

CHRIST JESUS CRUCIFIED.

– JUNE 14 – Luke 23:33-46. –

IN these days when the theories of the self-styled higher critics, and all who entertain theories of salvation by evolution, are making advances in every direction, we are glad to see the "International Lessons" drawing the attention of Bible Students frequently to lessons like the present one, summed up in the Golden Text, – "Christ died for our sins."

The greatest transaction ever made, the purchase of all (over fifty billions) of the slaves of the great task master, Sin, was not appreciated in its day, and has not been appreciated since, except by the very few – in all a "little flock." The masses of mankind since have been doing just what the people did upon the day of our Lord's crucifixion. Some looked, but sympathized little, and appreciated not; others derided and blasphemed; others made sport of it, and still others with rude jest gambled over his raiment. They knew him not; they knew not the value of the work which he performed on their behalf. They appreciated his life to some extent, though very imperfectly, but as for value to his death, they could see none in it. The Apostle, by inspiration, calls attention to their condition, saying that the god of this world had blinded their minds, so that they could not see. False theories, false expectations, false reasonings, and a lack of true consecration to the Lord, have blinded the eyes of many since, not only of the world, but also of those professing to be disciples of Christ.

But to all who do see the real value of the ransom sacrifice "finished" at Calvary and whose eyes have been opened to see the wonderful results which must ultimately flow from that great transaction – to all these the Master's words apply forcibly: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous persons have desired to see

the things which ye see and have not seen them and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them." Such as do see this "great light" which illuminates the entire plan of God have certainly great cause for thankfulness; for such have been translated out of darkness into God's marvelous light. We can thank God, too, in the light of the cross, not only for the blessings which have reached us, his Church, who truly believe in his great sacrifice; but also for the assurance that in "due time" this gracious message of redemption through the precious blood will be made known to all, and that all the deaf ears shall be unstopped! In due time all shall see the real significance and merit which were in the great atonement sacrifice given once for all; for it is written concerning the blessed Millennial Day – "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped"; and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." – Isa. 35:5; 11:9.

Aside from the weeping of the disciples, the penitent thief's conduct is the only mark of appreciation of the Lord's righteousness found in this picture. It is suggestive, too, of the fact that, as then, so in every age, many of the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees have crucified the truth without sympathy or appreciation; often the only sympathizers have been some of those apparently deeply degraded.

But if human hearts were unsympathetic and unappreciative of the great transaction, nature was not, for she, as a witness to the wonderful scene, veiled her face in darkness and trembled. The rending of the vail between the Holy and the Most Holy would seem to teach symbolically that a way into the Holy of Holies had been opened. The Apostle seems to interpret it thus in Heb. 10:19-22.

Our Lord Jesus, faithful and trustful to the last, commended his spirit in his dying moments to the Heavenly Father, whose promises supported him during his eventful life, and now were his strength in his dying hour. Nevertheless, from another account we have the record that at the very last moment the Heavenly Father withdrew from our Lord

this support, and left him, probably but for a moment, alone; and his last experiences were those of utter loneliness and complete separation from the Father. This we may know was not [R1989 : page 128] because of the Father's displeasure; for he had the full assurance that in all things and always he pleased the Father, and the Father subsequently testified to this in raising him from the dead, as said the Apostle Peter. (Acts 17:31.) That experience was necessary, however, because he was taking the place of the sinner. The sinner, Adam (and we all in Adam), had forfeited not only our rights to life, but also to fellowship with the Father; and in being our ransom-price in full, it was necessary that our Redeemer should not only die for us, but that he should die as a sinner, as a felon under sentence of death; and it was appropriate also that he should taste of the proper experiences of the sinner in being fully cut off from the Father's favor and communion. This last experience would seem to have been the most trying through which our dear Redeemer passed. It was then, as on no other occasion, that his soul sent forth the agonizing cry, "My God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"
