

## **THE ATONING SACRIFICE COMPLETED.**

– LUKE 23:35-53. – MARCH 24. –

**"Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures."  
– 1 Cor. 15:3.**

"AND when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him." (Mark 15:20.) Jesus was now in charge of the centurion, and with the two bandits or highwaymen who were to be executed that day, was led to execution, each of the three prisoners being under the guard of four Roman soldiers, with a centurion in command, sixteen persons in all. It was about nine o'clock in the morning, and our Lord having been incessantly harassed by his enemies from the midnight previous, without food or rest, buffeted, scourged, tormented, was, according to tradition, weak and faint under the heavy load of his own cross, which, according to custom, he bore. The Gospel narrative seems to confirm this incidentally, by telling us that Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the soldiers to bear the cross for Jesus. Some, however, claim that Luke's reading respecting this matter, that he "bore the cross after Jesus," signifies that he walked behind Jesus and merely assisted in the bearing of the cross.

Whichever way it was, Simon had a most enviable opportunity of serving the Master – an opportunity which would be eagerly seized by some of the Lord's people today, who would be glad to share, not only the Master's burden, but his ignominy. And, strange to say, the opportunity is with us now, and whosoever will of the Lord's disciples is privileged to take up the cross and follow after him; for the offense of the cross has not ceased. True, the cross has become fashionable, and is worn by many as an ornament with little thought of the original cross and what it signified, and with little desire to bear any of its shame or ignominy

or weight. But there are still some who have the Master's spirit, to whom the Apostle appeals, saying, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him;" for "we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren," and to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake which is the Church." – Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 John 3:16; Col. 1:24.

Altho the man Christ Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners – perfect – nevertheless he was neither a giant in stature nor in physical strength. This indicates to us that the perfect man was not a giant physically, nor in brute force preeminent; for all that the perfect man was, our Lord Jesus must have been, in order to be his ransom price, his substitute. The coarseness and brute strength which we find in many men is to be esteemed a degeneration, as truly as is the weakness and effeminacy of others – only that the degeneracy has manifested itself in another form. Great brute force and coarseness of organism is rarely accompanied by a proportionate strength and efficiency of brain power, and of the finer sentiments of the mind. The completion of the restitution work, therefore, must not be expected to bring coarseness and giant strength; but fineness and symmetry, physical as well as mental. Additionally, we are not to forget that for three and a half years our Lord's ministry had been a constant drain upon his vital forces, not merely in connection with his public preaching, but specially in connection with the miracles which he wrought at the expense of his own vitality; as it is written, "Virtue [vitality] went out of him and healed them all." – Luke 6:19.

The journey to Calvary was a sorrowful spectacle. It is to their credit that some of those who followed in the procession were weeping, and this credit for tenderness and sympathy falls to the women, to whom Jesus turning said, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." Apparently the Savior's thought was not centered wholly upon himself: he was thinking rather how

this injustice would shortly react upon this nation, whose representatives had said before God and men, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." No doubt our Lord had in mind the descriptions of the trouble that would come upon Jerusalem, as given particularly in the prophecies of Daniel and Jeremiah. (Daniel 9:24-27; Jer. 6.) We realize how literally our Lord's suggestion was fulfilled when we remember the story of the siege of Jerusalem, and how the women and children especially suffered in the horrors of that time. It is a sign of greatness of mind when one is able under such trying circumstances to think less of himself and more of others.

Arrived at Calvary the crucifixion took place. It is probable that the victim was nailed to the cross while it was lying on the ground, and that then the four sturdy soldiers lifted it and set it into a socket in the earth, the pain from the wound being intensified by the jolting of putting the cross into an upright position, **[R2787 : page 106]** and then terribly augmented by the hanging weight of the body. Crucifixion is probably the most cruel form of death, and even by the Romans, as we understand it, was practiced only upon culprits – usually outlaws, brigands and seditionists. Thus our Lord was, in harmony with the statement of the prophet, "numbered with the transgressors." – Isa. 53:12.

On our Lord's cross, above his head, written in three languages, was a statement of his crime – the charge upon which he was convicted and sentenced, in the words, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It was written in Latin, the language of the Romans, representative of authority and power; in Greek, the language of culture and learning; and in Hebrew, the language of the professedly God-fearing people. It was a title of shame and contempt, a brand of blasphemy to those who read it; and the multitude, going and coming to and from the city jested him upon his title, and the miserable failure of the fraud he had attempted to perpetrate in claiming for himself such high honors and dignities.

The priests and rulers, of course, followed to see their victim surely dead; and any qualms of conscience they may have had respecting the injustice of their course seem to have been stifled by the apparent confirmation of their verdict in their success in accomplishing his death, and in his apparent powerlessness to save himself from his calamity. The soldiers too, especially those who had him in charge, seem to have felt that this was an exposure of another fraud, the ignominious termination of another one who had asserted himself against the power of Caesar.

The records show that Jesus' mother was there, and her sister, and John the disciple, and his mother, and Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Cleophas. (John 19:25; Matt. 27:56.) They were all sorrowful; many of them weeping. They could not deny the assertion of the rulers and the multitude, that apparently the claims of our Lord had been fraudulent; they could not understand how he who had such power, and in whom they had such confidence, could be so helpless in the hands of his enemies. It was incomprehensible when they remembered how even the winds and the waves of Galilee obeyed him, and how many unclean spirits, being unable to resist the command of his word, had been cast out of the afflicted. But altho they could not make any reply, under the circumstances, to the jibes of those who railed at the Lord, they nevertheless loved him; for they knew, that regardless of his power and his titles, and whether or not he had overstated his relationship to the Heavenly Father, nevertheless, "never man spake like this man," and never had they known any who could compare with him amongst the sons of men for purity and nobility of soul. They could do naught else but love him and trust him, and wait for some indication of the seeming inconsistencies which they then beheld. And so it is at times with the Lord's followers since. Occasionally things occur in respect to the Lord's Word and what he permits his people to suffer, and the power he permits their adversaries to exercise, which are incomprehensible, and his followers may at such times be obliged simply to hold their peace; but those who

know the Lord through intimate communion and fellowship of heart, who have fed upon "the deep things of God," who have drunk of his spirit – altho unable to explain the difficulties, are fully able to trust in him and to hope and to wait for such expressions as are sure to come, in vindication of his every act and word and providence, in due time.

Whilst the others were reviling our Lord and calling upon him to manifest his Messiahship and to come down from the cross, one of the thieves joined in the ribald assault; but the other, realizing that death was near, and admitting his own guilt, seemed to recognize in Jesus a person of an entirely different order and character from that of himself. He alone, so far as we are informed, raised his voice in protest against the slurs, and in defense of the meek and lowly one, who said nothing in his own defense, and who thus set us a most wonderful example in patient endurance and suffering for well-doing. Had he demonstrated his power, as they "dared" him to do, he would have been wrecking the hopes, not only of those who maligned him, crucified him, but also the hopes of the whole world of mankind. O, how we rejoice in his faithfulness unto death – even the death of the cross! How we praise him that he did not exercise his power, and "call for more than twelve legions of angels" to deliver him, but on the contrary sacrificed himself, laying down his own life as a ransom for Adam and his race!

The contrite thief knew little respecting Jesus, except what he saw before him of his patient endurance, suffering for righteousness' sake; but this "living epistle" made a marked impression upon him, just as sometimes the conduct of the Lord's followers, patient in tribulation, is the strongest and best lesson that can be given to some, "without God and having no hope in the world." There is nothing to indicate that this thief became a saint in the few moments of his acquaintance with the Lord; there is nothing to indicate that he had or could develop a *character* in that

time which would constitute him an overcomer, a joint-heir with Christ in the Kingdom. Everything is to the contrary of such thoughts. He merely realized that he himself was guilty and worthy of death, according to the law, that Jesus was innocent, and that there was a bare possibility of there being something in the claims of this wonderful man in respect to a future Kingdom. [R2788 : page 107] He would at least speak a word in his defense, and then he would appeal to Jesus, that if he had a Kingdom, as had been intimated, he would graciously remember his words of defense and do a kind deed for him when his Kingdom should come.

### **PARADISE PROMISED.**

Jesus replied, "Verily, verily [so be it, so be it], I say unto thee this day, Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It should be as the thief had requested, not otherwise. When Jesus' Kingdom should come the effect or result of that Kingdom would be the restoration of the Paradise lost when sin entered into the world as a part of its penalty, – redeemed by the sacrifice which he was then finishing at Calvary. When he should come into his Kingdom at his second advent he would, as the thief requested, remember him there and then, and undoubtedly the thief will have an abundant reward for the words of comfort spoken to our dear Redeemer in his hour of trial; but that reward will surely not be a place in the throne, in the Kingdom, as a member of the body of Christ; for this position amongst the elect is to be given only to those who shall attain the character-likeness to God's dear Son. (Rom. 8:29.) Besides, none can attain this position without being begotten of the holy spirit, and the holy spirit, the begetting power of the new nature, was not yet given, until after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, when at Pentecost it came upon those who waited to be adopted from the house of servants into the house of sons. – John 1:12; 7:39.

The thief died too soon to have any part in this Kingdom, had he been ever so well developed in character, – even as John the

Baptist died too soon. Of the latter our Lord said, that altho there was not a greater prophet than he, "the least one in the Kingdom of heaven [the spirit-begotten Church, joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom] is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11.) When the Kingdom shall come, and Paradise shall be restored, not only the penitent thief will be there, but also the impenitent one, and those Roman soldiers, and those bloodthirsty scribes and Pharisees and priests – all will be in Paradise, – not for any worthiness of their own, but by reason of the merit of Christ's sacrifice, which paid their penalty and insures their having a full opportunity in the Millennial Paradise to come to a knowledge of God and through obedience then to life everlasting, if they will.

How forceful the expression, "I say unto thee *today*," – notwithstanding all this seeming weakness on my part and seeming triumph of my enemies – I tell thee today, that thy prayer shall be answered; and that when I come into my Kingdom, Paradise shall be restored and thou shalt be there to be blessed, as I shall be there to be the King and Priest to give the blessings promised in the divine plan.\* The garden of Eden was the Paradise lost, and on a larger and grander scale it shall in due time be restored by him whose sacrifice purchased it as well as mankind. – Eph. 1:14; Rev. 2:7.

\*The comma should be after and not before "today" in order to permit harmony with the facts here before us, and agreement with other Scriptures. The *original* Scriptures are not punctuated – punctuation being a comparatively modern invention.

It was probably during the early part of the crucifixion, that the four soldiers who had Jesus in charge divided his clothing amongst them; but the seamless robe which he wore, a fine and expensive garment, being desired by them all, for it they cast lots. That robe properly and beautifully represents Christ's righteousness, the wedding garment, which is of great value, and which, during this present age, is granted to the most favored ones

as furnishing the opportunity for their attainment with Christ of joint-heirship in the Kingdom, if they will suffer with him. The lot or privilege to have this garment of Christ's imputed righteousness has fallen chiefly to us of civilized lands, to whom the light of the knowledge of God's gracious plan in Christ has been granted. How thankful we are that the lot or privilege of possessing the favors represented by this robe is ours. Those who appreciate it will show their appreciation in the affairs of their daily lives, seeking to keep their garment unspotted from the world, and that it may be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and that it may be embroidered with all the graces of the Lord's character; that under the grace which it implies they may be accepted in the Beloved One. – Psa. 45:14; Jas. 1:27.

The darkness which came over the scene of the crucifixion at noon, and lasted until three o'clock, after our Lord's death, was evidently a very remarkable one, and made a deep impression. A newly found version of the Gospel, known as "The Gospel by Peter," is represented to say of this darkness, "Many went about with lamps, supposing it was night," and that the darkness lasted until Jesus was taken from the cross, when the earthquake took place. "Then the sun shone out, and it was found to be the ninth hour."

The rending of the Temple veil apparently took place at the same time as this earthquake – the moment of our Lord's death. This was not the trifling matter it might appear from the word "veil," for this veil was an extremely large and extremely heavy curtain, the tearing of which would be no small matter, but would have required superhuman strength. Edersheim describes this curtain as being sixty feet long and thirty **[R2788 : page 108]** feet wide, and five inches thick; made of seventy-two squares joined together. We have seen (*Tabernacle Shadows*) that this veil was symbolical; – that it represented the completion of our Lord's sacrifice by which he opened up for us a new way of life beyond



the vail, through the sacrifice of his flesh. In a figure, therefore, the Lord God, by the rending of the vail, declared that the death of Jesus made possible the way into the Most Holy, even heaven itself, and the fact that the vail was rent from the top to the bottom implied that the work was God's and not one having its start and accomplishment in human design and effort.

**"FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT  
MY SPIRIT."**

Our Lord's words commending his spirit, his life, to the Father, reminds us of the words of Stephen. (Acts 7:59.) Stephen, however, had little to surrender, like us all; his Adamic life, the spirit of life, received from Adam, was already forfeited, and the only life which Stephen, therefore, could commend to God was the *reckoned life* received by faith through Jesus, the Life-giver. In the case of our Lord the matter was different. He had life rights which had never been forfeited through sin, and was committing these to the Father as the ransom price for Adam and his forfeited spirit of life: nevertheless, our Lord was firmly trusting in the Father's promise to raise him up from the dead by his own power, and his trust was in God that the restoration of life which he had promised he was abundantly able and willing to perform, and raise him from the state of death perfect, in the divine nature, with its glory, honor and immortality. Thus our Lord gave up the "ghost" (an old English term) – gave up his spirit of life – he died, and remained dead until the Father raised him from the dead on the third day by his own power.\*

\*See tract, *What is the Soul?* Sample copy free.

The closing scenes of the drama evidently were very awe-inspiring, not only to our Lord's friends, but also to his enemies, and a general hush and feeling of grief spread about. The taunts of his enemies ceased as the darkness came down, and many were willing at the last to admit that the occurrences were remarkable,

and corroborated to some extent the Master's claims, saying, "Truly, this man was the Son of God." – Mark 15:39.

The solemnity of our Lord's dying moments seems to have given greater courage to some of his friends, two of whom, Joseph and Nicodemus, were members of the Sanhedrin, which had condemned him, these two being either absent or voting against the condemnation. They had been too careful of their reputations to avow their interest in Jesus previously, "for fear of the Jews," but now they had the courage to own the Lord as their friend, and to arrange the details of his burial. (John 19:39.) The dilatory acknowledgment of Jesus on the part of these wealthy and influential men reminds us of the peculiar difficulties which hinder all persons of wealth and influence in connection with a proper acknowledgment of the way, the truth and the life. True, there are many rich men today, and many of influence, who, because of popularity of churchianity, take a prominent part in its service; but churchianity must not be confounded with "the body of Christ," the true Church, which, like the Lord, is comparatively without influence, power or wealth, as viewed from a worldly standpoint. When the great drama of this atonement day is completed, the last member of the body of Christ has finished his sacrifice, there will doubtless be many of the rich and **[R2789 : page 108]** influential to come forward then, to honor the humble ones and to garnish their sepulchres. Much more to their credit and to their advantage and assistance in making their own calling and election sure would it be for these to come boldly forward in the time of sacrifice and bind their own sacrifices to the horns of the altar. – Psa. 118:27.

### **THE ATONEMENT.**

Various are the theories advanced in the name of Christianity and the Scriptures, respecting the at-one-ment between God and man; some acknowledging that the work which our Lord "finished" in his death on Calvary is the basis of all human hopes

respecting the life everlasting, and at-one-ment with the heavenly Father; others persistently seeking to deny this, advancing theories to the effect that the at-one-ment between God and man never was broken off, that no ransom sacrifice was necessary to a reconciliation, that no fall took place, and that hence no restitution back to primary conditions is necessary or desirable or was secured by the Lord Jesus' death. Many of these theories which deny the redemptive value of our Lord's death affect to do him greater honor by claiming that his work for humanity was solely that of a great teacher, and in no sense that of a Redeemer or purchaser. These false theories which ignore the ransom are becoming more numerous, more persistent and more seductive day by day to those who are not well rooted and grounded in the divine Word and plan of the ages. It is appropriate, therefore, that we here call special attention to the fact that according to the Scriptures the entire plan of salvation is pivoted upon the great transaction of our Lord's *sacrifice*, which, beginning with his consecration at Jordan, was finished with his expiring breath at Calvary. Whoever believes this and accepts **[R2789 : page 109]** it is justified thereby, obtaining his share in the merit of that sacrifice. Whoever rejects it rejects the only name and the only faith by which he can ever be reconciled to God and attain to life everlasting.

We are not in this suggesting that men are saved by a theory, but we are suggesting that since all who come into harmony with God during this Gospel age must come to him through *faith* in the precious blood of Christ, it follows that he cannot have a reasonable faith without a more or less clear theory; and that any theory which ignores the death of Christ as the basis of justification and reconciliation is an unscriptural one, and hence of no value whatever. Hence all who claim relationship with God upon any other basis of faith, any other theory, are deluding themselves – they are neither reconciled to the Father nor to the Son, nor justified from their sin, nor members of the Church which is the body of Christ.

We do not mean by this to say that only such as have a clear conception of the *philosophy* of the atonement are justified; on the contrary, it is our belief that many of God's dear people during the dark ages, and since, have lived and died without a clear conception of the philosophy of this subject as it is now possible for it to be seen and appreciated. But while failing to see the *philosophy*, all of God's true people have recognized the *fact* that it was the death of Christ which effected our reconciliation to the Father, and upon which all hopes of life eternal are based. See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. V., *The Atonement*.

To those who prefer the inspired words of an Apostle to the uninspired conjectures of their own and other minds, the Golden Text is an all-sufficient answer to all no-ransom theories. One of these, Christian Science, declares: "There is no sin," – hence nothing to deserve punishment; and "There is no death," – hence Christ did not die. But the Apostle affirms, in harmony with both reason and Scripture, that both were facts, and that Christ's death was *for* (as a means to our recovery from) our sins. Let us stand firmly in the inspired "faith once delivered to the saints." – Jude 3.

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