

THE STORY of THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST**Lesson 22****Matthew 27.45-46****“My God, My God, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”**

Every time we come to this **FOURTH CRY OF CHRIST FROM THE CROSS**, we hardly know **how to begin** or **where to begin**...or **where to go** with it.

We think we know a little something about the essential foundational thinking that the Lord Jesus may have been entertaining in His tortured mind... and maybe a little something about God's purposes for the physical, environmental, and atmospheric phenomenon which accompanied this outcry (*that is, the darkness which descended upon the land at noon*).

But, after everything we have said and could say, we still can't come away thinking we have comprehended the depths of understanding the transactions which passed between Jesus Christ and His Father.

James Stalker said in his excellent commentary, **The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ**, **“In the entire Bible, there is no other sentence so difficult to explain. The first thought of a preacher, on coming to it, is to find some excuse for passing it by; and after doing his utmost to expound it, he must still confess that it is quite beyond him.”**

But, of course, Jesus DID CRY OUT with these words. And they are WRITTEN AND REVEALED for us to know, meditate upon, look into, and learn from. So, there are very important and significant lessons we must receive into our hearts.

In all these seven statements, the Lord Jesus is revealing what is going on in His soul and giving us commentary on the operations and significances of His own death on the Cross.

NOT A MERE RECITATION

The Lord Jesus is not merely quoting the prophecies for the sake of fulfilling them and “checking them off.” He IS fulfilling what had written concerning Him 1000 years before. These are the exact words from “The Psalm of the Cross”, *Psalm 22.1*: **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.**

But, He wasn't just reciting these words; HE WAS EXPERIENCING THEM FROM THE DEPTHS OF HIS OWN PERSONAL TORTURED SOUL. Matthew and Mark both say **“Jesus CRIED OUT...WITH A LOUD VOICE.”** Meaning, this was His most passionate personal expression of the grief, pain, and anguish which wracked His soul. He was focused and obsessed with the condition of His soul which produced this outcry of pain and vented this violent eruption from the bitter breaking of His heart.

WHAT HAD HE BEEN THINKING?

The timing of this bitter outcry tells us volumes about where it came from. The crucifixion event itself lasted for six hours, from 9 am till 3 pm. During those first three hours, Jesus' first three statements were directed toward those around Him: His accusers and abusers, the repentant thief, and Mary and John. But, after thinking though all His pains for the interests of others first, He necessarily must deal with His own experiences.

These last four statements came toward the final few minutes of those torturous six hours. All three synoptic Gospellers describe how that at high noon -- when the sun should have shone with its clearest and brightest light -- all of a sudden it went dark. Pitch black darkness descended upon the whole land.

This lasted for the remaining three hours of His crucifixion. You talk about spooky, eerie developments! Surely, something like this convergence of events and circumstances would set everybody to thinking about the other-worldly significance of what is going on here! **“DID GOD REALLY CARE ABOUT THIS MAN AND WHAT WE ARE DOING TO HIM, AFTER ALL!?”** **“GOD, IS THAT YOU?”**

There seems to have been an oppressive, spooky silence and hush also which fell over this whole event. Of course, one result of this unexpected phenomenon would be that everyone there would be more concerned about their own welfare...what is going on here? Am I in danger? Is God doing this? What is God telling us? Can I get home safely in this darkness?

For the most part, they left Jesus alone. **But, of course, Jesus had been thinking deeply this whole time.** The darkness...and everybody else's preoccupation with these extraordinary circumstances left the Lord Jesus more alone with His own meditations. **We can't even begin to imagine the depth and bitterness of the darkness which descended upon His soul during these hours of silence, agonies, and darkness.**

There was most certainly a physical factor which increasingly came into play and profoundly impacted His mental condition. Call it agitation, “troubled in spirit” (*John 12.27; Gethsemane*), depression. Your mind can't escape your body's influence upon the ways it works. Let me quote Stalker again: *“The wounds in His hands and feet, exposed to the atmosphere and the sun, grew barked and hardened; the blood, impeded in its circulation, swelled in heart and brain, till these organs were like to burst; and the slightest attempt to move the body from the one intolerable posture caused pains to shoot along the quivering nerves. Bodily suffering clouds the brain and distorts the images formed on the mirror of the mind. Even the face of God, reflected there, may be turned to a shape of terror by the fumes of the physical trouble.”*

TRULY, ABSOLUTELY ALONE

The Lord Jesus was truly, absolutely alone. There was no one there to give Him any kind of support or help. **His enemies**, of course, exulted in His dire predicament. **The populace** had been persuaded to turn against Him. **His nation** had rejected Him. **His own disciples** had abandoned Him in disappointment. **One of the Twelve** He had chosen had betrayed Him. Mary and John and the other women would have been willing to intervene in any way they could, but they were powerless to lend Him any kind of real help. **HE WAS UTTERLY, TRULY, ABSOLUTELY ALONE IN THIS HIS DARKEST HOUR OF HIS DIREST NEED.**

BUT, WHAT ABOUT HIS FATHER? WHERE IS HIS FATHER?

The Lord Jesus had NEVER been without the personal fellowship, companionship, and support of His Father. Think about all those nights He spent alone with His Father in prayer. Remember all those spontaneous exclamations Jesus made to recognize His Father's Presence with Him...and to receive strength, encouragement, and resolve just from knowing that His Father was with Him. He could always comfort and embolden Himself through all the treacheries and uncertainties of His relationships with all other people by knowing that the Father would always be there. In *John 8.28-29*, when Jesus was under scorching attack from the Pharisees and other unbelieving Jews, Jesus encouraged Himself by saying: **When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. AND HE WHO SENT ME IS WITH ME. THE FATHER HAS NOT LEFT ME ALONE, for I always do those things that please Him.**

Listen to some of Jesus' last words before He went to Gethsemane to surrender Himself to His Cross. He expresses the boldest confidence that EVERYONE WILL ABANDON HIM...EXCEPT HIS FATHER. He could always count on His Father's being with Him...and delivering Him. **John 16.32: Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. AND YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME.**

You can hear His desperation in every syllable of this cry. You hear plaintive cries of consternation and pleas for explanation.

**And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying,
ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?
that is, MY GOD, MY GOD...WHY...HAVE YOU...FORSAKEN...ME?**

**REAL, OBJECTIVE, GENUINE FORSAKING?
or SUBJECTIVE SENSE OF BEING ABANDONED?**

In other words, DID GOD REALLY FORSAKE HIM? Or, was Christ only FEELING ABANDONED? Here is one truth for sure: **THE FATHER DID NOT WITHDRAW HIS LOVE, OR PLEASURE, OR ACCEPTANCE OF JESUS CHRIST AS HIS SON.** His love was never interrupted. The Father's heartbeat of love never even skipped a beat or got out of rhythm.

The Son was fulfilling the service He had committed to the eternal covenant of grace and redemption. Christ was becoming obedient to the point of death—even the death of the cross. He had received this commandment, and He was obeying it. He had come to do God's will, and He was doing it. He always pleased the Father, and He pleasing the Father now. The Father's relationship with the Son on the Cross was never interrupted and certainly not broken. **THE FATHER WAS NEVER DISPLEASED WITH HIS SON AND WHAT HIS SON WAS DOING ON THE CROSS.**

Isaiah 53.10-11: Yet it PLEASED THE LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD SHALL PROSPER IN HIS HAND.

¹¹ **He shall see the travail of His soul, AND BE SATISFIED.**

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

The Father was NEVER DISPLEASED WITH CHRIST AS HIS SON...but there was a necessary response and relationship that God must transact with Christ AS OUR SUBSTITUTE FOR SIN.

GOD MUST TREAT THE SUBSTITUTE AS HE WOULD HAVE TREATED THE SINNER

I don't know how else to say it...or how much farther to go. We can't go farther than the plain teachings of the Scriptures and what God has revealed to us. The rest we will gladly leave in the vast unopened treasures of God's infinite wisdom and grace. God and the Christ did what they did...and they knew what they were doing...and it was all perfectly transacted and accomplished.

But **2 Corinthians 5.21** clearly and plainly declares: **For He (God the Father) made Him (the Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** The sin which Jesus assumed upon Himself was not His own. It was ours. **"The LORD has LAID ON HIM the iniquity of us all."** (*Isaiah 53.6*, et al) **"Who Himself (Christ) bore our sins in His own body on the tree..."** (*1 Peter 2.24*). There are thousands of other statements in the Scriptures which tell the message of the Gospel: **JESUS CHRIST WAS CHARGED WITH OUR SINS AND GOD MADE HIM ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR PENALTY AND CONSEQUENCES AS THOUGH HE HAD PERSONALLY COMMITTED THEM HIMSELF.**

This is what the Bible means by “impute” -- to charge someone else’s sin and transgression to another person; to make that other person morally liable, responsible, and accountable; and require that substitute to pay the penalties the original transgressor owed.

So, what is the penalty and punishment for this sin of ours which Jesus took upon Himself?

The punishment is DEATH, SEPARATION FROM GOD, NOT BEING PERMITTED TO BE WHERE GOD IS, BEING REJECTED AND CONDEMNED BY GOD, SUFFERING GOD’S WRATH.

2 Thessalonians 1.8-9: ...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

So, the darkness and the estrangement which Christ suffered was God’s holy and just response to CHRIST’S BECOMING OUR SIN.

**Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in
When Christ, the Mighty Maker, died for man, the creature’s sin.**

God the Father must necessarily treat His Son--for this moment--as He would have treated us (and will treat us) if our sin had not been imputed to Christ. The very essence of God’s punishment of sin is HIS HOLY AND JUST WRATH BEING Poured OUT UPON OUR SIN.

**John 3.36: He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;
and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**

**Romans 5.9: Much more then, having now been justified by His blood,
we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

1 Thessalonians 1.10: ...even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

“In this lies the true meaning of the cross. Those who try to explain the atoning work of Christ in any other terms inevitably end up nullifying the truth of Christ’s atonement altogether. Christ was not merely providing an example for us to follow. He was no mere martyr being sacrificed to the wickedness of the men who crucified Him. He wasn’t merely making a public display so that people would see the awfulness of sin. He wasn’t offering a ransom price to Satan—or any of the other various explanations religious liberals, cultists, and pseudo-Christian religionists have tried to suggest over the years.

Here’s what was happening on the cross: God was punishing His own Son as if He had committed every wicked deed done by every sinner who would ever believe. And He did it so that He could forgive and treat those redeemed ones as if they had lived Christ’s perfect life of righteousness...

It was God’s own wrath against sin, God’s own righteousness, and God’s own sense of justice that Christ satisfied on the cross. The shedding of His blood was a sin offering rendered to God...When Christ ransomed the elect from sin (1 Timothy 2.6), the ransom price was paid to God. Christ died in our place and in our stead—and He received the very same outpouring of Divine wrath in all its fury that we deserved for our sin. It was a punishment so severe that a mortal man could spend all eternity in the torments of hell, and still he would not have begun to exhaust the Divine wrath that was heaped on Christ at the Cross.” (John MacArthur, Jr)

WE CAN BE FORGIVEN AND ACCEPTED...BECAUSE HE WAS FORSAKEN!