

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 19:28-30

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished..." All things. Jesus had accomplished all obedience to the law of God – He had in His final moments honoured His mother. He had accomplished all the suffering required by the "suffering servant." He had fulfilled all prophecy, the last of which He was just about to do.

At this point Jesus cries out saying "I thirst..." The great thirst of Christ shows the extent to which He has suffered bodily in His death. Bruce Milne writes "At the natural level a wholly comprehensible cry in view of the dehydration which was a prominent feature in the torture of crucifixion."¹ This sour wine was to act more as a pain killer, then as the thirst quencher.

And so Jesus is offered sour wine. But this is not the only time that Jesus was offered sour wine. Matthew 27:34 tells us that He was offered sour wine earlier. Why does Jesus not drink the wine in the earlier instance? There are two answers. The first answer is in regard to the exact wording of the prophecy of Psalm 69:21 – "And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink..." In order for the prophecy to be fulfilled Jesus had to be offered the sour wine in response to thirst. It is only as He is offered the wine after crying "I thirst" that He could fulfil the scripture.

The second answer, which is more important, is in regard to Jesus' own words, "Knowing that all things were now accomplished..." What was accomplished was the work of suffering... all that remained was to die. Jesus did not accept the drink earlier because part of the nature of this work was to suffer and Jesus

¹ The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John, Bruce Milne, pg. 281

faced this suffering full on. Jesus did not ask for any comfort in His work of drinking the cup of God's wrath until the work was completed.

John Flavel writes "Nor indeed (though Christ so bitterly complains of His thirst) was He willing to be relieved, till He had finished His work. O love unspeakable! He doth not complain, that He might be relieved, but to manifest how great that sorrow was which His soul now felt upon our account."²

It is somewhat ironic that Jesus faced great physical thirst while spiritually drinking the cup of God's wrath. But was Jesus thirst just simply a physical thirst? In Luke 16:23,24 we are told that the rich man cried for water in the "torments of Hades..." In His suffering on the cross our Lord was bearing the full torture of hell. This thirst of the raging fires of hell's suffering was greater than the thirst of the cross physically – and understatement for sure.

The great warning for us from this story of Lazarus and the Rich Man is that there is no comfort to the Rich Man's torment. He is told "There is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot..." (16:26). The thirst of hell is an eternal thirst for those outside of Christ. But what about right now? What are the promises of the gospel to us right now? Jesus Christ promises living waters to those who thirst – "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water..." (John 7:37,38). He promises water that is everlasting – "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst..." (John 4:14). It is the great exchange to replace the eternal thirst of hell for the eternal refreshment of Jesus Christ.

After having received this sour wine, Jesus says that it is finished and dies.

TableTalk

Read Matthew 5:6. The Christian life is a life of thirst, but a thirst for what?

The beauty though of the Christian life is that the more we thirst for righteousness, for Christ, for the Father and Holy Spirit the more we are filled with what we desire. Oh Christian, pursue joy and true, lasting fulfillment with all your passion.

²The Works of John Flavel, vol. 1, John Flavel, pg. 430