

## Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

### The Gospel of John

#### Chapter 19:23-27

**"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose is shall be,' that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which says, 'They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things." Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."**

"Roman law... granted the soldiers the right to the clothes the executed man was wearing; it was customary to execute the condemned man naked. The basic unit of the Roman army was... eight soldiers; half-units of four soldiers each were sometimes assigned to special tasks, such as execution squads."<sup>1</sup> In Jesus' case there were 5 items of clothing. It is generally agreed that these items included an outer garment such as a robe, a head garment or scarf, sandals, a belt and a tunic.

When the soldiers come to the tunic they decide not to tear it apart. There is perhaps significance to this. Leviticus 21:10 says that the high priest shall not tear his clothing. God providentially worked that Jesus, as our great High Priest, did not have His clothing torn as the Levitical law commanded.

This event took place in fulfillment of the Scriptures that David had written earlier, saying "They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots..." This tells us a couple truths about the plan of God for our salvation. One, it is not "last minute" - these things were written long ago. Two, it is planned to the smallest, most seemingly insignificant detail.

<sup>1</sup> The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Craig S. Keener, pg. 312

It is interesting the way John ends this part of his story. He says "*Therefore* the soldiers did these things." The soldiers of the Roman Empire divide Jesus' garments and cast lots for His tunic precisely because it was a part of God's plan. God did not foresee that they would do this and therefore prophecy it. God prophesied that this would happen and therefore the soldiers did it.

This small scene regarding Jesus' mother teaches us the devotion of John the disciple and the women. With the exception of John, all the other disciples have fled. They had all said that they would die with Jesus, but now they have all cowardly ran off. It is quite a scene at the cross. The soldiers are "doing their job" and dividing up the spoils. The religious leaders are hurling insults at Jesus. But these women, we are told, "stood by the cross" in apparent quietness.

Look at the divine grace that is bestowed upon these women. Crucifixion was an ugly, shameful thing. We wonder at Mary and her strength to be at the cross. As with many of the sayings and events of Jesus' birth Mary probably kept this saying in her heart and pondered it - "A sword shall pierce your own heart..." (Luke 2:35). Now she would know what this prophecy meant. A.W. Pink writes "If Christ was the Man of Sorrows, was she [Mary] not the woman of sorrows?"<sup>2</sup>

It is probable that Joseph has died, since we read nothing of him in the gospels since Jesus was 12 years old. Therefore, Jesus, as the oldest, would have been the one who took care of His mother. Now that He is dying, and seeing His mother, Jesus makes arrangements to have her needs taken care of, by providing John to be in His stead.

What is interesting is that Jesus says to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Why does Jesus call her "woman" and not mother? Many thoughts have been given for this but it must mean the same as when she was called "woman" in John 2. Jesus is looking at her and speaking to her in the relation of Saviour, not as Son. He would bring her to remembrance of His mission. Certainly, Mary probably had the most understanding of Jesus' mission of any other person on the earth at the time. He is reminding her that He is the Saviour on the Cross, not just her Son.

## TableTalk

Read Exodus 20:12. Even on the cross, Jesus is still fulfilling all the commandment. If Christ looked after His mother while hanging from the cross, we should also be diligent to look after our parents in all circumstances?

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<sup>2</sup>An Expository Commentary: The Gospel of John, vol. 5, James Montgomery Boice, pg. 1515