

# Voices From Calvary

**Introduction.** From the moment Adam and Eve fell into sin, God had a plan for the redemption of humanity (Genesis 3:14-16). God promised Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:1-8; 18:18; 22:17-18). We can trace the lineage of Abraham and see that Jesus was the promise's fulfillment (Matthew 1:1-17; cf. Galatians 3:16). Christ emptied Himself of the glory of His deity (Philippians 2:6-7), and became obedient in order to become our sacrifice, fulfilling God's plan (Hebrews 5:8-9).

On Sunday, part of our worship includes partaking of the Lord's supper. Do we understand and recognize the significance of the memorial to our Lord? It is for this reason that we will examine the seven sayings of the Lord upon the cross. It is edifying to see in these sayings the progression of God's purpose for the redemption of mankind.

Not all of the sayings of Christ on the cross are recorded in one gospel, so we may not know all of the sayings and we may not realize the order in which they were uttered. It is significant to note that the first three sayings were uttered in the light. These were statements of forgiveness and fellowship. The next two sayings were spoken in the darkness. These were statements of conflict and exhaustion. The final two sayings were uttered in the emergence of light, representing completion and victory.

## I. ***The Voice Of Intercession -- "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).***

- A. In His first three statements, Jesus revealed striking characteristics about His work as High Priest (cf. Isaiah 53:12). This first saying was a prayer for those who were guilty of putting Him to death.
  1. It is not quite certain whether the Lord referred to the Jews or the Romans or both. The Romans were ignorant that He was the Son of God and were obeying the commandments of their rulers.
  2. The Jews knew He was innocent and had the evidence, if they would have examined it, to determine that He was the Messiah (Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8).
- B. Jesus here forgets about Himself. The cross was the most humiliating of all ways to put a man to death, and in His deepest moment of human abasement, the divine bursts forth.. Jesus here turns to divine mercy and asks for them what their deed had forfeited.
- C. We need to pray for our enemies, even when they seek to do us harm (Matthew 6:14-15). No other religion teaches men and women to pray for the forgiveness of enemies. Men and women of the world seek revenge, but the Christian patiently bears reproaches and persecutions (James 1:3-4; 1 Peter 2:21-25).

## II. ***The Voice Of Mercy -- "Today, thou shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).***

- A. In this statement, Jesus proclaimed pardon to the penitent and exonerated the sinner. He promised mercy to all whose hearts were pure (Matthew 5:8). The thief on the cross realized the power Jesus had and Jesus looked into that man's heart and forgave him. The thief fully believed Him to be the Messiah and had faith that the Lord would establish His kingdom.
- B. The word "paradise" is of Persian origin. It originally meant a garden and particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees, shrubs, fountains, and flowers.
  - 1. In hot climates these gardens were particularly pleasant; and therefore they were attached to the mansions and palaces of nobility and of the rich.
  - 2. The word came to denote any place of happiness and then to denote the abode of the blessed after this life is over. This was the same paradise to which Paul was taken in 2 Corinthians 12:4.
- C. It must be noted that this thief does not constitute a pattern of salvation for us today. This was before Jesus died on the cross (Hebrews 9:15-17). In other places before His death, He had forgiven the sins of people who lived under the Law of Moses (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:47; John 8:10-11). But now, we must follow His current terms of pardon.
- D. This voice not only reiterates the theme of forgiveness, but it also teaches us that the souls of the righteous will be made happy. The other thief merely sought to be delivered from death, not to be delivered from his sins. The penitent thief would have the security and assurance of a future resurrection and glorious immortality (Revelation 2:7).

## III. ***The Voice Of Affection -- "Woman, behold, your son! ... Behold, your mother!" (John 19:26-27).***

- A. Jesus also demonstrates His role as High Priest by bestowing blessing on His own. Jesus shows not only His divine thoughtlessness for Himself but also His human thoughtfulness for others. Mary was poor and it would seem now that she had no home. Jesus in His dying moments, filled with tender regard for His mother, secured for her an adopted son, obtained for her a home, and consoled her grief by the most beloved of His apostles.
- B. This wonderful example of the Lord's care should be etched in our hearts (1 Timothy 5:8). He made her welfare one of His last cares on the cross when He was making atonement for the sins of the world.

1. There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus, in the agony of the cross, when the salvation of the world hung in the balance, thought of the loneliness of His mother in the years ahead.
  2. Even in the moments of the world's most significant battle, our Lord never forgot the what lay close to home. Tradition says that Mary lived with John in Judea until the time of her death, which occurred about fifteen years after the death of Christ.
- C. A long space of time intervened between the third and fourth sayings. Three gospels affirm that three hours of silence and darkness reigned on Calvary. It is the climax of the sufferings of our Lord. The biblical account is silent as to the content of this period of time (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). We can only get a glimpse of how terrible these three hours were when that awful voice of desertion rose from Calvary.

#### IV. ***The Voice Of Desertion -- "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46).***

- A. This was the only time Jesus called the Father "My God." This was the combination of the Old Testament idea of sacrifice, and the idea of the willing suffering of Jehovah's Servant. This statement was taken from Psalm 22:1, clearly showing this episode to be the fulfillment of prophecy. To be the perfect sacrifice, Jesus must experience the full separation of sin (Isaiah 53:4-5; 59:1-2; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- B. How great a blessing it is that the Lord died in our place, on our account, that He might bring us near to God. He experienced in that dreadful hour God's hatred of sin. It was suffering, endured by Him, that was due to us; and suffering by which we can be saved from eternal death.
- C. The fourth and fifth sayings were spoken in the time of darkness. Nature was wrapped in gloom as Jesus, bearing the burden and the curse of sin that was not His own, revealed to us something of the mystery of suffering.

#### V. ***The Voice Of Humanity -- "I thirst" (John 19:28).***

- A. After several agonizing hours upon the cross, Jesus cries out that He is thirsty. After He saw that all was fulfilled in accordance with the scriptures, He yielded Himself to the physical needs of His body.
- B. This saying reminds us that while Jesus suffered for the sins of many, He still had to become the world's redeemer in a man's body (Hebrews 2:10).
  1. When John was writing his gospel near the end of the first century, a doctrine had arisen in religious and philosophical thought called Gnosticism.

2. One of its main tenets was that the spirit was altogether good and matter altogether evil. God, who was pure spirit, could never take upon himself a body, because that was matter, and matter was evil.
- C. Therefore, they taught that Jesus never had a real body; they argued that Jesus could never really suffer. They said He went through the whole experience of the cross without any real pain. However, if Jesus was to ever redeem man, He must become as a man. He had to become what we are in order to make us what He is. John stresses the fact that Jesus was really human and really underwent the agony of the cross.

#### VI. ***The Voice Of Victory -- "It is finished" (John 19:30).***

- A. In one Greek word, He summed up the whole of man's redemption. In the word "finished" was all that prophecy had foretold and type foreshadowed (Luke 18:31; 22:37). Jesus knew the relationship between His death and our redemption.
- B. He looked back on His life from the time when He said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9), and was able to say with regard to every job and title of His life's work, "It is finished" (John 17:4). Christ encountered death, not as the conquered, but as the conqueror (cf. Romans 8:37).
- C. The other three gospels do not tell us that Jesus said, "It is finished." But they do tell us that He died with a great shout on His lips (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). On the other hand, John does not speak of the great cry, but does say that Jesus' last words were, "It is finished." The great shout and the words recorded here are one in the same.
- D. Jesus did not die in a weary defeat, but He made that great statement as one who shouts for joy because the victory is won. Although He seemed to men to be broken on the cross, He knew that He had prevailed. The sufferings and the agonies in redeeming man were over. The hardships, persecutions, mockings, pangs in the garden, and the cross were over, and the doors to the kingdom of God could now be opened in just a short while for all those who believed and obeyed Him.

#### VII. ***The Voice Of Death -- "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).***

- A. The word of victory was followed by a word of rest. It was a demonstration of what physical death would be for all saints. It was not a leap into the dark, unknown afterworld. It was a homecoming. Ever since the promise that "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise

his heel" in Genesis 3:15, the world was moving toward that grand, climatic moment which culminated in the cross.

- B. After John records that Jesus said, "It is finished," he said that Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The word that is used here means to "settle back upon a pillow." For Jesus the strife was over and the battle was won; and even on the cross He knew the joy of victory and the rest of a man who has completed His task and can lean back, content and at peace (Hebrews 2:14-15).
- C. The word "commend" simply means to "put in charge with." He was depositing or committing His soul for safe keeping. Death was robbed of its sting (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). Because of these words, the believer can say with the apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

**Conclusion.** No one can obey Jesus unless they know Jesus. By examining this short series of Jesus' statements, we have gotten a very good impression of the deity and humanity of Christ. No one can be saved unless they come in contact with the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:9-10).

We come in contact with the blood of Christ through baptism (Romans 6:3-4). His blood and baptism cleanses our "evil conscience" from "dead works" (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22). Baptism is not the only command, but it is the culmination of faith (John 8:24), repentance (Acts 17:31), and confession (Romans 10:10).