

## I Thirst John 19:28

Among the more mystifying words from the Cross are the words that are before us today. **“I thirst.”** They are the only words from the Cross that begin with “I” and, therefore, point attention to Himself, although in some ways the cry of being forsaken looked at himself and the deep agony of the Cross. It should be noted that while the attention was drawn to His physical condition, it was not a request. It resulted in the soldiers placing a sponge of vinegar to His lips, but He did not ask for that. That cry, I believe, was not merely to announce His physical thirst but to point beyond that to something much deeper.

**“I thirst.”** Jesus began His ministry with the temptation of Satan and there He was hungry. He ended His ministry on a Cross and there He was thirsty. Remember when Jesus confronted a Samaritan woman at the well what He offered her? Read John 4:14. He who would thirst in our place offers that which eliminates thirst. How ironic was that?

The timing of the request must have been important. John noted it specifically. First, it was **“after this.”** We can assume that referred to after the darkness and the separation of Jesus from His Father. And it was **“knowing that all things were accomplished,”** that is knowing that our needs had been met, that He spoke the words, **“I thirst.”** At a bare minimum it would tell us that the most important thing on the mind of Jesus that day was not the incredible suffering that He was undergoing but our salvation. Once the awesome price of our sins had been paid for He could turn attention to Himself and speak of its cost in ways that He could not have before that hour. It’s like the athlete who runs a race and once the finish line is crossed can fall exhausted and take a drink and speak of the agony of the race just run. Now that redemption was accomplished, He could think of His own thirst.

Not only was this cry **“after this”** but, according to John, it was also the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. That prophecy is found in Psalm 69:21 where we read, **“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”** Everything He was going through was known ahead of time to the God who is above time. Over 20 Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled during the last 24 hours of Jesus earthly life. The fulfillment of prophecy was God’s way of further identifying Him as the promised Messiah.

Jesus was the one spoken of in the Old Testament. The cry of thirst from the Cross did not point so much to the physical as it did to the deeper price of our redemption. The Jesus of the Cross was not merely a good man whose goodness was misunderstood. He was not merely a prophet whose message was not accepted. He was not merely the victim of political intrigue. He was the Promised One of the Old Testament. He was the One of whom God had first spoken of in Genesis 3:15 and the One whom God had slowly revealed to the prophets. When He came in the fullness of time He could truly be identified as the promised Savior. The words **I thirst** were spoken, in part, as a testimony to who Jesus was and why He was on that Cross. It is a reminder to us that nothing that day happened by chance. Every last detail was planned in advance by the Father who loved us so deeply that He gave His Only Son to die in our place.

Think about Him thirsting for a moment. He was part of creation. Read John 1:3. That means that the one who thirsted on the Cross had made every river that existed. He had made every spring that fed every well on earth. Not only had He made them, He controlled them. Scripture tells us He commanded the rains to cease for 3 years during the time of Elijah and then directed them to begin again. He told the waves of the sea to be calm and they were. But on the Cross, He thirsted. With one word He could have ordered a river to literally flow through His mouth, but He thirsted. He thirsted because men thirst. He was one of us, taking our place on the Cross.

**“I thirst”** certainly speaks to the physical suffering of Jesus on the Cross. Keep in mind that the night before Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room and celebrated the Passover Meal. After that celebration we read that He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed. From there He went to be arrested and that was followed by a night of illegal trials, of beatings by the soldiers, of mockery by the masses, of being taken to Golgotha and the crucifixion. It was 9 in the morning when He was placed upon that Cross. For the next 6 hours He hung there. From noon to 3 it was dark and, as far as we can tell He declared **“I thirst”** shortly after the sun shone again. Simple calculations will tell us that under incredibly difficult conditions, some of them in the hot Judean sun and all in the hot Judean temperatures, Jesus had gone 20 plus hours with nothing to drink. To merely note that He was thirsty had to have been an understatement. His mouth must have been incredibly dry, His lips swollen, His throat parched. He was thirsty for sure. Still I am not convinced that He made that statement merely because the hours with nothing to drink had gotten to Him. He had been thirsty long before that.

Some have suggested that He wanted a drink so that His throat would be better and His voice muscle sufficiently strong to be able to say the last few words of the Cross. History tells us that many on crosses became so dehydrated, so dry overall, with throats so swollen and vocal cords so parched that they could not even cry out in pain. But Jesus was still able to speak with only a few words left to declare.

The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself. Thirst in the Bible often represents the emptiness of life without a relationship to God. That is what Jesus was referring to when He told the Samaritan woman that He had water that would ensure she never thirsted again. We have a parable of Jesus that helps us understand a little more fully the implications of **“I thirst.”** In Luke 16, beginning in verse 19, we have the parable of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. In life the rich man had everything while the beggar had nothing. Jesus said that the rich man had everything except faith and the Lazarus had nothing but faith. They both died. Lazarus was carried by angels to the security and provision of Abraham’s side, which is an Old Testament picture of heaven. The rich man, who had no faith, went to Hell. Every now and then I read or hear of someone who denies the reality of Hell, but you need to remember that regardless of what others may say, Jesus believed in Hell. It was because of His belief in Hell that He went to the Cross. There is no other way to explain the Cross without if there was no Hell and if God did

not love us enough to want to ensure that we never have to go there. In that parable we are told that the rich man prayed. Read Luke 16:24 for what he asked for.

On the Cross Jesus took our sins upon Himself and that meant the separation or thirst that rightfully belonged to us. His thirst was our thirst. It was a thirst He had never felt before.

The idea that He thirsted by taking our place helps us understand the price of our redemption and it also helps us understand the glories of our redemption. Read John 7:37-38 and Revelation 22:1. Hear again Jesus say, **“I thirst”** and then envision the river of life that ensures that you and I will never thirst again. He thirsted that we need not. He who offers us the water of life died thirsty.

Revelation 7 tells of those who had been martyred for their faith in the tribulation and records of them in Revelation 7:14 that they are now at the throne with the Father. Read Revelation 7:16. Hear Jesus say, **“I thirst”** and then listen again to His promise to those who are faithful to Him, **“never again will they thirst.”**

On the Cross Jesus declared that He thirsted. We must not minimize the agony of those hours or the love that took Him there. At the same time, we must never think that all it cost Jesus to secure our redemption was a few hours of pain on a Cross. The battle was not for our physical lives but for our souls and the price of that was spiritual death which includes a thirst for fellowship with God. Jesus loved us enough to pay the full price and all He asks of us in return is that we accept His offer of forgiveness. All He asks is that we take unto ourselves the redemption purchased at so great a price. The offer is very simple. Accept the water of life Jesus died to provide or spend all eternity thirsting after God and unable to find Him.

Let me ask you question. Had you been at the foot of the Cross that day and heard Jesus declare He was thirsty, would you have given Him a drink? I am sure we would have. Here is the good news. You can still offer that water. Read Matthew 25:35-40. He took our thirst and now He asks us to give a cup of water in His name to others who are thirsting physically so that we may introduce them to the one who can give them the water that will mean they will never have to thirst spiritually. Is that really too much to ask of us given all He went through so we would not thirst?