

A Preview of Messianic Suffering

Scripture: Mark 10:32–34

Code: 41-53

Appropriately, I want you to open your Bible to the tenth chapter of Mark, familiar territory for us. By next Sunday night, we will have completed the tenth chapter because we're going to finish it up next Sunday morning and evening. And the eleventh chapter begins with our Lord's triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem in the final week of His life. So we're coming in to the climactic portion of this wonderful gospel of Mark.

But today, we're going to be looking at chapter 10 verses 32 and 34. I couldn't find a more appropriate text for a Christmas message than this one and it became apparent to me as soon as I knew the timing of this that the Lord had ordained that we would have this text on this day. Christmas, as we all know, is filled with all kinds of profound and powerful elements concerning the birth of Christ. It is one of those stories that has amazing characters and even more amazing circumstances that make up the story. All of those elements have found their way into songs and hymns and spiritual songs that focus on the birth of Christ. We've all grown to love and appreciate the characters of Christmas, Joseph and Mary, even Zacharias and Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon, to say nothing of the shepherds, the wise men and even familiarity with Herod, as well as the angels of heaven.

This is an unparalleled event of wonder and drama and there are so many ways to approach it. But the heart of Christmas is in understanding not that Jesus came, but why He came. And as I read this morning in Matthew 1:21, the angel's words to Joseph were very clear as to why he came, "She shall bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus, meaning Jehovah Saves, for He will save His people from their sins." That identifies the purpose and the reason for Christmas. A Savior has come to save His people from their sins. That was the angelic message to Joseph and it was also the angelic message to Mary in Luke 1:31, "You will call His name Jehovah Saves." That was the message from the angels to the shepherds. "Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord." And that is why in John 4:42 He is identified as the Savior of the world. That is not to say that the whole world will be saved, but that the world only has one Savior. The overwhelming reality of Christmas is that the Savior has come, the long-awaited Savior, the final sacrifice for sin, the One who will die in the sinner's place, He has come. This is the good news of Christmas. This is the gospel.

As we study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it becomes apparent to us that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen. Still there are many skeptics. There have been, there are and there always will be who deny that Jesus had any such idea that He might end up in such an ignominious and horrific end. Skeptics suggest that His death and the suffering associated with His death was the result of Him stepping over the line, going too far, a little too zealous, a little too revolutionary, a result of misfortune, on the one hand, or perhaps even better, miscalculation, a bad unintended, unexpected end to a pretty good try on His part.

Jesus, they would suggest, these skeptics, is naive, swept away by popularity. Perhaps a little too

zealous for the things He believed, certainly too ambitious and maybe with some delusions of grandeur. In any case, the way it all ended was certainly not the way He had planned it.

Well, according to the pseudo-scholars, that's how you have to view the death of Jesus. However, according to the Bible, from the very beginning, the angel says He will save His people from their sins and we all know because of all of redemptive history up to that point revealed in the Old Testament that there is no salvation without sacrifice, and there has not yet been a suitable sacrifice. He has come to die. He has come born to die as a sacrifice for sin.

This is no surprise to Jesus. The first words that ever come out of His mouth in the New Testament are these, "I must be about My Father's business." The last words ever to come out of His mouth before His death, "It is finished." He knew why He came and He knew when He had accomplished that purpose.

Throughout His ministry it was clear to Him where He was headed. Before the Romans knew anything about what they would do, before Judas knew anything about what he would do before the chief priests and the rulers and the scribes knew anything about what they would do, before the drama in all of its detail played itself out in history, He knew every single detail that would come His way. In fact, Matthew, Mark and Luke, all three gospels, record three separate times when He informed the disciples about the details of His death.

Let's look at Mark's record of those three times. The first is in chapter 8 verse 31. It says, "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." Again Mark records in chapter 9 verse 31, not long after that He said it again, "He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered, or betrayed, into the hands of men and they will kill Him and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'" Here He added a bit more detail about being delivered into the hands of men.

And then finally, in chapter 10 verse 32, our text for this morning, is the third prediction with even more detail about what will happen. "They were on the road going up to Jerusalem and Jesus was walking on ahead of them, and they were amazed. And those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn Him to death...and here comes more detail...and hand Him over to the Gentiles, they will mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.'"

Each of the three adding more specific elements to the prediction of exactly what would happen to Jesus. He knew what would happen and the reason He knew what would happen is two-fold, and I want to show you those two things this morning.

Number one, because He knew perfectly the Old Testament. Number two, because of His own divine knowledge. It was prophetic Scripture and personal omniscience. And because of His perfect knowledge of Scripture and His omniscience, He knew every detail before those details were ever done or ever planned or ever thought of, He was born to die. He was born to be the Savior and that required death. God planned it, the angels praised it, and Jesus predicted it. The heart of Scripture,

the heart of the Christian gospel, the heart of the Christmas story is the salvation of sinners through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, about which He knew every detail.

Now if you look at the end of verse 32, for a moment, it says, "He began to tell them what was going to happen to Him." That can't be said of anyone, except Christ. No one knows what is going to happen to them in the future, no one knows the future except God, and Jesus is God. He begins to tell them in detail what was going to happen to Him.

How did He know this? First, from prophetic scripture...first from prophetic scripture. Let's look at verse 32 and I'll show you how this fits in. "They were on the road going up to Jerusalem," you always go up to Jerusalem, it's 25 hundred feet above sea level and 35 hundred-plus, 38 hundred-plus above the Dead Sea, and Jesus would be coming to Jerusalem from the back side of the Jordan River through Jericho from the level of the Dead Sea. So He would be going up in the direction of Jerusalem, some 35 hundred feet to the plateau on which the once Jebusite city sat.

Jesus was walking on ahead of them. And I just want to stop, for a moment, to say that is an important statement. Jesus was never dragged into Jerusalem against His own will. He was never swept into Jerusalem by the euphoria of the crowd. He was never sort of encouraged to move toward Jerusalem because the pilgrims were all sort of pushing Him along for the celebration of the Passover. He was Himself walking ahead of His entire entourage. And this is to tell us that He is the leader of this parade. He is resolute as He moves firmly to the place of His own death. He knows exactly what is going to happen when He gets there. He has told the disciples, they're not in the dark about it, and they're pretty sure it could well come to pass because they already know the hatred and animosity of the religious leaders, they've demonstrated against Jesus time and time and time again and they also know that what He says is true. That is why the text says, "They were amazed...they were amazed." There's a natural fear in the soul of anyone who is walking into their own death. They were amazed. No hesitance, no reluctance, with resolute conviction He walks ahead of everyone, pulling His reluctant, amazed, fearful, confused, hopeless little band by the sheer force of His personality as they follow along in bizarre confusion.

When it says, "They were amazed," it most likely refers to the Twelve because the Twelve had been told the details of what was going to happen to Him. It was to them that He had told the promise of His own death. And they're amazed, they're amazed at His courage, they're amazed at His conviction, because they want to run in fear. Additionally, "And those who followed," must refer to another group, this would be the wider group of disciples and followers that He had, pass just the Twelve, and there were many of them, they were fearful. They were fearful. The word "fearful" is basically a word that refers to a kind of fear that is a baffling kind of fear. There was some confusion with them. They're still sort of caught up in the Messianic idea of Judaism, that He's going to set up His Kingdom, and yet they've heard about the things that He said with regard to His death. Their hope is very low and they're baffled and they're confused, and it's that kind of fear. Why is He doing this? Why is He walking in to this deadly danger?

You know, this is one of the very vivid and dramatic portraits of our Lord, Jesus going to His death resolutely, pulling along His confused, frightened, startled and amazed followers. Now for the Apostles, their expectation was grim, seriously grim. In John 11 when Jesus told them, "We're going to Jerusalem," it was Thomas' response to say, "Let's go and die with Him." Fatalistic...let's go and die with Him.

So in order to help them be prepared for this, He pulls them aside. You see it there, He pulls them aside, the Twelve, and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him. This is so important...so important.

It was bad enough when it happened, even though He told them it was going to happen. They still denied Him. They still fled. They still ran. They were still terrified, still terrorized. One can't even comprehend what level of terror they would have experienced if they hadn't been told that it was going to happen. What level of doubt? Sure, they ran out of fear. They ran out of terror. But at the same time, there had to be a reality check that said, "This is exactly what He said would happen." And when that settled in their hearts, it pulled them all back again.

No, it's safe to say that though these men were raised in Judaism, all of them, they ostensibly would have had exposure to the Old Testament. They would have been taught in the synagogues week after week after week and raised up in synagogue schools, as boys were. It would be safe to assume then that they had some knowledge of the Old Testament.

However, the rabbinic approach to the Old Testament in the time of our Lord and long before and even since, right up until the modern era, is not an approach that would yield you a faithful understanding of Scripture. I hate to say that, but that's true. When you hear a rabbi, an orthodox rabbi, or a modern rabbi, a reformed rabbi even today, they might give you some practical wisdom, they might have some psychological insight, they might have some skill in sorting out issues in life, but when they begin to approach the interpretation of Scripture, they are as lost as lost can be because long ago they decided that there needed to be, in order to sort of give them a place in the sun, an esoteric, almost gnostic elevated secret mystical knowledge of Scripture that only they knew. And the people had been exposed to this for centuries. There was no real connection between observation, human reason and inaccurate interpretation of Scripture. And so we can safely say that under the influence of Pharisees and scribes in that kind of tradition with a bizarre kind of mystical hermeneutic, these men didn't really have a good understanding of the Old Testament.

But then again on the other side, there were some things that were just plain obvious like when Herod went to the Chief Priest and said, "What does the Old Testament say about where He's going to be born?" And they immediately said, "Bethlehem." There were some things that were obvious enough that they should have known. But the problem is, at this particular point they don't really know the Old Testament and they don't know the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament well enough to see their fulfillment. In fact, do you remember that after the crucifixion and the resurrection, Jesus walks with a couple of them on the road to Emmaus and He opens the Old Testament, remember that?, Luke 24, and explains to them in the Old Testament all the things that just had come to pass? It was all there.

You say, "Why are you talking about the Old Testament? It doesn't appear in verse 32?" Well it doesn't appear in verse 32, but in the parallel account in Luke, Luke gives us the parallel account of Jesus' third prediction of His death and resurrection. This is what Luke writes. "All things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished." That's Luke 18:31, as He was going toward Jerusalem, He was telling them all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man and that they will be accomplished. So, Mark doesn't tell us that, Luke tell us that, that He explained to them the Old Testament prophets and their prophecies concerning what was coming.

How did He know what was going to come? First of all, because of prophetic scripture and anyone who knew the scripture could have seen that. His death was promised in the Old Testament and not in a sort of generic way, but in a very, very specific way. In fact, if you look at the Old Testament, it's pretty obvious, isn't it, that there needed to be a sacrificial system. Wouldn't you say that's pretty obvious in the Old Testament? There had to be, God mandated it. Why? Because it kept pointing out that the wages of sin is death and that God will accept a substitute sacrifice in place of the sinner. But there's never a sacrifice that ends the need for another sacrifice, and another, and another, and another, and another.

So all of them are waiting for the final sacrifice. They all understood that the wages of sin was death but that God would provide a sacrifice. They knew that from the Old Testament, starting with Adam and Eve they learned that God by means of a sacrifice will cover the sinner's guilt. From Abel they had learned that there aren't many acceptable sacrifices, there's only one. From Abraham they had learned that it is a sacrifice which God Himself will provide that will be satisfactory. And from the Passover, they learned that it had to be a lamb without blemish and without spot. They had made sacrifices their whole life. There should be no shock in just looking at the general tenure of the Old Testament that a sacrifice was going to be required. They should have known that. And Jesus had been introduced to them by John the Baptist with these words, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

If they knew Psalm 2, they would have understood the rage of His enemies against Him because it's there. If they knew Zachariah 13 they would have understood that He would be deserted by His friends. If they knew Zachariah 11 verse 12, they would have known that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. If they understood the implications of Numbers 21 in the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, they would have been able to see perhaps in some fashion that the Son of Man would eventually be lifted up, the picture of the cross. If they would have understood Psalm 34:20, they would have known that none of His bones would be broken on the cross. If they understood Psalm 22 verse 18, they would have known that His clothes would be gambled for. If they understood Psalm 69:21 they would have known that He was being given vinegar to drink by witless people who were fulfilling a specific prophecy. If they knew Psalm 22:1 they would have understood the cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" If they understood Psalm 22 and verse 31, they would have known the cry, "It is finished," for it is in that Psalm. Zachariah 12:10 talks about the spear thrust into His side. Psalm 16 talks about His resurrection. And Psalm 110 even talks about His ascension into heaven.

So many specific details surrounding His death were clearly in the Old Testament. And surely they hadn't lived their whole lives without being exposed to Isaiah 53, the greatest of all messianic, Old Testament passages. The servant substitute, the servant sacrifice who provides redemption for sinners, who is wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities.

The Lord was on His way to the cross and on the way He explained to them the Old Testament prophecies that He would fulfill. And my guess is, that I just told you what some of them were. He knew His Old Testament and He reiterated it for them.

It was much earlier than this that He set His face to go to Jerusalem, Luke 9:51 says. And He went there for the specific reason of fulfilling the very prophecies the Old Testament prophets had stated. This is a great defense of the integrity of our Lord's life and mission, against all accusations of the skeptics. He went to the cross because that was the whole point. And the Old Testament revealed

many specific details and He knew them because He knew the Scripture.

They should have known. How many times did Jesus say to the leaders of Israel, "Search the scriptures, search the scriptures? Do you not know? Have you not read?" He called out their ignorance of their own text, ignorance not because they didn't read it but because they were so adept at misinterpreting it. They all should have known some of the details of His death from the Old Testament Scripture, prophetic Scripture.

But secondly, He not only knew what was coming by prophetic Scripture and a perfect knowledge of its interpretation, but He knew what was coming by personal omniscience. There were things not revealed in the Old Testament that no one could know unless one knows the future, and knows what is as of yet non-existent, and that is true of Him as it is true of God. So we'll pick it up in verse 33. We're going to Jerusalem, He says. We're going to Jerusalem.

And this is startling but it's essential. "He will be the sacrifice that God will provide," that it says in Genesis 22:14, perfect final sacrifice. He will be the true Passover Lamb without blemish, without spot, who will finally satisfy the justice of God with His sacrifice. He will open the way into God's presence and provide salvation and eternal life for all who put their trust in Him. He's going to Jerusalem. That's the plan. There is no alternative.

And then He starts to talk about things that only He could know. The Son of Man will be delivered...the Son of Man will be delivered. That's betrayal. To the chief priests and the scribes, that's the scheming religious aristocrats that will condemn Him, He will be condemned to death, that is there will be some kind of a legality that will sentence Him to death. He will be executed but not by the Jews. He will be handed over to the Gentiles who before they execute Him will mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him and then kill Him, and three days later He will rise again. He predicted each of these elements and each of them came to pass exactly as He predicted. And you find that, as you keep reading in Mark, as you keep reading in Luke, as you keep reading in John and as you keep reading in Matthew, all the details are there. It doesn't surprise us that Jesus knew things that no person could know.

At the beginning of His ministry in John 2:25 it says He didn't need anybody to tell Him what people were thinking because He knew what they were thinking. He knew exactly where, for example, a certain fish would be swimming at a split second of time when it would be caught because it was the fish that had the coin in his mouth to pay His taxes. He knew exactly the history of a strange woman He had never seen in His life but He met her by a well and knew her entire marital history. He knew precisely where there would be a colt that He could ride on into the city of Jerusalem and He knew exactly what the conversation would be when His disciples went to get the colt from the man to whom it belonged. He knew precisely about a man who was carrying a pitcher that His disciples would meet as they went into Jerusalem. He forecast in detail the destruction of Jerusalem that not one stone would be left upon another forty years before it happened. He knew all these things because God knows all these things and He is God.

He's called the Son of Man and even though that is on the surface a term identifying His humanity, it is primarily a messianic term that appears in Daniel 7:13 to describe the Messiah. It is to say that the Son of God will also be human. It's used 80-plus times in the New Testament, 80-plus times and it refers to Him as the Messiah. He is therefore Son of God, Son of Man, the Messiah.

So the Son of Man will be delivered. Let's talk about that. This is betrayal...this is betrayal. It's an agonizing reality, betrayal. It's a horrible thing to be wounded, as it were, in the house of your friends, it's a terrible thing to be betrayed. As Psalm 41 verse 9 describes Judas, it talks about Judas being His own familiar friend with whom He broke bread. He would be the one who would betray Him. Jesus knew that. Jesus knew who it was even though the disciples didn't know. They said, "Who is it, Lord? Who is it? Who is it?" He knew who it was. He knew who the devil in their midst was. This is personal omniscience. He knew the horrible pain of betrayal from a man in whose presence He had performed divine miracles for three years and who had seen everything about His character, and the virtue of His life, unparalleled, unequaled and still wanted from Him only power and money. And when he couldn't get it, he got enough money as he could and ran, only to hang himself in shame. He knew all of that about Judas.

Also, He was rejected...not only betrayed, but rejected, and rejected by a most unlikely group, the chief priests and the scribes...the chief priests and the scribes. You might think, you know there might be some bad High Priest who would reject Him, or maybe a little coalition of bad priests. But they were all in on it. This is not a bad cop scene, this is not some corrupt leadership. This is the whole group. You're talking about the whole religious aristocracy of the land of Israel, the gatekeepers of Judaism, the purveyors of Judaism, top to bottom, side to side. It involves, for example, the Chief Priests, involved the High Priest, and all former High Priests who have maintained that title as former Presidents maintain that title in our culture. These would be the elite among the elite. It would then step down from the High Priests to elevated priests like, for example, the one who was called Captain of the Temple. His job was to assist the High Priest. He was like the vice-High Priest. He was given that duty in case he needed to step in and act on behalf of the High Priest. He was a deputy attendant to the High Priest, even on the Day of Atonement. And it was this particular person, the Captain of the Temple, who arrested the Apostles in the fifth chapter of Acts.

So it starts at the top with the High Priest and all the rest, Annas and Caiaphas. And it comes right down through the ranks to the next in order and below the Captain of the Temple would be what was known as the director of the weekly course. There were priests all over the land of Israel and they came into Jerusalem for two weeks a year to offer their sacrifices, to be the sacrificial priests and they were butchers for two weeks and then they left and another course came in. Somebody coordinated all of that, this was the director of the weekly course of the priests coming and going and offering their sacrifices and carrying on their special rites of purification.

Then there were the directors of the daily course. There were the morning sacrifices and the evening sacrifices every day. In fact, there could be multiple sacrifices, multiple priestly functions going on every day and someone officiated over that and officiated over the actual sacrifices themselves...that's the director of the daily course, as some have called him.

There were at least seven temple overseers who were like administrators, they were priests, they were permanent part of the temple oversight. They may well fall into the category of the title elders, which we read earlier. Then there was the treasurer and there were several of them. They were the CFOs, they were the financial guys, priests who controlled all the financial transactions with the doorkeepers, in charge of the salt and the bakery and the keys and the store supplies and the animals and the coins and all the stuff that you associate with the temple and the Lord cleansing the temple.

This is the entire mass of leadership in Judaism. Then below them are the ordinary priests who are all over the country and who come on their courses. And under them are the Levites who serve and attend to the work of the priests. All of them, the chief priests and everybody that they influence took on Jesus and rejected Him. The scribes are added, they were the theologians...they were the theologians. The sacramentalists were the priests, the theologians, behind the scenes, interpreting the Old Testament are called the scribes. They're kind of a new upper class. Priests could be a little bit low class. They could be pretty common people, not the chief priests but the rest of the priests. But somewhere between the normal class of priests and the aristocratic chief priests was this chief priest of scholars called scribes. Most of them were Pharisees, legalists, some of them were Sadducees, liberals, but the entire group, all of them, all of them together collectively, rejected Jesus Christ.

It's an amazing thing. Priests, you remember, as a hereditary aristocracy, below them are the scribes which would be an intellectual aristocracy....together they reject their Messiah.

How far do they go? They will condemn Him to death and that is the horrendous story of the trials of Jesus. Once before the High Priest, then before Pilate, then before Herod, then back to Pilate and condemned, condemned, condemned, condemned with no legitimate witnesses, no legitimate accusations. He had done nothing. Pilate even said it, "I find no fault in Him." Tried to wash his hands of the affair. One of the greatest miscarries of justice in human history, Jesus is condemned to die without any legitimate accusation and no truthful witnesses.

I wrote a book on that called *The Murder of Jesus*, you can read the unbelievable account of that trial. Here is the sinless one, this magnificent person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is betrayed, who is then rejected, who is then condemned to death. He says it's going to happen and it did. It is exactly the way it happened.

As you read through Mark, as you read through Luke, as you read through Matthew and John, it all unfolds exactly the way He said it would happen. Before Judas knew what he was going to do, Jesus knew. Before the chief priests and scribes knew what they were going to do, Jesus knew. Before the trial could ever be played out, He knew exactly what its end would be.

When you think about the proportion of Jesus' sufferings, it's really pretty staggering stuff. That's why Isaiah 53 calls Him a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We talk a lot about scourging and a lot about crucifixion, but the sorrows of Jesus were...were profound long before that. Why? Because He knew what was coming. Some suffering is sufficient unto itself because you don't suffer until you get there. But Jesus knew it all in detail and He suffered long before He actually suffered, He suffered the torment of His own soul. That's why the New Testament refers so many times to the sufferings of Christ, plural, again and again and again and again and again...sufferings.

If you just look at Isaiah 53, you don't have to do it now, but I just want to give you some words that appear in it. Listen to the sufferings of Jesus described from just words in Isaiah 53...ugly, despised, rejected, sorrowful, grieved, smitten by God, afflicted, wounded, bruised, chastened, whipped, alone, oppressed, afflicted, silent, killed, buried, put to grief, in travail of soul, numbered with transgressors, poured out His soul to death, bore sin. That's all in Isaiah 53, a tremendous list of sufferings.

We've already talked about disloyalty, betrayal. We've talked about rejection, condemnation. How

about another one? Ridicule, that starts to come in verse 33 at the end. "After they had condemned Him to death, they'll hand Him over to the Gentiles...they'll hand Him over to the Gentiles and then the ridicule will take place. They will mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him..mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him." Really, inconceivable and unthinkable, scorn, mockery, ridicule, embarrassment, shame. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:23, "Through all of this He never retaliated...never ever retaliated." You talk about suffering. It's horrific...spitting in His face, the very one who was personally going to the cross to bear the sins of sinners.

These are hateful gestures beyond description. We all know a little bit about scourging. The Jews did it with a three-thonged whip. The Romans added dimensions, they put bits of rough glass, bone, metal in the end of the whip and it was horrific. He went through all of that, profound injuries to His body. But it's not just that, it's all that He suffered in the context of being hated and rejected which reached its apex, according to Matthew's gospel, when He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It is just an unbelievable litany of horrors that He endures. His scourging is so bad it takes two men to do it, trading off.

And finally, they kill Him. Just to fill out the total picture here, according to Matthew 20 verse 19 He said, "They would kill Him by crucifixion," He told them that. It's the first time He really told them that bluntly. Death by crucifixion is a horror which we have talked about often, all on its own, indescribable horror. One writer says, "A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, shame, long continuous of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of intended wounds, all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful, the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish. The wounds inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrene, the arteries especially at the head and stomach became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pain of a burning and a raging thirst and internal anxiety which made the prospect of death welcome."

All of this He knew was coming in detail. It's so sad to me when these pseudo-scholars say what they say about Jesus being ignorant of this. He knew every single detail. His suffering was personally planned by God, as recorded in the Old Testament, personally known by Him in detail through His own omniscience. He knew every bit of it and thus He lived in the anticipation of all this agony long before He ever experienced it.

But the story doesn't end there. Always in all three of these predictions, it ends this way, verse 34, "And three days later, He will rise again." And He did...and He did. He said at the beginning of His ministry, John 2:19, "Destroy this body and in three days I'll raise it up." He said that. He said He would die, He said He would rise. And He died, and He died exactly the way He said He would die, with exactly the details that would attend His death and He rose exactly the way He said He would rise in exactly the time He said He would rise.

What fool would deny that this is the Son of God? The centurion's comment, "Truly this man was the Son of God." He came to save His people from their sins. And that's exactly what He did on the cross and through the resurrection. That's why Christmas is so important to us. It's not about a baby in a manger, really, it's about a Savior on a cross and out an open tomb.

Father, we thank You for the record of holy Scripture which is so rich and not only rich but so unassailable, so strong, so firm. Scripture can't be broken. There's no weak links, no break in the chain. Its veracity, its truthfulness and its power have stood the onslaughts of all the skeptics through all history and the skeptics have come and gone and the Word has remained unscathed, untouched, undented because it is true. And it sustains that at every turn in every examination. We come this morning to worship the Christ who came and knew why He came and did what He came to do that we might have life and have it more abundantly. We thank You for the salvation that is ours in Him. That's why we celebrate His coming. Use this season, Lord, in our lives to increase our worship, our gratitude, our praise, an open opportunity to witness to the glory of our Christ, we pray in His name. Amen.

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