

Exegesis

Vs. 28-29 – “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.”

As is commonly known, Jesus said *seven* things while hanging on the cross, but the specific sequence of these sayings is unclear. Thus, the phrase “after this” simply refers to a *passage of time* and not to a strict chain of events. What follows is a *possible* arrangement of those comments, but it is *impossible* to be dogmatic about such things: shortly *after* the soldiers cast lots for his clothing (cf. Matt. 27:35), but *before* the three-hour-long darkness (cf. Matt. 27:45), Jesus said (1), “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lu. 23:34); towards the end of that darkness, Jesus quoted from Psa. 22:1 when he said (2), “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46); Jesus said to one of the two criminals crucified alongside him (3), “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Lu. 23:43); (4) “Woman, behold thy son...Behold thy mother” (Jn. 19:27); (5) “I thirst” (Jn. 19:28); (6) “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30); and finally, “loud” enough so that all could hear, Jesus said (7), “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lu. 23:46; cf. Matt. 27:50; Mar. 15:37).

Jesus said that he “thirst[ed],” and, using “hyssop,” they gave him a vinegar-filled sponge to drink from (cf. Mar. 15:36). Hyssop is a hardy plant that grows in rocky crevices as tall as three feet high (cf. 1 Ki. 4:33).¹ It is mentioned throughout the OT, most famously when the Israelites marked their doorposts with “a bunch of hyssop,” dipped in “blood,” during the Exodus (Ex. 12:22).² It is unclear if John intended such a connection. The mention of hyssop is more likely a byproduct of eyewitness testimony. Had hyssop and blood been connected in some way, rather than hyssop and “vinegar,” a Passover reference would’ve been explicit.

The Greek term translated as ‘vinegar’ is ὄξος (*óxos*), which should not be confused with modern vinegar. While vinegar is commonly used as a preservative or condiment, *óxos* was a popular beverage in the first century, often referred to as “sour wine.”³ The BDAG explains that

¹ “Plants of the Bible: Hyssop,” *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, New and Enhanced Edition, (Nashville, TN; Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2014), p. 909.

² Carson (1991), p. 621, explains that some commentators consider it implausible that a hyssop branch would’ve supported the weight of a wine-soaked sponge; however, he asserts that “a stalk of hyssop could.” Indeed, the Greek text does not stipulate the exact amount of hyssop used; John simply recounts the factoid and moves on. Carson further explains, “Indeed, the branches of hyssop at the end of a stalk could form a little ‘nest’ to cradle the sponge. Roman crosses were not very high; the soldiers needed to raise the sponge barely above their own heads.”

³ NKJV, ESV, CSB, and NASB all use the translation “sour wine.”

óxos “relieved thirst more effectively than water and, being cheaper than regular wine, it was a favorite beverage of the lower ranks of society and of those in moderate circumstances, especially of soldiers.”⁴ So, *óxos* was *the* drink of the blue-collar worker; it was intended to *quench* one's thirst after a long day's work (cf. Ruth 2:14).⁵

Moreover, this "sour wine" reference should not be confused with the one offered to Jesus right before being crucified. That one had been mixed with "myrrh" (cf. Mar. 15:23), which made it so much more bitter and undrinkable that the Lord refused to drink it once he'd had a taste of it (cf. Mat. 27:34).⁶ The “sour wine” given to Jesus at the *beginning* of the crucifixion was a *cruel* joke played on him by *cruel* torturers. The second version of the “sour wine,” given here at the *end*, might've tasted better, but that improvement was just *another* form of cruelty. Making the beverage more palatable would be hard to resist for those on a cross. But should they give in, they'd effectively *prevent dehydration*, but in doing so, they'd also *prolong affliction*. Thus, even this seemingly hospitable act was still a *cruel* joke played on the Lord by *cruel* torturers.

But once again, the soldiers are not the ones in control (see notes vs. 24); God is. John does not want us to see only the horrors of crucifixion; he also wants us to see how God was at work *amid* those very horrors. You see, Jesus didn't only say, “I thirst,” because he was thirsty; if that were the case, he wouldn't have waited *six hours* to ask for a drink.⁷ John says the other, and more important, rationale behind these words was that Jesus knew "that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled." A desire for scriptural fulfillment, not mere thirst, drove him to ask for something to drink.

But which Scripture was Jesus seeking to fulfill? Considering John has just mentioned Psalm 22 in vs. 23-24, it seems appropriate to begin searching there. In fact, the Psalmist says in verse 15, “My tongue cleaveth to my jaws,” which sounds like the description of someone thirsty. However, such an interpretation is inconclusive, especially when there's a far better correlation found in Psalm 69:21, where the Psalmist says, "In my thirst, they gave me *vinegar* [emphasis added] to drink." The word translated as “vinegar” in the LXX is the same one used by John—i.e., *óxos*; the parallelism between the two passages is so close that John might not have even

⁴ BDAG, p. 715.

⁵ The Greek term John uses to describe the “wine” in 2:3, 9-10 is **οἶνος** (*oínos*).

⁶ Carson, DA, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition, Volume 9, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Academic, 2010), p. 643.

⁷ Using the Roman system, John 19:14 states Jesus' trial before Pilate began around the “sixth hour”—i.e., 6AM. Using the Jewish system, Mark 15:25 says the Lord was crucified during the “third hour”—i.e., 9AM. Like Mark, Matthew uses the Jewish system when he says that darkness covered the earth from the “sixth hour”—i.e., 12PM--to “the ninth hour”—i.e., 3PM. Thus, the Lord hung on the cross for roughly six hours.

felt the need to make the reference explicit. Also, John seems to favor Psalm 69, having quoted from it on two separate occasions (cf. Jn. 2:17=Psa. 69:9; Jn. 15:25=Psa. 69:5). Though Psa. 22 has the more contextual support, the explicit verbal link to Psa. 69, as well as its multiple appearances in John's account, makes it the more likely of the two candidates.⁸

As we discussed in verse 24 with Psalm 22, David's torment *prefigured* Jesus' travail, and the same principle applies here with Psalm 69. King David is a *type* of King Jesus. What was for the son of Jesse a *metaphorical expression* of his tribulations became, for the Son of God, a *literal description* of the crucifixion. The things that David went through in the OT *foreshadowed* the things that Jesus went through in the NT, giving us a better grasp of God's perspective. David's sorrows weren't pointless; they pointed forward to Jesus. Likewise, Jesus' sufferings were not a stroke of bad luck but the calculated decisions of a sovereign God who has been working out his redemptive plan for generations (cf. Gen. 3:15)

Vs. 30 – John tells us that, after Jesus drank the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Afterward, the Lord "bowed his head and gave up the ghost." Contrary to what the soldiers must've thought, the wine did not *delay* death; from their perspective, the drink seems to have *hastened* it. After he drank the sour wine, the Lord, under his own power and volition "gave up the ghost." If no one took Jesus' life, but the Lord laid it down willing (cf. 10:18), then he could say when it would end.

Interestingly, rather than saying three words, the Greek text shows that Jesus only spoke *one*: **Τετέλεσται** (*tetelestai*). This is the same word used by John when he said the things Jesus had to *accomplish* had been "accomplished" (vs. 28). So when the Lord said this whole ordeal was "finished," he wasn't only saying his life had come to an end, but he was also saying that his life's work had been *completed*.

Furthermore, the verbal links of vs. 28 and 30 recall 13:1, where John said, "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the *end* [emphasis added]." The term translated as "end" is the Greek word **τέλος** (*telos*), which is the root of *tetelestai*. Hence, Jesus *finished* what he started; he *accomplished* the task he was assigned to do. And since his birth on that blessed Christmas morn, and even before (cf. Rev. 13:8), the Lord did not stop pushing towards the journey's *end*. He knew where the way would lead, yet he never once delayed. Ever the Lord moved, driving closer to that fateful hour. And for all that long and winding way, passing

⁸ Carson (1991), p. 619.

mile after mile, year after year, never once did the Lord stop loving his own. Jesus loved them...
he loved *us* "unto the [very] end."

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 90 | John 19:28-30

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Tonight, the Lord will come to an end. But this ending is *different* from the sort where nothing comes afterward. This ending is better thought of as the closing of a *chapter* rather than an entire *book*. The conclusion of this particular story arch has taken many an age to tell and affected many during its initial debut, but it is also a finale that affects this present age. For when the Son of God said, "It is finished," those words have rippled throughout time and impacted *all* who have ears to hear them, from those in the first century, the twenty-first century, and beyond.

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