

His Last Words

What I'm here persuaded to write are some thoughts regarding the last words ever spoken by the singularly most astonishing mortal man who ever lived. This of course was Jesus, the Son of Man, as He called Himself. Did I speak carelessly, out of ignorance, or blasphemy in referring to Jesus as a very special yet simply mortal man? I pray not! For this is the way most of the world chooses to regard Him, as just an unusual man who had some wise things to say. The fact is, however that He was also the Son of God, and therefore He was God Himself in the flesh and blood body of a man. I am further persuaded as a believer in His deity, that while He walked on earth prior to His death on the cross, He was as yet, from a time related perspective, neither Lord nor Savior. As a mortal man by definition, He was both able and destined to die, as is the way of all mortal flesh. Oh yes, as the Son of God He is, always was, and always will be our Lord and Savior. However, until His resurrection and ascension to heaven, He was this only positionally, not functionally or experientially. His death and His resulting shed blood is what cleansed the saved souls waiting for Him as He descended into Sheol. It was then when He rose on the third day, having vanquished death, and later ascended to heaven in His now immortal physical body, that His role as Lord and Savior became effectual and experiential.

What I have written this far was not included in my original prompting, but became immediately compelling as a preface to what I've called the Last Words. By His last words, I mean His last utterances as the mortal man Jesus, before He died the death of all mortal flesh. Scripture records Him as speaking seven times from the cross. What can we learn from the dying words of this mortal Man in whom dwelled God Himself in the spiritual embodiment of the Son of God? What can we learn as He so gloriously, painfully, and victoriously, took on, and paid for, the sin debt of the entire world, past, present and future? For three and a half years before His death on the cross, Jesus was a Rabbi who taught Scripture, healed multitudes, provided many prophecies, and set the ultimate example of a sinless life. Aside from these last utterances, what else do we know regarding His composure and His thoughts as He hung for those horrible 6 hours

on the cross? We know a surprisingly large amount from Psalm 22 which should be read and studied in depth, if one is truly interested in an answer to this question. Also, while the whole of Scripture is effectually written about Jesus, the essence of why Jesus had to suffer and die in this manner are clearly summarized in chapter 52 and 53 in the Book of Isaiah. However, it's beyond the scope of this study to deal with these most revealing and prophetic passages in Scripture. Now finally, let us get on with an examination of those seven utterances.

1. Consistent with His nature as our carnate God/Man who was about to become our incarnate Lord and Savior, his first words as He hung in agony were, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*" (Luke 23:34) Even then, in that unbearably painful condition this dying Man's thoughts were ones of mercy and forgiveness for those who were there mocking Him and who were the earthly perpetrators of His suffering. Why did He say this out loud? To simply think this was consistent with His nature and purpose, and thinking this would have been sufficient, for the Father knew His Son's thoughts as He knows all of ours. However, He spoke them, and then recorded them for us to learn from. This was a recorded example of how those who seek to be Christ-like should deal with those who trespass against them. In what we commonly call the "Lord's Prayer", Jesus tells us to pray for the forgiveness of our transgression AS WE forgive those who trespass against us. From the cross He demonstrated that this was more than a do-as-I-say instruction but the ultimate do-as-I-do example for us to live by. These precious words did not come back to Him void, as is evidenced by what we read of the multitude of martyrs who also died with the same compassion in their hearts. However, we should not in any way conclude that this request for forgiveness was a spiritual forgiveness unto salvation. Only a saving faith can trigger God's grace of redemption. This was merely a request that this brutal act of ignorance was not to be added to their list of sins.
2. *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:43) Here we see Jesus about His Lord's business right to the very end, even on the cross. While others

could only hear His words, Jesus knew the secrets of the heart of the thief who was on the cross next to Him. There was genuine repentance found in this previously doomed man, and Jesus recognized it and for that reason saved his soul. What an incredible “side event” this was! Here was a common thief, having been sentenced to death for his crimes, and to eternal damnation for his sins, suddenly hanging and suffering next to the mortal manifestation of the Creator of the Universe, the One who created the crosses and even the mountain on which they stood! Something about that proximity to Jesus, His voice, His countenance, His reputation, and of course His calling to the Father is what drew him to Jesus, and made him realize who Jesus actually was. It was this beautiful evidence of faith that caused Jesus to give him eternal life. Think about it. Who there, at that time, other than the thief, believed Him to be who He was?

Not even the apostles understood this yet. Earlier, Peter spoke as if he did understand. However, his later behavior indicated otherwise. Perhaps Mary, His mother knew, having been told by Gabriel who He was, and having nurtured Him as He grew to manhood. But here it would seem, that this thief was the very first man to recognize His deity, and the first to die in the faith, as well as the first and only man to accompany Him to Sheol and back to heaven. Finally he may have been the last to ever descend into the pleasant part of Sheol! What is the lesson here for us? Every word in Scripture is a lesson for us if we are willing to seek it. For one, it is that an unsaved soul on his or her deathbed can be saved, if true repentance enters their heart. For another, even the most sinful of souls can be forgiven and will receive eternal life, immediately after they have come to a genuine repentant faith in Jesus. I am sure that those words from Jesus brought great comfort to the thief during the remaining hours or minutes of his life. Here Jesus shows us that even under the most difficult circumstances, where an opportunity arises, we should give aid and comfort as best we can to those in need who enter our lives. (For a more detailed understanding of the saving qualities expressed by the thief, see in Book 3, called Evidence of God’s Love, chapter 14 titled “The Three Thieves.”)

3. *“Woman behold thy Son! Behold thy mother”* (John 19:26, 27) These words were Jesus’ final act of worldly business. By then Joseph, His stepfather had probably been dead for quite awhile. Jesus, as the oldest son, was responsible for her as long as He was able. Normally, it would seem that this responsibility would have gone to the next oldest son. We know that Mary had at least six more children after Jesus. Mary had four other sons, James, Joses, Simon and Judas. (Matthew 13:55) Why didn’t Jesus simply let the next eldest take on the care of their mother? We are not told, but it is obvious that Jesus knew what was best for His mother and so, by the authority of the first-born, He designated the Apostle John as her guardian son.

We must not conclude that the way Jesus addressed His mother as being cold or lacking in due respect. In the culture of that day this was not as it would be considered in today’s manner of speech. For what must have been a perfect reason, Jesus chose John over her own sons to be her guardian son. Thus we see Jesus, even under this painful circumstance, even moments before His death, showing concern for, and making provisions for, the care of His mother. This is of course, an example for all of us, that we should leave this earth having set in order all that must remain behind to be dealt with by others. Our blessed Lord Jesus had no temporal home or estate to deal with. At that moment, providing for His mother was His primary concern, and He responded to that concern most effectively. Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus had, through His apostles, laid the foundation of what became the New Testament. However, nothing could be constructed on that foundation, until He suffered and died so that sin could be fully forgiven.

Only then, during His 40 days on earth after His resurrection, was He able to build His eternal church on that foundation. His last minute attention to the well being of His mother should not be considered as an example to us for any last minute attending to our responsibilities. Jesus always knew all things, including

the very moment of His death. He did everything at the exactly correct point in time. Remember, “tomorrow” is one of Satan’s favorite words. If he gets us to put off what we should do today and get us to postpone until tomorrow and tomorrow, quite likely the appropriate tomorrow will never come. However, the final day with no more tomorrows will surely come when it will be too late.

4. *“My God My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46) I believe that a strong case can be made to support the fact that this is the crescendo, the high point of the whole plan of God! While it was conceived at the moment of creation, He orchestrated it here on this earth in real time in preparation for His creating the eternal kingdom on the new heaven and earth that will follow the millennium. These were the moments during which all of the past present and future sins of all of mankind who would ever have lived were applied to Jesus. Having thus been made sin, He could not, while in that state, have an oneness with the Father. This spiritual separating, this act of being ripped apart from the Godhead, was the means of achieving the magnitude of punishment and justice-satisfying pain that all of mankind’s sins demanded. No human is capable of understanding, or adequately appreciating what happened in the spiritual realm as this ghastly “forsaking” occurred. If we seek the reason, we find God’s answer in John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* If we ask why the cross, we must probe deeper where we find that God is not only love, but He is also just, and His justice demands punishment for sin.

Any loving Father will punish his son for misbehavior. This will most often hurt the Father who administers the punishment as much as it hurts the son. It is love that recognizes the need for that punishment, and it is love that causes the father’s pain as well. Look now at the heavenly Father’s dilemma. It is not His son who has sinned; it is the whole world of potential sons and daughters who have sinned. Absent punishment, there could be no cleansing of sins, and thus there could be no one eligible to enter the family of God that He wants to be with Him in His

eternal kingdom. God's perfect justice, tempered by His uncompromising love, manifested in God Himself through His own sinless Son, when He accepted the necessary punishment of the sins of the entire world. Jesus' cry to God from the cross probably signaled the very moment when that horrible pain of separation from the Father reached its peak.

Perhaps you question the term "separation from the Father" as describing the manner of punishment, thinking that such parting of the Godhead was impossible. Perhaps so, but consider this. Throughout Scripture, this is the only time Jesus referred to "God" and not to "Father." As has been repeated so many times, ALL Scripture is for our learning, nothing in Scripture is trivial or without significance. Where there appears to be an inconsistency, it is a clue indicating that there is some deeper truth to be found. Why at this profound and final hour of Jesus' mortal life did He avoid that expression of loving intimacy and oneness with His Father that had never been absent? He was experiencing a condition the likes of which had never before existed! His having become the embodiment of sin had forced a separation from the Father that brought forth the required measure of punishment that God's justice demanded. By that, and only that vicarious suffering by both the Father and the Son, was God's justice satisfied, and the spiritual death that sin had demanded was vanquished.

When we come to realize what really happened here between the Father and the Son, we find a more profound meaning in the words God prompted Isaiah to write in Chapter 9 verse 6, where we read "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*". We normally consider this as a prophesy telling of the birth of the God/Man, Christ Jesus. Certainly that is true, but is that all there is to the "given" part of this prophesy? Was the Son actually "given" at that time? That is, was He no longer in the role of the Son part of the Triune Godhead? Not in the context we normally believe it was written. In John 3:17, what does it mean by the words that "He gave His only begotten Son"? Does it mean the same thing that we commonly attribute to what Isaiah wrote? I don't think so. I don't

believe that either verse should be interpreted that way. As I have prayed and mused over this, I am strongly persuaded that this “given” and this “gave”, contain a much more profound meaning. I believe that these passages are relating to us something about what happened on the cross when Jesus uttered those intensely painful words. While Jesus was the personification of sin, He could not be God’s Son anymore than any of us can be, until our sins are paid for, and forgiven. It was when Jesus took over the sins of the world, that He was made sin incarnate. That is when He was “given”, for in that condition, He could not be His Son. He could not be God’s Son until justice had been served. Justice was served when the sins had been paid for, and they were paid for during those awful moments when He and the Father were spiritually separated.

Whether mankind likes it or not, believes it or not, only those who are His, only those who are saved through genuine faith in Jesus, and have been cleansed of their sins, have the legitimate right to call Him Father. He is God to all, but Father only to His redeemed family. At that moment, when Jesus cried out to God, rather than to His Father, He could not call Him Father because at that moment He was effectually sin personified, sin being purged, and sin thereby causing a separation from the most holy and sinless Father. Jesus could not call Him Father in this horrible, though thankfully temporary state. He could only appeal to His God, which I sense was an appeal for mercy from that unbearable condition, even though He knew of its necessity. He had known this, even before the moment of creation, and had acquiesced to an acceptance of that event.

Recall how in Gethsemane He actually sweat blood as He prayed to the Father regarding what He knew that moment would be like. Although being the Son of God aspect of the Triune Godhead, He was also the Son of Man, and in this lower capacity, He feared and so prayed to the Father that if there were any other way, any way that He could be spared this terrible thing, God might spare Him. Yet we see that, in His heart, He knew that there was no other way and so He would yield Himself to that fate in complete obedience to the Father. (Matthew 26:39). Try

as best we can, it is impossible for us to even begin to appreciate what our dear Jesus, and the Father as well, endured during those worst moments of all eternity. For this perfectly sinless Man, being also the embodiment of God Himself, to have been made sin, the most repulsive, demeaning and abhorrent of all afflictions, is infinitely beyond human understanding.

5. "I thirst" (John 19:28, Psalms 69:21) It is my thought that this utterance by our blessed Lord, because it follows immediately after the "separation ordeal," expresses both a spiritual as well as a physical thirst. This devastating ordeal surely drained Him physically. In Gethsemane He actually sweat blood in anticipation of that moment. We are not told so, but it seems very likely that if the anticipation had caused such a physical trauma, the actual event was even more traumatic, and a cause of severe dehydration which resulted in a strong thirst. That they gave Him vinegar instead of water is interesting. Was it just another mockery of His condition as were the recorded commentaries of those in attendance? Or was it an act of compassion toward a dying man for whom water would have been of no benefit other than to perhaps prolong His suffering? Vinegar in this circumstance would have temporally alleviated the dryness of His lips and throat. At this point I'm not sure which attitude prevailed in the hearts of those who offered the vinegar.

Beyond this physical aftermath of Jesus' ordeal, most certainly there had to also be a spiritual thirst for the restoration of His oneness with the Father. Because of the Father's great love for His Son, and for all of those who could now become His sons and daughters, the Father was surely delighted with the outcome, and even before the physical ordeal on the cross was over, that thirst was satisfied as Father and Son again became one, as we will soon see. I believe that the thirst to be at one with the Father exists in the souls of everyone who is redeemed and truly lives by the faith that saved them. Adam had that oneness with God, until sin broke that spiritual bond between them. All of mankind that has ever lived since then have suffered from that loss, and perhaps at least subconsciously, have

yearned for its return. I suspect that this is also one reason for the rise of so many religions. Each, in various ways, seeks to satiate that thirst for a return to that oneness. All but one of those many religions try to accomplish it through individual efforts and works. Those ways are of course satanic diversions, doomed to failure. Only a faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior restores that oneness. Even then there is a residual thirst in the heart of every redeemed soul. It is a thirst for greater intimacy, a greater knowledge and understanding of who He is, and how one can best please Him. For those who are His, this thirst is renewed and satisfied daily through prayer, worship, study of His Word, obedience, and eager response to His calling for good works. This is the response to that thirst that is called sanctification. It is the means by which the redeemed are prepared for service in the eternal kingdom.

6. *"It is Finished"* (John 19:30) having gone through that "terrifying" ordeal, He thereby accomplished what He had come to earth to do, and so was ready to end His mortal stay on earth. His life's end was accompanied by an earth shattering event. It was at this time, during mid-day, that darkness covered the earth, an earthquake struck, and the curtain that enclosed the Holy of Holies place in the Temple was torn apart. In the Greek, "it is finished" is contained in the single word "teleo" (Strong 5055). Some biblical scholars well versed in Greek, refer to the word "tetelistai" as being what Jesus actually spoke. Apparently, it's another spelling of the same word. Both versions can be translated as "paid in full." In the context of our Lord's achievement, I believe that "paid in full" is a more relevant translation.

As He spoke this Word, His Work was indeed finished, as the mortal flesh and blood Jesus. However, what He achieved during those horrible hours of suffering was payment in full, for all of the sins of the world. "Paid in full" was the more common usage of the word at that time. When a prisoner was released from jail, after having completed his full term of punishment, he was sent out with a certificate of release that told of his punishment. It was officially stamped with

“Tetelistai” – Paid in Full. This was given so that he would have proof of having paid his debt, and paid it in full. That translation is more in keeping with what our Lord meant when He spoke that word. The message it provides is of profound importance, and perhaps from our perspective, the most blessed word He ever spoke. PAID IN FULL!! Here He is proclaiming the ultimate victory!

The victory over sin and the spiritual death it demands. PAID IN FULL!! It was not a partial payment for our sins, but a FULL Payment! No amount of good behavior, good work, pious life, self-denial, self flagellation, or any other form of attempted payment by works could in any way contribute to the redemption of a soul. He did it all, He PAID IN FULL right there on that cross, during that time that He had been forsaken by the Father God! That is what Tetelistai means as He uttered it with almost the last breath of His dear life. Let us understand that this was not the moaning of a beaten and defeated man. This statement of an ending was in fact a declaration of a glorious beginning, the dawning of a new spiritual order, and the new life! Oh dear God, why can't the world hear and believe in Him, and what He said? Why must they perish, when the path to heaven is so clear and so available? Why must His great sacrifice and the suffering that both you dear Father, and your Son subjected yourselves to out of your love and desire to redeem man, be so universally ignored, abhorred, and rejected, except by the very few who have chosen to hear Your call?

If you, who read this, are not one of those who has received that for which Jesus “Paid in Full”, I beg you seek Him in single- minded sincere prayer, knowing that you are a sinner and in desperate need of a Savior. Do it NOW, and I can assure you that He will hear you and save you, for God is “... *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance...*” (2Peter 3:9) Jesus died for YOU, as He did for all of mankind, even the most wicked. But you can receive that ultimate blessing only if you truly believe that He did this, and if you put your faith and trust in His promise that He will do all that He said He would do. I

beg you again, DO IT NOW! Some day, and it could be today; there surely will be no tomorrow!

7. *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”* (Luke 23:46) what a glorious moment this was for our Lord Jesus. He was about to GO HOME!!! All things that He had come to do, He had finished. Notice that Jesus Himself chose to then die as He “commended His spirit.” He had come to heal, to teach, and to save. He had come to provide salvation and then set up, that is to establish His kingdom of heaven. This was to train certain men, primarily His Apostles, to continue its growth and fruitfulness, “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25). Then, and this will happen soon, He will do a low “fly by” from the third heaven down to the lower heaven and call to Him all of the two thousand plus years of accumulated “fruit” which is the church, that is the earthly Body of Christ. His calling will bring forth first the bodies of the dead, and then the living. Each will then receive their incorruptible bodies.

Thus the whole Body of Christ will be delivered to heaven. As we can see, this final earthly declaration is in fact the beginning of our Savior’s next segment of His kingdom of heaven enterprise. Bringing home the church will be followed by His drawing to Himself untold millions during that comparatively short age between the Rapture and the end of the Tribulation. Except for that brief foray into the atmospheric heaven to pick up His church “body”, and his defeat of Antichrist at Bozrah, all of His effort will be done while He is in heaven sharing the Father’s throne. After the Tribulation, the final segment of His kingdom of heaven project will commence and will last for 1000 years during which time Jesus will reign from the restored throne of David as the archangel Gabriel had promised Mary. At the end of that 1000 years, Jesus will “pack it all up” and deliver it to the Father in the kingdom of God which will then be in the new heaven and new earth that is to come (Revelation 21:1)

What a blessing we have been given, that is to those who worship Jesus as our Lord and Savior. What a blessing it is for us to have, effectually through Scripture, been there as He spoke those last words as the flesh and blood human Man, and Son of God. These Words are profound and precious to those who love Him, and fully appreciate what He accomplished on the cross. Let's hear them again and simplify our thoughts the essence of what they reveal about Him.

1. *Father forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34) This expressed the ultimate example of what He had taught regarding loving your enemy.
2. *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43) Here He expressed His own Godly power of forgiveness and a divine knowledge of where He was going.
3. *“Woman behold thy Son! Behold thy mother”.* (John 19:26, 27) This expressed His love and duty to the woman the Father had chosen to bear and to raise His mortal Son.
4. *“My God My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46) Here was the entire Godhead's love for us expressed in the most profound manner.
5. *“I thirst”* (John 19:28, Psalms 69:21) this was an expression of His yet corrupt human flesh which He would soon shed and replace, with the incorruptible.
6. *“It is Finished”* (John 19:30) All He had come to earth for was now finished. He had paid in full for the sins of the world. He was ready for His next mission in His heavenly realm.
7. *“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit”* (Luke 23:46) How wonderful it must have been for Him at that moment when He offered Himself back, and did return to the Father with whom He was again One.