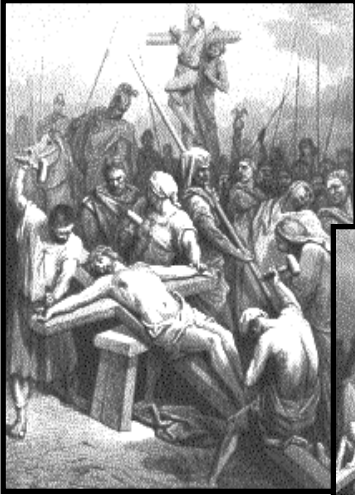


What held Jesus on the cross?



What held Jesus on the cross? It was not the nails, but Jesus' love that kept him there.

What keeps our sacrifice on the altar? Our love? No—this is not enough. It is only a full appreciation of Jesus' love that keeps our sacrifice on the altar.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then ... they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

1 Cor. 5:14,15

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me

to tremble . . . tremble . . . tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me

to tremble . . . tremble . . . tremble.

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me

to tremble . . . tremble . . . tremble.

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

May this be a blessing to you in your Memorial meditations.

Br. Ken Rawson

Jesus' Thoughts on the Cross

The actual time frame of Jesus' cross experience is as follows: Jesus was on the cross longer than three hours, as the Catholics claim. Actually, it was six hours as revealed in Mark 15:25,33,34.

Mark 15:25 *And it was the third hour [9 a.m.], and they crucified him.*

Mark 15:33 *And when the sixth hour [12 noon] was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.*

Mark 15:34 *And at the ninth hour [3 p.m.] Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Matthew 27:46 states "about" the ninth hour. The Greek word for "about" here is Strong's 4012, *peri*. It can mean "all over," "around," or "general period." It is not the same Greek word translated "about" in Acts 13:18,20, which is much more specific. "About" the ninth hour could refer to a period of time before 3:00 p.m., such as 2:30 to 3:00.

Have you ever wondered what Jesus' thoughts were during that tragic time of physical and mental anguish? Well, we *can* know to a large extent the content of Jesus' thinking during the last three hours of his cross ordeal.

From the Gospel accounts, it is evident that at least some of Jesus' thinking during his first three hours involved loving concern for some of those around him. Notwithstanding his personal suffering, Jesus rewarded the faith of one of the thieves with a promise of hope. Luke 23:42, 43:

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise.” (NRVS)

Jesus, knowing that he would die, asked his favorite disciple, John, to take his mother into his home. John 19:25-27:

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

The fact that the first words that Jesus spoke when he broke his silence were a quote from the first verse of Psalm 22, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* and then he quoted the very last phrase of Psalm 22, *“It is finished,”* —all this indicates something.

It provides a clue of Jesus' thoughts during those three hours of silence. It indicates that Jesus' mind meditated on the whole of Psalm 22. In Psalm 22, I believe we have a stirring account written long before it occurred of what actually passed through the mind of Jesus while he was on the cross during the last three hours. The Gospel accounts deal with the external events of the crucifixion. In Psalm 22 we have a record of the very emotions that stirred Jesus' heart. The anguish of pain, the despair of being forsaken, and finally the future joys of hope amidst the

tragedies of the present were the concentrated thinking of Jesus at this time.

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Matthew 27:46 reveals Jesus uttered this cry sometime before 3:00 p.m. “*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”

Before these words were uttered, the nation that hailed him as king just days before had now forsaken him. His disciples who once forsook all and followed him had, at his arrest, now forsaken him and fled as he was “*delivered into the hands of sinful men.*” (Luke 24:7)

The soldiers had cruelly mocked him. Crushed a crown of thorns upon his head; brutally scourged and buffeted him; spat upon him; plucked off his hair; stripped him of his garments; put him to open shame and nailed him to the cross. Yet he suffered all this in silence. He endured the cross, despising the shame. A vulgar crowd taunted him and the thieves which were crucified with him flung the same taunts into his face; yet he opened not his mouth. In response to all that he suffered at the hands of men, not a cry escaped his lips. But when his Father turned from him, he cried, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” Why have you left me to suffer alone?

Jesus probably knew ahead of time that this would happen, but he never, *never* realized how devastating—seemingly impossible, complete cessation of communion with his Father would be. Jesus never could have even imagined how impossible this disfellowship from God

would be until—*until* it actually happened. His was a cry that *reverberated* throughout the entire universe as the angelic hosts watched this terrible drama on earth. We do well to ponder the meaning of this cry.

“*The wages of sin is death.*” On the cross Jesus was receiving the wage due Adam and his descendants. He had no sin of his own, for he was perfect, but he was bearing our sins on the cross. Hebrews 2:9: Jesus “*tasted death for every man.*” “*Dying thou shalt die.*” Death is a process and during the death process, sin requires alienation between God and man. God turned his face away from man. Thus, in Jesus’ taking the sinners place, it was necessary that the Father would withdraw His fellowship from His beloved son.

*At about the ninth hour, sometime before 3:00 p.m., the pain of this disfellowship became so unbearable, that Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Do you know what this means? **For the first time in billions of years, the only begotten son was conscious of his beloved Father’s fellowship being torn away.** Up until this point, Jesus could say, “I know that thou hearest me always.” Is it any wonder he cried in anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

Psalm 22:2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Day and night here is symbolic of continuously. From the time point of verse 1, Jesus is continually crying to God but is not heard. The Hebrew here for “am not silent” is literally, “there is no silence for me.” The thought is that Jesus prayed or cried incessantly in his heart or mind. He never ceased. All this denotes intense and *continuous*

supplication that came from the anguish of his heart. But he was unheard and unanswered. *Thus, verse 2 strongly indicates that the period God turned His face away from Jesus was more than a moment.*

Mark 15:33 showed that from 12 noon there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. Suddenly, every voice was hushed. A feeling of horror gripped their hearts, as every light in creation seemed to be snuffed out and intense darkness covered the earth. *This three hour darkness was symbolic of God putting a barrier of fellowship between His face and Jesus.*

Psalm 22 was Jesus' continual cry, not audibly, but in his heart. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" This is a question that none could answer, but—but Jesus answered his own question and his answer is found in verse 3.

*Psalm 22:3 But Thou art holy, O Thou
that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

The answer was "**But Thou art holy**"—a majestic reason. Jesus complained of anguish in the experience, yes, but *not* of the *injustice* of it. Instead, he acknowledged God's righteousness. "*Thou art holy*" in exacting all of this suffering. **Justice** requires, **wisdom** requires, **love** requires that I taste the dregs of taking the sinners place—even being forsaken by my God. Indeed, "*Thou art holy*" and *Your holiness, Your attributes* require that *You forsake me.*

Have you ever experienced this situation *where intellectually you understand what is happening? You see the whole picture, but it doesn't stop the anguish in your heart?* We can be enduring a real tragedy—a "why me" tragedy. Intellectually we understand that a member of the world's sympathetic High Priest will have to endure this

type of experience, but *why me Lord?* only when we can say, *Yes me, Lord*, will the heart's anguish be minimized.

His attitude of submission was not just grin and bear it. No matter how severe the requirements of the Father, he could only think of his Father as worthy of *all the praises of Israel*, natural and spiritual. What a loving, obedient, submissive son. No matter how much suffering the Father required, Jesus could only think of his Father as worthy of the praises of all His people. In fact, he speaks of God as being *enthroned in the praises of Israel*.

The lesson for us. What do you think of when you suffer? Oh, it is the Father's will, therefore, I will grin and bear it. No. The reason we are suffering is *God is holy*. His holy attributes require you to suffer. His **love** for you as a new creature requires that you be made perfect through the experience you are suffering so that His deep love, compassion, and understanding for mankind might be expressed through you in the Kingdom.

His **wisdom** knows what trials you need and can bare. And His **justice** requires that you be tried until you crystallize perfection of heart intention to qualify for the divine nature. And if we are willingly submissive, His **power** will sustain us. Therefore, in our greatest trial, what should we think of? We should think of our Father as worthy of the praises of all his people. That is our challenge. If we accept the challenge and our sympathetic high priest who set this example will help us attain it.

*Psalm 22:4-5 Our fathers trusted in thee:
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. [5]
They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they
trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*

Jesus is saying the fathers, that is the Ancient Worthies, called on You and You were there to help. *Now why don't You help me?*

Psalm 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

Have you ever felt like a worm when you were doing what you believed to be right but everyone was opposed to your stand? Also, all of us, at times, are ashamed of our actions. We feel as lowly as a worm. *"I am a worm."* There are several Hebrew words for worm, but Jesus chose a specific type of worm, the "tola." We will come back to the meaning of that word.

Jesus was thinking, here I am; everybody is taunting me. I am blasphemer, a scoundrel, a worm. They are making me feel like a worm. How low can I feel? How low can I get? Even my Heavenly Father, with whom I dwelt and worked for eons and eons in the past, now even my beloved Father has forsaken me. Yes, *I feel emotionally like a lowly worm. But intellectually I know, I know I am a very special worm, the "tola" worm.*

The Hebrew word for worm here is "tola." "Tola" is a special worm from which the people of the Middle East derived a valuable crimson dye. The dye was formed from its blood, released when the worm was *crushed*. The scarlet dye for the linen of the Tabernacle came from the blood of the "tola." And the word scarlet is mentioned many times in connection with the Tabernacle, always referring to the scarlet dye that came from the crushed "tola" worm.

This is powerful! When Jesus thought of himself as the "tola," he thought of himself as the worm who was being

crushed that scarlet blood, the ransom price, might be provided.

Psalm 22:7-8 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, [8] He trusted on the LCRD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

This refers to the crowds around the cross, common people who taunted Jesus. It was fulfilled in Matthew 27:30,40:

“And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.” “And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Psalm 22:9-11 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. [10] I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly. [11] Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

You were with me all of my life since I was a baby. *Why aren’t You with me now?*

Psalm 22:12-13 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. [13] They gaped upon me

with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

The strong bulls of Bashan were remarkable for their size, strength and fierceness. They represented the priests and religious rulers who were fierce, savage and violent in their opposition to Jesus. This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:41-43:

“Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”

In verse 13 “a ravening and a roaring lion” refers to Satan. The religious rulers and priests were the tools of the devil in opposing Jesus.

Psalm 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

On the cross the position of the body was greatly distorted. The bones were out of joint, which caused torturous pain and Jesus’ heart melted. He died of a broken heart.

Psalm 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

“My tongue cleaveth to my jaws”—so intense was Jesus’ thirst that his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

Psalm 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

“Dogs have compassed me” as a gang of evil doers. In oriental cities, dogs would run through the streets and often attack people. The assembly of the wicked in verse 12 was a reference of the crowds jeering at Jesus in distinction to the bulls, the fierce religious leaders.

They pierced his hands and feet. The Hebrew word “pierced” means bore through. There is no mention of nails in the New Testament. (See Endnotes.)

Psalm 22:17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

This again refers to the distortion of Jesus’ bones due to his awkward position on the cross. He was probably naked and that is why they stared at him.

Psalm 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:35:

“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.”

Psalm 22:19-21 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. [20] Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. [21] Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

The animal mentioned is not really a unicorn, for unicorns do not exist. This is a reference to a type of wild ox with long pointed horns that were so symmetrical that from the side profile they looked like one horn. Other nations sometimes bound criminals to the horns of this wild ox for execution.

As Jesus thought about this picture, he realized he was being crucified as a criminal, a criminal between two thieves. Seemingly, Jesus was not just hanging on a stationary cross, but rather like a criminal on the horns of a wild ox, he was being symbolically dashed to pieces against the ground—the groundswell of the hate mongers, masses, soldiers, thieves, priests and religious leaders who were *mercilessly* tearing him to pieces verbally.

As horrific as the symbolism of a criminal being dashed to pieces on the horns of a wild ox, as treacherous as that was, there is a thrilling point on verse 21. He was “*heard*” (KJV) “*from the horns of the unicorn.*” Other translations say he was “*answered*” or “*rescued*” “*from the horns of the unicorn*” or wild ox. **Verse 21 becomes the turning point in Psalm 22. Jesus’ continual prayer for help from the Father is finally heard.**

At some point during the 3½ hours of darkness, Jesus had the assurance that the Father heard him “*from the horns of the unicorn,*” emblematic of his trying experience on the cross as a criminal. This means that though the darkness continued to his death, yet it was not an utter forsaking. *Jesus’ prayer was heard. He knew his sacrifice was acceptable.* He would be raised from the dead.

There are two views on the period of the Father’s disfellowship. First, the disfellowship continued for the balance of the last three hours. Second, the Father’s fellowship returned before the end of the last three hours. If the Father’s fellowship returned, then verses 19 and 21 denote the point of Jesus’ thinking that the Father’s fellowship had returned. “*He was heard from the horns of the unicorn.*”

I believe, as the darkness lasted for three hours, so the Father’s disfellowship continued to the end of the three hours. How, then, did He give strength and help to our Savior? I personally believe at some point as Jesus was meditating on verse 21, he was “*heard from the horns of the unicorn,*” ***a surge of joy filled his heart.*** Why, the very reason the Father centuries before caused Psalm 22 to be written was for this very purpose. *Although the Father’s face was turned away, Psalm 22 was the source of the Savior’s strength, the inspiration of his heart, the basis of his faith that he had been faithful.*

So that as Jesus was about to die *with head raised high*, he could confidently say, “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*” I commit my hope of living again, and I commit the ransom price into your hands. This is a further thought Br. Russell gives in the 1916 Foreword of Volume 6. **Jesus now realized from verse 19 and 21 that this Psalm was a preordained answer to his prayer for the Father’s help, even though the Father could not fellowship with him.**

Therefore, starting with verse 22 his thoughts were transformed to notes of triumph, praise, joy, assurance and hope.

Psalm 22:22-24 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. [23] Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. [24] For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

From the depths, Jesus' thoughts were now raised to a level of hope and joy, the reconciliation of the Church and their common-union with Jesus, while they still tabernacled in the flesh. Why in verse 21 did you want to be delivered from the lion's mouth and heard by the Father during your crucifixion? In answer, Jesus says, I wanted the strength to be faithful unto death so that, verse 22, "*I will declare thy name [that is, the Father's name] unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation [the Church] will I praise thee [Jehovah].*"

Verse 23 reveals that the congregation is composed of both those who are of the "*seed of Jacob*"—Jews who came into Christ, and the "*seed of Israel*"—Gentiles who became spiritual Israel. These two classes compose the congregation or Church.

In the depths of his sorrow and agony, Jesus thought of his brethren. The word "*name*" is symbolic of character. Jesus was saying, I want to be faithful so

that I can reveal my Father's name or character to my brethren, the Church. I want my brethren to become intimately acquainted with my Father as I am.

“Affliction of the Afflicted”

Why should the Church, the seed of Abraham in verse 23, spiritual Israel, fear, pray, and glorify the Father? Verse 24, because the Father does not despise nor abhor the “*affliction of the afflicted.*” Actually, God cherishes the righteous afflictions of *The Christ*. Think of this phrase: When in affliction, Jesus was thinking, I have learned a wonderful lesson from my cross experience that I want to share with my brethren when I am resurrected and become their High Priest. You have been invited to share in my afflictions to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

On the cross I was forsaken by all my friends and scoffed at by the crowd, but God did not despise me. He did not despise my afflictions—“*the affliction of the afflicted.*” Now your sharing my afflictions will mean at times that others will scoff at you. *Friends, yes friends, even brethren and family will forsake you.* But take heart, you are not despised of God. Yea, blessed in the sight of the Lord, is the sacrificial death of his saints.

Many of you are going through tragedies...some have secret tragedies that nobody knows about. But God's face will not be really hid from you like it was from me for awhile. *But even here He **heard** me.* When you cry unto Him in your afflictions, He will also hear you. **This message is a part of Jesus' High Priest ministry to us as he reveals to us his word in the New Testament writings and his providences in our lives. Jesus assures God will not forsake us.**

Psalm 22:25-29 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. [26] The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live forever. [27] All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. [28] For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations. [28] All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

Jesus' thoughts are raised to another level of the joy of hope. Have you ever noticed the interesting contrast between verses 22 and 25? Verse 22 says, "I will declare thy name in the midst of the **congregation**"—the Church in the flesh during their development as new creatures. Verse 25: "My praise shall be of thee in the **great congregation.**" The "great congregation" is the glorified Church, united with Christ, blessing the world of mankind.

Verse 25 speaks of Jesus in the future tense: "I will pay my vows before them [those of mankind] that fear him [God]." Remember in the Tabernacle account of Leviticus 9, the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering show three different aspects of the same sacrifice. The peace offering represents the vows of a covenant that the High

Priest makes that are based upon the sin offering. *These are vows that are fulfilled during the period of sacrifice and also in the Kingdom.*

In the Kingdom Jesus will pay his vows before the world. His vows, that is, his agreement with God under the New Covenant arrangement he will bring the world into harmony with God. This is the thought of Isaiah 49:8 which Paul also extends to the Church. *“I will give thee for a covenant of the people.”* This is what is meant when Br. Russell said that the New Covenant is first made with the Mediator, not directly with the world, so that the Mediator until the end of the Millennium will dispense the blessings of the New Covenant to the world. (R4640.)

Verse 27 states that *“all the ends of the earth shall remember [bear this in mind].”* This verb is not used in the sense of recalling something previously known, but rather to retain in mind and this knowledge of God’s plan will inspire the world to return to the Lord in the Kingdom.

As Jesus endured the agony of the cross for those three hours of silence, what comfort he received from meditating upon his future kingdom work as described in verses 25-29. Jesus was thinking, if this is what hanging on the cross would accomplish, it was well worth the suffering.

In time of trial we also should meditate upon our great hope of blessing the world in the kingdom. We must follow Jesus’ example in depths of trial or despair. *We must have hope and vividly think of the actual work we will do in the Kingdom as a result of the lessons we are learning in our trials. **This makes our hope a living hope.***

Psalm 22:30-31 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. [31] They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

Now Jesus was carried to a third level of joy. Jesus' thoughts again turned to his brethren, the glorified Church, as shown in verses 30 and 31. Now he saw his brethren sharing his hour of triumph in the Kingdom. Yes, he will drink the cup anew with us in the Kingdom. What a cup of joy it will be to share in Christ's Kingdom project of blessing all the world of mankind. This joy is spoken of as Christ dividing the spoil with the glorified church, the "strong." Isaiah 53:12:

". . . he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Verse 30 speaks of the "seed" that shall serve him. Some translations give the word prosperity, race or men shall serve him. "Seed" is correct because it is the same Hebrew word translated seed in the Abrahamic promise. Then the seed of Abraham, the Church, will serve the Lord in the Kingdom by declaring the Lord and his truth to the generation of mankind in the Kingdom and this is the thought of many translations.

"It is finished."

Now we come to the last phrase in Psalm 22: "*He hath done.*" The word "*this*" is in italics, meaning it is supplied.

Moments before Jesus died on the cross, he shouted in triumph, “*It is finished,*” and these are almost the very words with which Psalm 22 concludes—“*He hath done.*” Or as the Hebrew might well be rendered, “*He hath finished.*” Therefore, on the cross Jesus rightly took these words and said, “*It is finished.*”

“*It is finished*”—to Jesus these were words of victory. But what does they mean to us?

*Could my tears forever flow,
 Could my zeal no languor know,
 These for sin could not atone;
 Thou hast saved and thou alone.
 In my hand no price I bring;
 Simply to thy cross I cling.*

O what joy! What peace to know that because of Jesus’ death the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us if we walk after the spirit. Romans 8:4

At last the closing moments have come. There had been the agony in Gethsemane, followed by the appearing of ridicule and rebuke before Caiaphas, before Pilate, before Herod and back again before Pilate. There had been the scourging, the mocking by the brutal soldiers, the treacherous journey to Calvary carrying the cross. The nailing of his hands and feet to the cross. There had been the revilings of the priests, the crowd, the two thieves crucified with him. There had been the awful darkness that hid his Father’s face, which wrought from Jesus the bitter cry, “*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*” There had been the parched lips that drew from him the exclamation, “*I thirst.*”

But now the sufferings were ended. The Father had bruised him. Man and devil had done their worst. The cup had been drained. The awful storm had spent itself. The darkness had ended. The prophecies of Jesus' sufferings were all fulfilled. The cross had been endured. The demands of Divine justice had been met.

With a cry of triumph, a cry that reverberated throughout the whole universe, our Savior exclaimed, "It is finished!" The ransom price was provided.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Endnotes

“They pierced my hands and my feet.”

Jewish commentators insist that word “pierced” (Psalm 22:16) in Christian Bibles is a wrong translation of the Hebrew word “בִּאֵרִי” which means “like a lion.” Of course they want to negate the fact the Jesus died on a cross.

Christian Old Testament scholars concede that most of the Hebrew texts available today read “lion,” rather than “pierced.” In some of these manuscripts “pierced” is a marginal note. On the other hand, there are Hebrew texts that read “pierced,” with “lion” in the margin. The same variance is reflected in English translations, except that the vast majority of the English versions retain “pierced” in the text, with “lion” relegated to the footnote in some instances. (See ASV, RSV, NIV, ESV.)

The two words are strikingly similar in appearance in the original Hebrew text. The only difference between the word translated “like a lion,” and the one rendered “they pierced” is in the length of the upright vowel stroke on the latter word. The two might easily be confused.

(בִּאֵרִי “pierced” and בִּאֵרוֹ “like a lion”.)

Professor Baigent of the West London Institute of Higher Education suggests that the standard Massorite Hebrew text, reflecting “like a lion,” “seems to be corrupt.” Numerous other scholars concur. In addition, we must note that in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which pre-date the common

Hebrew texts by a thousand years, the term clearly is “pierced,” not “lion” (VanderKam / Flint, 124).

Tertullian (A.D. 160-220), one of the so called post-apostolic “church fathers,” who had access to evidence older than we possess today, quoted from Psalm 22 in one of his five books, *Against Marcion*. In Book III, which is designed to argue the Messianic identity of Jesus based on Old Testament prophecy, Tertullian says that the Lord was “prophetically declaring his glory” when he said, “They pierced my hands and my feet” (Sect. XIX).

The Dead Sea Scrolls and Tertullian’s quote conclusively prove the phrase “they pierced my hands and feet” is valid in verse 16.