

The Last Words Of Jesus Christ

Seven Final Utterances of Our Savior

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Jesus once took a poll among His followers, as recorded in Matthew 16:13. He asked, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, who had been executed by Herod, returned from the dead. Some said that He was a second Elijah. Other people thought that Jesus was Jeremiah or one of the other ancient prophets. Peter, as one of Jesus' students, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Sadly, though, Peter caught a glimpse of this truth for only a moment. He did not really understand Jesus' true mission.

Matthew 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Jesus turned around and corrected Peter for his misunderstanding of what Jesus' purpose was on earth and realized that Satan had influenced that act. Peter lapsed into believing that Jesus was a human Messiah, a physical descendant of David who had come to lead the Jewish nation to independence and glory. That is what all of Jesus' disciples thought. Listen to what one of them said shortly after Jesus' execution.

Luke 24:14-21 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas

answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened."

They were convinced that Jesus was coming to lead an insurrection and bring Israel to the point of being, once again, a sovereign nation and a glorious one. His unexpected death was a shock and disappointment to His followers, and the public just was not sure about this man Jesus, either.

John 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

They were not clear on who He was, even though the signs were all there from the scriptures that the prophets had written in ancient times. Many people thought that Jesus was less than completely sane. Some were saying, "He has a demon and is mad. Why listen to Him?" Even those with whom He grew up were concerned. "When His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'" Still, Jesus drew large crowds of common people. There was something special about Him and His teaching. The public was intrigued by what He said, which caused the jealous religious leaders to complain, "Look, the world has gone after Him!"

Even the Roman official Pontius Pilate wondered about Jesus. The Jews accused Him in front of Pilate and said that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. "When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid...and said to Jesus, 'Where are You from?'" Jesus' disciples also wondered what kind of man He was and asked, "Who can this be...?" Even with all of Jesus' miracles, preaching and teaching, and all that He fulfilled of the writings of the prophets of old, there was still a lot of confusion and doubt having to do with who Jesus was.

The people were confused about the identity of Jesus and were even more amazed at what He answered. Matthew 7:28-29 tells us, "The people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The educated elite were also shocked at Jesus' depth of learning and wisdom. Jesus was not perceived as an intellectual, an influential political leader, or an established religious scholar. He seemed to come out of nowhere when He burst upon the scene of His day. The religious fraternity mocked Him. John records their criticisms: "We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

They had no idea who He really was or why He had come. People were impressed by His knowledge, wisdom, and philosophy but were not willing to change anything about themselves. The Jews and their leaders should have known, though, because Jesus Christ came just as the scriptures described in the Old Testament prophecies.

Let me just give you a little bit of doctrinal background. The apostle Paul says that Jesus died and was buried. Jesus, the divine Christ, rose from the dead. He did not rise from life or a living state but from death! Paul also tells us in Romans 4:9, "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." The expression *revived* indicates that Christ had been unconscious and not that He rose from a state of conscious mental activity. He was dead as we know death.

Paul continues, in Romans 5:6, 8: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

These are obvious statements to us in God's church but not so obvious to them at that time. The test of a spirit (that is, angel or demon) is, as I John 4:2 tells us: "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." It is very important that we realize that they were just coming to this understanding at that time that Jesus had actually come in the flesh.

In the first chapter of his gospel record, the apostle John records the earliest knowledge of the beginning of the ages: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Greek word translated *Word* is *logos*. It means "Word" or "Spokesman," as you are very

well aware. This is referring to the One who co-existed with the Father from eternity—who always existed—who is one with the Father, yet, as He Himself told us, His Father is greater than He.

He always referred to Himself as "One sent by the Father," establishing without doubt who was the greater Authority. He said that the words that He spoke were not spoken of Himself but of the Father who sent Him. He gave Him a commandment regarding what He should say and speak. The One who gives the orders and sends another is in a superior position to the One who is sent and who obeys those orders. Thus, the line of authority was in no doubt at all: It was God the Father and Jesus Christ, in that order, in the chain of command.

According to God's command, in the family relationship, a husband is set by God in a superior position to that of his wife. Yet they are both human—both on the same level—and they are one. They are not one God but one flesh.

Christ prayed that the church would be kept as one, even as He and the Father are one. The church is composed of many members yet it is one body. Its members—more than one—are to be kept one in the sense of harmony and unity in love and purpose, as Christ and the Father are one. They form one church, even as the Father and Christ form one God that is more than one member or one Being.

The Word, who is the Eternal, has eternal life and made all things. The Spirit Being called the Word was made flesh. He did not merely enter into some mortal fleshly body or the body of another. He was not separate from the flesh, as a spirit being inside the flesh.

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It says in verse 14 that the Word became flesh. That means completely flesh, just as you and I. Jesus was a fleshly Man. He was God who came in human flesh. When converted into human flesh, the life that kept Him alive resided in the blood that was in Him, as in all who are flesh. Each person's breath oxidizes the blood and is called the "breath of life"—of animal or human life. Jesus was also God; He was both human and divine. However, He was not God inside of yet separate from the body of flesh. He—God—was made flesh until He—still God, God with us—became God IN (not inside of) the human flesh—God manifest in the flesh.

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil...

That is, as we humans are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus Christ also, in exactly the same manner, was partaker of flesh and blood in order that He might die. He had to die in order for God's plan to be continued.

Hebrews 2:15-16 ...and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

He does give aid to His church.

Jesus did not come in the nature of angels—that is, spirit nature. He was a human being, made flesh. At birth, He took on human nature. He was tempted in all points as we are. He suffered as we do. This is something that He could not do if He were merely God taking possession of a body. He was actually flesh, as we are. He was forced to resist the pull of human nature, even as we are. He, God, became man—so that He could die for us, so that our sins could be erased and forgiven!

Jesus was dead following that crucifixion! For three days and three nights, the second Spirit Being of the God Family—called Emmanuel, meaning "God with us"—that is, God made human flesh—was dead! Dead matter cannot impart life; life can come only from life. As a human, Jesus was the

Son of God the Father. God was His only Father. Mary, a physical human woman, was His mother. He became the Son of God at His human birth, and now He was dead as a result of that crucifixion.

If He was not dead, then the penalty of our sins is not yet paid; we are yet in our sins; we are without hope! It is very important that we understand that He had to have been flesh and died completely. If there were no other Person in the God Family, then the Giver of all Life was dead and all hope ended! Of course, we know that it did not. If there were no Father in heaven while Jesus Christ lay dead, then all life everywhere had come to an end. However, the Father still reigned in heaven, and the Father had life inherent in Himself.

Life can come only from life, and Christ Jesus was now dead. His life had gone from Him. His blood in which resided His life, shed from His veins, given for you and for me, had been poured out on the stake from which He hung. That is where His life resided: in His blood, not in spirit. He did not shed a spirit to save us from our sins. He shed His blood, and in doing this, He gave His life.

John 5:26 tells us, "As the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus Christ was completely dead, not just halfway. God the Father did not cause Jesus Christ to get back into the body that had died when He spoke to people after His death. It was not only the body that died. Both the body in which Christ lived died, and Jesus Christ Himself died. If Christ did not die for our sins—if it were only a mortal body that died—then we do not have a Savior, and we have no hope of salvation. Again, we see how important it is to realize that He was completely flesh.

What happened is that the Word—the Eternal—was changed into flesh. While on this earth and before His death, Jesus was flesh and blood, exactly as you and I are. His life was in His blood, and He gave His life by the fact that His blood poured out while He was on the stake. He had taken on a human nature. He was God, but now God changed into flesh and blood; He was Emmanuel—"God with us." The Word was made flesh, and He was flesh and blood, not just an immortal Spirit in a body of flesh and blood.

Some theologians falsely argue that God is immortal and could not die, but the scriptures reveal that God so loved us that while we were yet sinners, the Eternal—the Word, who was with God and who was God in the second Person—permitted Himself to be changed completely into a flesh and blood Man. He became a physical human who could and did die.

God the Father, though, the Sovereign God, still reigned in high heaven—and He raised Jesus from the dead, not from life. It was Christ Himself who was dead and was revived. Nowhere does scripture say that He was alive and active, or that God had Him get back into the human body that had died and was now resurrected. His resurrected body was no longer human. It was that of the Christ, resurrected to immortality, once again changed! He had been changed—that is, converted—into mortal human flesh and blood, subject to death for the purpose of dying for our sins. Then, by a resurrection from the dead, He was again changed into immortality and now a living Savior. He was not then a dead Savior; He was dead for only three days and three nights.

If Jesus had been only human, His death could have paid the penalty for only one other human being who had incurred that penalty by transgression of God's spiritual law. Since God the Father created all things by Jesus Christ, and since all things, including man, were made by Jesus Christ, He is our Maker and, therefore, God. His life that He gave was of greater value than the total of all human beings on earth that have lived, are living, or will live.

He died, and then, for three days and nights, was dead. He who was in the beginning and was God stooped to human level, submitted to death, and trusted the Father to restore Him to life. That is the price that He paid for us. He gave Himself for us; and in so doing, bought and paid for us. Therefore, we belong to Him

I John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

John's letter was written so that we may know that we have eternal life. The gospel was written so that we could read the testimony of God that He gave to His Son, believe in the One to whom the testimony pointed, and in this

way receive life through faith as the gift of God. Thus we, having believed, may know that we have received and continue to have eternal life abiding in us in the presence of Jesus Christ, who abides in us. We have quality of life dwelling in us in Jesus Christ; the essence of our Christian life is eternal life.

The word for *eternal* is *aionios*, which means far more than simply lasting forever. A life that lasted forever could easily be a curse rather than a blessing. It could be an intolerable burden and not a glorious gift if lived by human standards. *Aionios* also refers to endless qualities such as God's power, His glory, and His quality life in Christ. There is only one person to whom *aionios* can be applied, and that is God. In the real sense of the term, it is God alone who possesses and inhabits eternity. Eternal life is, therefore, nothing other than the life of God Himself. What we are promised is that we can receive the gift of a share in the very life of God. Jesus Christ alone can bring us to God. It is in Him that there is open to us the new and living way into the presence of God. Eternal life is the life of God, and we can find that life only through Jesus Christ.

That was the introduction and background that I wanted to give to you. Now let us get to the heart of the sermon: What did Jesus say to humanity from the stake that Passover day? Surprisingly, Jesus' vital last words are not reported by any one gospel writer.

Jesus Christ, God's only Son, spent His final hours nailed to a stake, despised and rejected by the humanity that He had created and came to serve. The night before, His disciples had deserted Him in fear for their lives. One of them had betrayed Him to the executioners, and then He, as the only perfect Person who ever lived, took upon Himself the consequence for every sin the rest of humanity had ever or would ever commit. From a place called Calvary or Golgotha, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, Jesus spoke for the last time before His resurrection from the dead. His words that spring day are preserved for us in the New Testament.

Jesus spoke seven times from the stake: three times to God the Father and four times to those nearby. No one gospel writer records all the things that He said. Matthew and Mark tell us one; Luke and John each give us three. Together, these statements by Jesus present us with a powerful message from the depths of our Savior's mind and heart during the hours of His greatest

personal agony and pain. Each of Jesus' statements gives us a window into the thoughts that filled His mind as He poured out His life for us.

Jesus did far more than die for mankind that day. He proclaimed the good news of our hope for victory over sin and death through His sacrifice for all. He overcame every obstacle that Satan and deceived men placed in front of Him. His final words stand as a source of encouragement for all believers. Since they are spread throughout the all four gospels, the import of all of Jesus' words could easily be overlooked; but when listed one through seven, they have an amazing impact.

Let us analyze them in the chronological order in which they were said. In this way, we can consider and appreciate the message of God's love, given by Jesus Christ the day that He died. First, He thought of others. He was concerned for those who crucified Him, the believing thief, and His mother. The central and fourth statement had to do with His relationship to the Father; and the last three statements, focused on Himself.

Only Luke records for us the first statement that Jesus spoke to God from the stake.

Luke 23:33-37 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

Shortly after Jesus was crucified, He raised His voice to God and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." That statement was actually for every human being, especially those who were crucifying Him. Within hearing range of His words were Roman soldiers, some of whom were gambling for His clothes and mocking Him. Also, there were common people, who were stirred up with hate by the religious leadership

and thirsty for His blood. In addition, there were the curious, who came to gawk at the spectacle of His death. The chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him, pretending that they would believe in Him if He would come down from the stake and save Himself from death. On His left hand and His right hand were two criminals, who were condemned to die with Him and could also hear His every word.

As you know, not everyone who was there to observe the crucifixion was hostile to Jesus. In the crowd there were faithful women who had followed Him during His ministry, and they were worn to shreds with grief and despair. Some of His disciples now came forward to show some support for their teacher and Lord. Mary, His mother, was also present that day to mourn the Son that God had given her by special miracle more than thirty years earlier.

Pilate had pronounced Jesus innocent of any crime and not deserving of death. Judas, who betrayed Him, was sorry for what he had done, although it does not seem that he was truly repentant. He did, however, confess Jesus' innocence to the chief priests and elders, but to no avail. Their evil hearts were set on His death. At the instigation of the chief priests and elders, all the people at His trial before Pilate demanded the death of the only guiltless person who ever lived.

Though innocent of any crime against God or man, Jesus had been taken prisoner, beaten, and condemned in a mock trial. He was then scourged in the cruel and painful Roman manner in preparation for His crucifixion. Now, from the stake at Calvary, Jesus' thoughts reached above the pain and rejection by the people that He had given His life to serve. In His intense prayer to God, He asked forgiveness for those responsible for the evil done to Him that day. By extension, and even directly, that includes each and every one of us who have ever sinned, which includes all of us.

His prayer was simple, direct, and heartfelt. He called God "Father." While facing death in agonizing pain, Jesus felt the same closeness and unity with God that He always had throughout His life. He knew God would hear and answer His prayer, because God always did.

Jesus carried no resentment. He asked God in prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers' sins "...for they do not know what they do." He was already an advocate for humans. While an ordinary physical human being would have been totally consumed with concern for his own pain and miserable condition, Jesus Christ instead testified to the greatness of His love and commitment to serve all who through ignorance have gone the way of sin and death.

The second statement that Jesus spoke was to encourage a pitiful human being, one of the criminals crucified with Him. The Bible does not tell us whether Jesus spoke to the one on His left or His right. Both criminals were worthy of the death sentence imposed on them according to the laws of the time. They were both most likely thieves or murderers.

At the beginning of their shared ordeal both criminals joined the others in reviling Jesus.

Mark 15:29-32 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

During the course of the morning hours, a miraculous change in attitude took place in one of the criminals. He began to believe that Jesus really was the Savior. We are not told of any conversation between the thief and Jesus other than this brief exchange. There was probably no additional communications between them. It may be that Jesus' own example was seen by the thief, moving him so deeply that he responded to what he observed in Jesus. Luke records the words that both the thieves spoke to Jesus.

Luke 23:39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

It is obvious that the thief mentioned here in verse 39 remained unrepentant. He wanted only to escape from his pain and had no faith, no desire to change personally. Jesus did not answer him. The gulf between them cannot be bridged until this criminal comes to truly believe in and know His Savior and repent of his sins. This may very well happen when he is brought back to physical life and his eyes are opened in the Great White Throne Judgment, after the Millennium.

Luke 23-40-42 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

The other thief was just as guilty as the first and, by his own admission, deserved to die. Earlier in that day, he had also rejected and mocked Jesus, but now he rebuked his fellow thief for his attitude. A change had taken place in his thinking, and then he turned his head toward Jesus.

Luke 23:42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

He realized that Jesus was the Savior and had a good bit of clout with God the Father. Jesus spoke to the repentant thief and gave him hope for the future.

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

Jesus' thoughts, in as much agony as He was, were to encourage and give hope to the thief who hung next to Him.

The two thieves are typical of all people who come into contact with either God's truth or a representative of God. Most, like the first thief, reject Jesus Christ and His way of love and giving; as a result of this attitude, their petitions to God go unanswered. However, all who repent and surrender to Him as Lord and Savior receive a lasting hope for the future and strength to

face the present. Jesus showed His confidence in the Father's promises when He told the repentant thief that there was hope of life after death. Eternal life in God's Kingdom lay ahead for those who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior and change their lives accordingly.

Jesus' third statement expressed concern for His mother's welfare. When it seemed impossible for Him to help anyone, Jesus provided for His mother through another human being, His disciple John.

John 19:26 "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

Evidently, His stepfather Joseph was dead. Jesus committed the care of His mother to the one He knew would be faithful to this trust. In this way, Jesus honored His mother, even while on the brink of death. He was not going to be an inhabitant of the earth for much longer and was already unable to do anything Himself, except this one last request. Because His power to discharge His duties as a physical son would come to an end upon His death, He gave John, His closest physical friend, the responsibility of acting son in looking after Mary.

Some people have wondered why Jesus refrained from mentioning his mother's name, simply calling her "Woman." A possible reason is that He did not want to upset Mary any more deeply than she was already. Another possibility is that Christ intended to show that, after having completed the course of human life, He was preparing to leave the physical condition in which He lived and was about to enter into the spiritual realm, where He would have authority over angels and human beings.

John 19:27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"
And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

By these words, Jesus charges John to treat her as a mother and to take as much care of her as if she were his own mother. Jesus showed by example that no sufferings, no matter how terrible, are able to destroy love. His

sufferings were greater than any known, yet He retained the loving memory of His mother. He seemed to forget His agonies in the face of her sorrow and needs.

A lesson that all children can learn from this is that there is no personal problem that is a reason for neglecting our parents. Additionally, Jesus showed that no appointments—other than those commanded by God—no matter how pressing, can justify the neglect of family responsibility. Here was a crisis in the history of the universe, yet Christ was concerned for His mother's needs.

Next, for the first time, Jesus focused His thoughts on Himself. In His fourth statement, He cried out to His Father from the depths of His heart, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Matthew 27:46 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?"

This is also recorded in Mark 15:34. Jesus' actual words, spoken in Aramaic, are left untranslated by both Matthew and Mark and are interpreted as a kind of testimony to the impact this statement had on the writers themselves. Jesus was not merely mouthing empty, emotional words. He knew that, hanging there on a stake, He was now totally alone, totally cut off from His heavenly Father. That is the condition in which most of this world finds itself today, and most of the world is totally unaware of it.

This cry of Jesus is different from His other comments that day. It is the only one that is a question. It appears to be a statement of doubt and fear and has puzzled a lot of people. Was Jesus afraid? Had He been abandoned by God, when He needed His Father most?

Jesus' cry was intense, reflecting His inner feelings. We can easily overlook the fact that Jesus was as fully human as we are. Even though God was His Father, Jesus was born of a physical woman and was subject to all the feelings of mind and body that any man is.

These words were spoken about three o'clock in the afternoon, after three hours of supernatural darkness covered the land.

Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

This was what Jesus and the whole earth had been going through.

As Jesus hung on the stake, He was alone, without God near, bearing in His body our sins. He stepped into our place to experience the pain and the anguish of total separation from God that results from sin.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

That is the place where Christ was at that point, carrying all of the sins of mankind upon His shoulders. When sin is present in our lives, we are cut off from contact with God the Father because sin and God are totally incompatible. Therefore, unless the penalty of our sin, which is death, is paid, we cannot have the contact with God that is necessary for eternal life. The perfect Jesus Christ paid that penalty. As the Creator of all mankind, Jesus' life was worth far more than the sum total of all humanity. His death paid the penalty for every sin, past, present, and future, committed by all humans. In paying this penalty, He had to take all these sins on His shoulders.

II Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin [Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Those hours spent in darkness, without the comfort of God's presence, were undoubtedly the most difficult part of Jesus' ordeal. God had always been with Him before; now the Father withdrew from His Son, leaving Him to suffer alone for sins. Without God there, Jesus experienced a tremendous sense of aloneness. Yet His cry was not faithless: He still addressed the

Father as "My God." Left alone by His Father, Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

Then Isaiah prophesies what Christ experienced for us:

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.

As the clouds overhead darkened and the pain in His body became almost unbearable, Jesus Christ knew that He bore the sins of the whole world—and He knew that He was bearing them alone.

Earlier, when He was being scourged and suffered mental agony, His Father had sent an angel to strengthen and encourage Him. Time after time, in the humiliation of His scourging, Jesus had drawn on the strength of His Father. The burden of responsibility weighed heavily on His mind. He constantly renewed His resolve through prayer to God in heaven. He knew that to fail in His mission would mean the oblivion of mankind.

Now, in the hour of Christ's greatest need, there was nothing. Even if He were forced to abandon His own beloved Son, God the Father was not willing to compromise with sin. God's laws are immutable, unchangeable, and eternal.

Deuteronomy 31:17-18 "Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods."

God explains right there what happens when there is evil in a person's heart or when there is evil in a person's life. In Jesus' case, there was no evil in His heart, but He was carrying it on His shoulders.

Micah 3:4 Then they will cry to the Lord, but He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, because they have been evil in their deeds.

What we see there is a result of people disobeying God and breaking His laws.

As a result of the immutable law of God, He was left with no alternative. If Jesus had become "sin" for us, then God had to forsake Him. Jesus would have to face the final minutes alone. Jesus, at last, could really comprehend what it meant to be cut off from God. He had come to this sick earth, not just to give His life for all mankind, but also to intercede to the Father on our behalf with far more meaning and commitment and feeling. He could only acquire this by going through the same things through which human beings go.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

As we go through our lives, we realize how hard it is to refrain from sinning. Most of the time, sin sneaks up on us, but the world flagrantly sins. So it was, on that Passover day, that Jesus Christ knew what it was like to be completely alone in the world. For that period of time, He was so completely cut off that He did not even have the strength and encouragement that we in God's church have with constantly available access to our almighty, sovereign God.

Soon after Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He would be able to enjoy the victory of eternal life over death. His final three statements came in rapid succession.

Jesus' fifth statement may have surprised some, because it involves thirst. It is interesting that the fifth Holy Day is the Day of Atonement, in which we

thirst. I have not had a chance to look into the connection between these seven statements and the seven holy days; but I think, although maybe not with every Holy Day, there are some similarities in subject matter. Death drew near for Jesus, and everyone knew it. He most certainly realized that it was close to the time of sacrifice.

He had endured the heat, pain, rejection, loneliness, and all the temptations with which Satan surrounded Him; and He overcame them all. He could have suffered silently to His death, but He did not. He did the unexpected: He expressed His need for human help.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"

He probably said it in a little more of an agonizing way.

John 19:29 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.

Jesus asked for a drink from a gawking crowd and cruel soldiers waiting to see Him die. He could have suffered without a drink just a little while longer, but He asked anyway. His request and the sour wine He was given to drink had been prophesied by David a thousand years earlier.

Psalms 69:21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Christ was fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy, again proving that He was the Christ.

The wording in John 19:28 indicates that Jesus was fully conscious and aware of fulfilling the details of the prophecies concerning Himself. The irony of the One who is the Water of life in the spirit but dying in thirst in His physical body is paradoxical. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus announced that anyone who is truly thirsty for God's truth should come to Him and drink.

You recall the time when Jesus was on the boat with His disciples:

Luke 8:22-25 Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

In commanding the raging sea to be still, Jesus exercised a power similar to that displayed in the original taming of the waters of the deep, the power that later miraculously delivered the Israelites at the edge of the Red Sea. It is no wonder that the disciples asked, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

Now, though, He hung on the stake, still maintaining total self-control as He obeyed the Father's will. Rather than calling down water from heaven, He asked for help from those who hated Him. Earlier, He had refused to drink the pain-deadening wine that was always offered to those about to be crucified.

The fact that Jesus was thirsty was added proof that He was really human and really underwent the agony of the crucifixion. We see through this the real humanity and the real suffering of Jesus. His attitude while suffering made a profound impact on many that day, including the battle-hardened soldiers who were familiar with the cruelties of war. This was something that they had never seen before. A soldier answered Jesus' request. The soldier may not have had faith in Jesus as the Son of God, but apparently he had come to suspect Jesus was more than an ordinary man.

The "sour wine" Jesus was given consisted of wine vinegar mixed with water. It was often used by soldiers to quench their thirst. The drink of sour wine did not fully quench Jesus' thirst, but it did wet His lips enough to enable Him to announce triumphantly, "It is finished!"

The sixth statement that Jesus spoke from the cross was the single Greek word *tetelestai*, which means, "It is finished." Jesus Christ had completed His work on earth as a mortal man, and He was able to feel triumphant.

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Papyri receipts for taxes have been recovered with the word *tetelestai* written across them, meaning "paid in full." That was the actual meaning in society at that time what that Greek word. This word breathed out by Jesus was significant. It is interesting that He did not say, "I am finished." When He said, "It is finished," He meant that His redemptive work was completed. He had taken on and been made sin for all people and had suffered the penalty of God's justice that sin deserves. Before God and the angels and in the presence and the hearing of everyone in attendance that day, He proclaimed His Work and mission fulfilled. The penalty for the sins of the world was paid in full.

His humility rings out clearly in His words. He had no vanity, no pride, and no arrogant attitude at all. Jesus took no credit to Himself. To the end of His life, Jesus' mind was on the Work that God had given Him to do. In front of everyone who was there, He announced, "It is finished, and it is paid in full."

He bowed His head, giving His seventh statement, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," and then dismissed His spirit.

Luke 23:44-46 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

Even at the moment of His death, Jesus remained the One who gave up His life. This differs from the normal process in death by crucifixion, in which the condemned person's life would ebb away, and then the head would slump forward.

In this final prayer, as in the first, Jesus called God "Father." He dedicated His life to serving God. God is love, and Jesus' ministry shows us what true love is. His love was complete when He gave His life for all mankind.

He totally trusted His Father and never doubted Him. Jesus accomplished nothing by His own power, and He said Himself. Notice the humility in the following scriptures:

John 5:30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."

John 14:10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."

His strength came from His Father in heaven. His final message to humanity before His death was an affirmation of the greatness and glory of God.

This dreadful ordeal at the very end of Jesus' earthly life should reinforce in our minds that sin—that is, any transgression of God's spiritual law—will result in an estrangement from our heavenly Father. The fact that even Jesus Christ Himself had to experience that separation shows us, without a shadow of doubt, that God will not compromise with sin and that every time we sin, we continue to be responsible for the brutal torture and suffering that Christ had to endure. This realization should move and inspire us to live the most perfect lives that we can. However, we have human nature that gets in the way, and we have Satan constantly influencing us—but this should be a driving force in our lives. Not only should that encourage us, but it should also make us aware that God means business when He emphasizes the punishment intended for those who willingly persist in doing wrong, for those who flagrantly break God's law.

Christ died for *our* sins. His suffering, especially His mental agony when He knew He was totally alone in the ordeal, should cause us to consider what will happen to us if we refuse to repent of wrongdoing. There can be no reasoning out of the judgment to come. What God has given us is an amazing and wonderful opportunity.

Jesus Christ's message that Passover day was by word and example, the most effective kind of preaching possible. This is the witness that we should be giving by our example. The fruits of Jesus' ministry were continuing to be produced, even up until His death, in the transformation of a repentant thief who acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord and appealed for His mercy. Even in Jesus' severe suffering, He gave the thief hope.

After Jesus' death, an officer of the Roman army, a centurion, fulfilled Jesus' prophecy of John 8:28 and professed, "Truly this Man was the Son of God."

On that Passover, Jesus completed His own physical part in His Father's Work. He set us an example that faith with good works is a dynamically effective faith. As God planned, Jesus' work continues now in His church, in those who obey Him and look for His imminent return as King of kings and Lord of lords to rule with great authority and power. We have His promise that if we faithfully serve Him, we will receive the eternal inheritance that the Father and Christ made possible. This wonderfully positive seven-part message that Jesus Christ gave to us just before He died for us gives us hope, encouragement, and assurance of an eternally bright future.

May God help us to keep His Passover in a worthy manner, with the humble attitude of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!