple of Christ. So Jesus turns his mother's care over to a spiritual brother rather than a physical brother.

And I think there is an important principle concerning the kingdom of Jesus here. Jesus is showing us that his followers will often find deeper cords of relationship with other followers of Christ over against their own physical family. Have any of you found this principle to be true? Are you in some cases closer to a spiritual brother or sister than you are to someone with whom you have a blood relationship? I think many Christians underestimate the power of this principle. I have watched Christians labor for years for acceptance or approval from their natural families and getting continually disappointed when all around them is a spiritual family that wants nothing more than to shower them with love and acceptance.

Brothers and sisters, I want to say this with all affection, but some of you are wasting so much emotional energy and some of you are shedding so many tears because your parents, siblings, or your kids won't relate to you the way you desire, when all around you is this incredible spiritual family that you have – Vineyard Columbus. And you are missing the love you could have here. The upside down kingdom of Jesus – spiritual family over physical family.

The upside down kingdom of Jesus, a great man remembering the needy and the lowly. We have in these words of Jesus, "Here is your son," "Here is your mother," the deep concern of Christ for one grieving widow. I've always loved the fact that Jesus was unlike other great men throughout history. If you read the biographies of great men, you see them focused upon the big picture, massive accomplishments, huge plans, great adventures, and important decisions. Often with great men, they seem to have no time, no concern for one lonely person, who just needs a hug, a word of encouragement, or a few dollars. Often in great men you don't see the tenderness that can be sensitive to the needs of just one person, even if it doesn't play into their great plans. Jesus is so unusual as a great man. Because he is not only able to focus on the big picture, the salvation of the universe, the reconciliation of all things to God, but at the same time he never loses focus on one struggling person.

You see at the cross his mother Mary, his young cousin, John. Let's consider this scene from Mary's perspective. What is happening in the crucifixion of Mary's son, Jesus, is the final ultimate fulfillment of a prophecy spoken to Mary by an old prophet named Simeon 33 years before when Jesus was just 8 days old. Simeon saw Jesus and said to his mother, Mary, in Luke 2:35.

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A sword will pierce your own soul too.

Mary's whole life of raising Jesus was the experience of a sword piercing a mother's heart. Again and again Mary was forced to relinquish control over her son, to allow her son to fulfill the call that God had on his life. Again and again Mary had to die to her natural motherly desire to direct and control her son's life, to protect him from harm. When Jesus was just 12 years old and came up missing, Mary and Joseph finally found him after three days in the Temple debating with the Jewish leaders, asking them questions. Mary expressed she was upset with Jesus. Luke 2:48.

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Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.

And the sword thrust that pierces her soul:

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Why were you searching for me, Jesus asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?

In other words, "Mom, my true home is not with you. My true home is with God my Father."

And on another occasion Mary is waiting for Jesus outside of a house. We read in Luke 8:20,

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Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you."

Another sword thrust by Jesus.

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My mother and brothers are those who hear God's Word and put it into practice.

When Mary demands that Jesus help a married couple on their wedding day because that married couple has run out of wine, Jesus draws a sharp boundary line, another sword thrust.

SLIDE

Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.

Now, Mary is watching her son mocked. She watches her son be attacked. She listens to the crowd screaming, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Her beloved son is beaten. It's a stab in her heart. It is a sword going through her soul. But nothing, nothing in her whole

life prepared her for seeing her son with nails pounded through his hands and a spike going through his feet, hanging on a cross.

I think Mary's lifetime of sword-thrusts through her soul has an enormous amount to say to mothers here in our church. The hardest lesson for a mother to learn is the relinquishing of control over a son or daughter, a true letting go of your child, and abandoning them to the will of God. Moms, because your child was once a part of your body and was literally tied to you by an umbilical cord, the vast majority of you find it infinitely more painful to let go than virtually any father ever does. Yet God insists at so many points that you open your hand and you release control of your child.

And this does not stop when they reach adulthood. There is a continual call upon a mother, a continual sword thrust through a mother's soul to open your hand and let go of your son or daughter. The release may involve sending your child off to kindergarten when they are 5-6 years old, or off to college when they are 18 years old and going to school in another state. The release may involve bad things like allowing your son or daughter to experience the consequences of his or her failure without getting in the way and constantly bailing them out. So many moms jump in the way of the discipline of the Lord and ultimately end up short-circuiting God's plan to discipline your child and turn them into a true follower. How many of you moms get in the way of the discipline of the Lord for your child?

A mother's release may involve something really good, like blessing your child to be a missionary where they will live for a large part of their lives thousands of miles away from you or having them give up a great job to do ministry at a much lower wage. Mom, are you willing to bless your child fully and release them to fulfill God's plan for their lives, not your plan? To fulfill God's call on their lives, not your call on their lives? Moms, have you ever opened your hand to God and said concerning your son or daughter, "I completely release control over my child to you, Lord. Do with them whatever you want to do. You are their maker, I'm not. I just carried them into this world. But you made them." Have you ever said to God concerning your child, whether they are toddlers, infants, elementary school-age, or teens or adults, "Lord, concerning my son or daughter, not my will, but yours be done in their life."

This is so hard for so many moms to do. Moms often think their plans for their children's lives are way better than God's plans. It is way better for you to be in control than it is for God to be in control, right? Mary had to release control over Jesus again and again.

There is a great contrasting story to Mary in the wonderful book by C.S. Lewis called "The Great Divorce." In Lewis' fantasy, a mother wishes to see her son, who has predeceased her and who now lives in heaven. And so this woman takes a trip from hell to heaven and she is arguing with a bright spirit, who apparently had been her brother, about her right to see her son. This spirit is telling the mom that she needs first to give herself and her son to God and then she can see her son. Mom explodes at him and shrieks, "Give me my boy, do you hear? I don't care about all your rules and

regulations. I don't believe in a God who keeps a mother and son apart. I believe in a God of love. No one had a right to come between me and my son. Not even God. You can tell him that to his face. I want my boy, and I mean to have him. He's mine. Do you understand? He's mine, mine, mine, forever and ever."

"He will be yours, Pam. Everything will be yours. God himself will be yours. But not that way. Nothing can be yours by nature."

"What? Not my own son borne out of my own body?"

"And where is your body now? Didn't you know that nature draws to an end? Look. The sun is coming over the mountains there. It will be up any moment now."

"Michael is mine."

"How yours? You didn't make him. Nature made him grow in your body without your will. Even against your will. You sometimes forget that you didn't intend to have a baby then at all. Michael was originally an accident."

"Who told you that?" said the ghost. And then recovering itself, "It's a lie. It's not true. And it's no business of yours. I hate your religion and I hate and despise your God. I believe in a God of love."

Many moms have turned their backs on God when God forced their hands open and required them to release their children – whether to do something in life or to death. Mom, the Lord owns your child. It is God who made your son or daughter, and the only safe way to live, the only sane way to live is to release your son or daughter to Christ. Mom, where are you at regarding the release of your child to God?

Here's the upside down kingdom of Jesus. Your child is better off being placed under the control of God, than under your control. Your child's life will go better if they fulfill the plan of God, rather than your plans. Your child will only be fulfilled and, frankly, you will only be fulfilled if you both fulfill the call of God on your life. And that comes only by surrendering your child and your own will to God.

We read Jesus' next word from the cross in Jn. 19:28-29,

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Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

Prior to Jesus being crucified, he was offered a drugged wine to drink. The other gospels tell us that he refused it. He wanted to undergo his sufferings with a clear mind. But now at the point of death, he wants to say something. Maybe he couldn't speak because his throat was so parched. But you can hear the Savior gasp the words, "I

thirst.” And here again is the upside down kingdom of Jesus, the one who is presented to us through the gospel of John over and over again as the fountain, is the thirsty. John presents Jesus continually as the one who can quench all of our spiritual thirst. To the woman at the well, Jesus said in John 4:13-14

SLIDE

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

To the disciples Jesus said in Jn. 6:35,

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I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

And to the crowds at the temple who were celebrating the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus shouted,

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If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

He is the quencher of thirst. The one who can satisfy all of your longings. Some of you are so dry, you are so empty. You are so unfulfilled. Jesus says, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” Friend, I tell you, you were not just made for this world. You were made for God. And the reason why you often experience deep dissatisfaction is because the things in this world can’t quench your thirst. There is a part of you that you may not be in touch with. It is a spiritual part. And the spiritual part of you can only be satisfied by Jesus.

Here’s the amazing thing. In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, the fountain who satisfies, himself is thirsty. Consider how far God went to accomplish our salvation. Talk about the humiliation of Christ. The never-ending stream, himself is dry. Jesus underwent all of our physical suffering. But I think his thirst points to a deeper spiritual suffering. At the cross Jesus underwent the torments of hell itself as Christ took on himself the wrath of God against sin, and the utter abandonment of God. He experienced the torments of hell. I think we see this in the simple phrase, “I thirst.”

What’s the characteristic of hell? Jesus tells a story in Luke 16 about a rich man and poor beggar named Lazarus. The rich man dies and goes to hell. The poor beggar, Lazarus, goes to heaven. And the rich man cries out for mercy. He says, “Father Abraham, have pity on my and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire.” Do you want to know what it cost Christ to save us? Jesus experienced the torment and agony of hell and its raging thirst when he hung on the cross.

We read in verse 28,

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Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

Every thing, every picture, every image, every shadow and type concerning Messiah in the Old Testament, has all reached its goal. The whole aim of the Old Testament, the whole purpose in pointing to Christ has been accomplished down to the particular fine points like the crucified Messiah being thirsty. The great Old Testament king named David prophesied 900 years before about Messiah being crucified and being thirsty. We read in Psalm 22:14-16,

SLIDE

I am poured out like water. And all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax. It has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me, a band of evil men has encircled me. They have pierced my hands and my feet.

The death of Jesus was no afterthought of God. It was not Plan B after Plan A, the Old Testament Law, failed. The death of Jesus was according to the predetermined plan of God. Every single aspect of Jesus' death was prophesied about hundreds of years before.

Do you meditate on the fact of God's faithfulness and the consistency of his purposes toward you and toward the world? Do you think about the fact that God doesn't blow hot and cold like we do? He doesn't start off with one purpose, one intention in mind, and then move on to a different purpose. God doesn't start a project like we do, and then get bored and leave it unfinished. He doesn't have dozens of half-read books lying around his house, or unfinished projects in the basement. Whatever God undertakes, whether we are talking about the death of Christ to accomplish the salvation of the world, or the salvation and transformation of you and me, whatever God undertakes, he brings it to completion. God doesn't grow weary. God doesn't get discouraged. God doesn't give up. Friend, if God has begun a work in your life, he is committed to bring it to completion. Never say, "Well, I guess I've blown it so bad that God is just through with me." In bad times and good times, through hard times, and times when you are full of doubt, when doors seem to be shut and doors seem to be open, God is working his plan.

And this is true not only in transforming you, this is true if God has called you to a ministry. He is committed to bringing you into situations and opportunities for you to express your ministry.

The church has historically seen Jesus' thirst as his prayer for world missions. Throughout church history, Jesus' statement, "I thirst," has been seen not only as a physical statement, but as his thirst for lost men and women. Mother Teresa's Missionary of Charities have engraved signs over their chapels all over the world, "I thirst; I quench." Mother Teresa used to say, "We want to satiate the thirst of Jesus on the cross and his love for souls."

Do you know, friends, when we engage in missions, as we do in Central Asia among Muslims, in Africa, in Brazil, in Mexico, and in China, when we send people out to the mission fields as a church, when many of you pray about being sent, when many of you go on short-term missions trips, have you ever considered that you are satisfying the thirst of Jesus, the longing to the point of deep pain that Jesus feels for his wandering, rebellious sons and daughters to return to him? In the upside down kingdom, we partner with God to satisfy the thirst of the never-ending fountain.

Finally, the upside down kingdom of Jesus – he is the finished one who finishes all, verse 30,

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When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

It is finished. The opponents of Christ thought they had rid themselves of this trouble-making Nazarene. They were done with him. No more embarrassing confrontations in public. No more challenges to their authority. They snuffed out the threat. He is finished.

From the cross we don't hear the moan of a beaten man, "I surrender." "I give up." "I am finished." Instead from the cross we hear the triumphant cry of the Victor, "My work has been completed. Everything that I set out to do has been accomplished. God's will has been completely done. It is finished."

Three English words – It is finished – translates one Greek word, "Tetelestai." All of God's purposes, all of God's aims, all of God's goals for Messiah, it has all been accomplished. It is finished. The whole Old Testament ceremonial law system with the thousands of sacrifices and the rituals with goats, sheep and bulls being slaughtered, herds of animals being slaughtered to offer a temporary patch over the problem of sin, all of that ceremonial law is finished by the one perfect sacrifice of the Son of God.

It is finished. It is finished. In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, the finished one finishes all and he finishes well. What's finished? God's wrath toward the sin of believers is finished. We read in the Bible that God is holy and that he hates sin. God has said that he will punish sin and sinners. God has said that the punishment for sin is death. God has said that a person who sins is banished from his presence forever. Before men and women can be reconciled to God, before we can know God, before we can come into his presence, before we can experience intimacy with God and the smile

of God's face, the problem of our sin must be dealt with. At the cross, God set forth his Son Jesus as the atonement for sin and the substitute for men and women.

In other words, God in his mercy holds Christ responsible for our sins. He is our substitute. He stands in our place. And God deals with and punishes our sin right there at the cross. God said he would punish sin. Therefore, he must punish sin. But because our sin has been punished at the cross, God's anger towards us is finished. It is finished. Tetelestai. Now we can live not as objects of wrath, but as objects of mercy and objects of grace, as sons and daughters.

Do you believe this? Do you really believe that God has punished all of your sins, everything past, present, and future? Do you believe God has punished all of your sins at the cross? Or do you still live with the constant gnawing sense that God is going to make you pay? Even though you've turned to Christ and trusted in his death at the cross, do you live with the sense that God is going to make you pay?

Let me ask you a question: Do you really understand the words, "It is finished?" That God's anger is finished? That God's wrath is finished? That God is not waiting to punish you? That God is not waiting around the corner to get you?

Let me press this home. What is finished? Not only is God's wrath appeased, but every attempt of yours and mine to gain God's favor, to be right in God's sight is finished. Christ has fully obeyed God's law. He kept every aspect of it perfectly. He bore the penalty of the broken law, and he gave to God positively perfect love, perfect holiness, and perfect obedience, without the least failure. Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled all righteousness. And God's way of salvation is to give us the righteousness of Christ.

Friend, have you ever seen your need for the righteousness of Christ? Have you ever stood in God's presence and said, "Oh, God, I just feel so filthy. How can someone like me come into your holy presence? I feel so dirty in my attitudes, in my thoughts, in my actions and in my words." Have you ever been struck by the awfulness of your sins in the sight of God?

You won't be struck by your need for righteousness if you compare yourself with other people.

- "Oh, I would never do what she does."
- "I can't believe the way he speaks to his wife. I'm so much better than him."
- "I would never think about treating my parents the way you do."

Do you measure yourself not by people around you, but by God and his holiness? When you come into the presence of God and you start measuring yourself by God and his holy standards, do you see yourself for what you are – your self-centeredness, your manipulateness, the way you bend life in your favor, the way you cut corners, your sinful attitudes, your impatience, your pride, your scorekeeping with others? If you haven't measured yourself against God, and you haven't seen how profoundly you need

righteousness, until you are deeply convicted of your sin, you will not feel your need for the righteousness of Christ.

Here is God's way of salvation. To anyone here who is in touch with the awfulness of their sin, anyone here who sees themselves as a sinner, and you're appalled by your condition, to those of you who hate your sin and you realize you have nothing in your life to impress God with, God offers a way of salvation. God says, "I will give you the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you trust in my Son Jesus, I will give to you as a free gift, Christ's righteousness. I will treat you as being right with me and judge you as innocent in my sight. It is finished."

Righteousness is accomplished. We no longer have to work for our salvation. We do not have to earn God's favor. It is finished. In the upside down kingdom of Jesus, sinners can come into the presence of God as righteous as Christ himself is righteous. Let's pray.

The Upside Down Kingdom of Jesus – Part 2

Rich Nathan

April 3-4, 2004

John: The Passion of Christ Series

John 19:17-30

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 - A. The Humiliation Of Christ
 - B. The Faithfulness Of Christ
 - C. The Desire Of Christ
- IV. The Finished One Who Finishes All (Jn. 19:30)**
 - A. God's Wrath Is Finished
 - B. Our Salvation Is Accomplished