

Behold the Lamb of God

by Fritz von Kietzel

These meditations on the Passion of our Lord were so treasured by German emigrants that there were several attempts to translate them into English.

This intensely devotional revised paperback edition is more than a step by step account of those fateful hours at the center of human history.

As you meditate on these pages with Bible in hand, your heart will be stirred to worship and adoration.

Because of the careful references to Scripture, this book is ideal for Bible study, and has been a treasured Lenten or Easter season gift.

Von Kietzel's precise writing will help you gain a greater awareness of the deep significance of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus.

His sequel, *By Many Infallible Proofs* follows up with meditations on the resurrection and ascension.

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Fritz von Kietzel

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Meditations on the Passion of the Lord



by Fritz von Kietzel

Behold the Lamb of God

Meditations on the Sufferings of the Lord

thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer...
Luke 24:46

by FRITZ VON KIETZELL

Translated from the German
Original Title-**DER ERFÜLLTE AUSGANG**

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THE BIBLE STUDY SERIES

The open Bible above the author's name on the cover of this book symbolizes our heart's desire in publishing this Bible Study Series book. The objective of this series is to provide sound Bible teaching in an inexpensive form for young people, home or dorm Bible study groups, Sunday Schools, camps, outreach and prison ministries both at home and in other English-speaking countries.

As you read, you will notice that Scripture verses have been noted at the outside of the page. These are texts you will want to read and study to understand the author's point. They are the changeless word of God. No man's thoughts or opinions are more important than understanding God's mind in His message to us, the Bible.

Sometimes, a Scripture passage is listed at the beginning of a section of text. You will want to stop and read this passage first, before going on in this book any farther. Always remember that every Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correcting wrong ideas,^a or for tearing down the strongholds of men's own thoughts.^b

a. 2 Tim. 3:16

b. 2 Cor. 10:4-5

The articles chosen for this series are sometimes extracted from larger works, but were felt to be important subjects that need to be reprinted.

Sometimes punctuation and even words or phrases have been modified or simplified for easy reading. Since these authors tried to simply open up God's changeless Word to their readers, their insights and explanations are as fresh today as when they were penned years ago. We believe you will find them both easy to read and understand.

Because of the variation in modern translations, many people may not recognize an unfamiliar passage from a different version. Often, the translator will quote from either the New King James Version of the Bible (NKJV), or from the J.N. Darby Translation (JND). Where this is necessary because a specific theological term is used, we try to explain those terms nearby. At other times, another translation may be used.

We trust you will enjoy tracing out the old paths that others have followed before you. "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."^a

a. Jer. 6:16

Foreword to the Second English Edition

These concise meditations on the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord first appeared more than 70 years ago in German. Its original title, *The Accomplished Departure*, was taken from Luke 9:31. There we read that on the Mount of Transfiguration, the “holy mountain” where God the Father acclaimed Him as “My beloved Son,” Moses and Elijah “appeared in glory” and spoke with Him “of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.”

A preliminary English version of this book was published serially during the 1960’s in *Grace and Truth* magazine under the title *Behold the Man*. For the Scripture references in his book the author used the German translation by J. N. Darby. For this edition we are generally using the New King James Version except where, in accord with the author’s desire for extreme accuracy, we use the New Translation by J. N. Darby. The title has also been changed from *Behold the Man*, an expression used by Pilate in derision and (the author suggests) in sympathy, to *Behold the Lamb of God* – the admiring expression of that honored servant of God, John the Baptist, which brings before us the thought of His sufferings and death, the theme of this book.

We believe you will find this book fascinating, soul stirring, yet painstakingly precise in tracing this wonderful,

most moving story of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It ties together in a touchingly devotional way the historical account in the Gospels with the hundreds of prophetic passages and other Scriptures that bear on it. We have added subheadings. The boldfaced references at the beginning of chapters or subheadings indicate the verses to be considered in that section.

We can now look back adoringly upon the Lord's sufferings and death. As we do so, our affections are drawn out to Him whom we own as Savior and Lord. To this end we highly recommend these studies to young and old alike for personal meditation. We also recommend them as a basis for Bible study in young people's meetings and other group discussions. May our occupation prove profitable to us, stimulating our worship and devotion to the Lord Jesus!

Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

Editor
2002

Chapter 6

THE BETRAYER'S END

Remorse, Not Repentance – *Matthew 27:3-10*

“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful...” He had obviously not reckoned on such an end, for the Lord had repeatedly evaded His enemies’ snares. For Judas, it had merely seemed to be an appropriate occasion to satisfy his greed for money. Once this man put his feet into the ways of sin, he gave himself over to Satan. Then when he became aware of the results, which by far exceeded his expectations, he had a terrible awakening. Thus, Judas’ repentance came too late and did not go deep enough. Such is always the case when the heart is more concerned about the results than about the horror of what has been done.

a. Mt.27:4

“I have sinned...”^a How often the mouth speaks these words when there is no true upright repentance, no change of heart before God! In fact, we find these words at least seven times in Scripture, but only twice does God acknowledge them by responding with forgiveness.* Then do not say “I have sinned” lightly! Rather, let the true fear of God fill your heart. Throughout his entire life Judas had lacked true godly fear, and it was still missing after this

* Pharaoh (Ex.9:27;10:16), Balaam (Num.22:34), Achan (Josh.7:20), Saul (1 Sam.15:24; 26:21), David (2 Sam.2:13; 24:10 ff.; cf. also 1 Chron.21:8,17; Ps.41:4; 51:4), the prodigal son (Lk.15:18), and Judas (Mt.27:4).

miserable deed, even though he made a kind of confession. “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” Was this all? Was this the character of his deed? Could not the One whom he had so shamefully betrayed expect to hear something more than that from his mouth?

It is not “godly sorrow”^a that we find here, as with Peter; “the sorrow of the world produces death.” Satan celebrated a twofold victory here. He had now attained what he had wanted with regard to the Lord, and the instrument he had used had been driven out into the night and despair. Judas “departed, and went and hanged himself.”^b Peter describes the dreadful judgment which fell upon Judas (and his house) as he points to David’s prophetic words.^c

a. 2 Cor.7:10

b. Mt.27:5

*c. Acts 1:16;
Ps.109:6-20*

The Field of Blood

Meanwhile, the “wages of iniquity,” the money which Judas had thrown down in the temple,^d lay at the feet of the high priest and elders. Neither this unhappy one’s remorse nor his witness as to the Lord’s innocence touched their hearts. They had no mercy. “What is that to us? You see to it!” This is what they said; yet they still had misgivings about putting the blood money (literally, the price for the blood) into the temple treasury.^e Such is man! Far from judging his guilt in the divine light, even though he is often given opportunity to do so, he flatters himself by observing an outward religion, but religion without Christ is worthless. And if we look up the passage in the Mosaic law upon which they supported their action,^f how humiliating to the Lord was the way they acted.

d. Mt.27:3-5

e. Mt.27:6

f. Dt.23:18

a. *Mt.27:7-8*

b. *Acts 1:19*

“And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.”^a Thus, in the “Field of Blood” they erected a monument to their own shame before “all those dwelling in Jerusalem.”^b At the same time this field, contrary to all men’s false claims, is the only thing connected with our Lord’s sacrificial death remaining upon this earth “to this day.”

c. *Isa.30:8-14;*
Jer.19:10-13

As this people had caused “the Holy One of Israel to cease from before” them, and as they had brought His blood upon themselves, had they not turned this land, which God had promised them, into an “Aceldama,” a Field of Blood?^c Would they not later be scattered to every wind? Yes, they were broken as “the breaking of a potter’s vessel, that is broken in pieces unsparingly; and in the pieces of it there shall not be found a shard.”

This surely is what the potter’s field* reminds us of. Did the Gentiles not inhabit this land later? Did it not finally become a “burying-ground for strangers”? Yes, the earth itself has become a “Field of Blood,” a “potter’s field.” From it the blood of the Son of God cries out, and the believer sees that everything which God gave, which was good, is now lying in ruins in it. What does the world still have to offer the one who sojourns here as a stranger and pilgrim? It is destined to serve only as the “burying-ground” for this mortal body, should the Lord not come before he dies. The Lord, too, found nothing here but the

* That is, a worthless field where the potter throws his faulty, broken vessels.

cross and a grave. Above all, these words give us a true picture of this scene where we live only for a short time.

“Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field.’”^{*a} Did not this saying come to their minds now? “Throw it to the potter: that princely price they set on Me.”^b Only Matthew mentions this price;^c his commission it was to testify to the people of Israel that they had considered their Messiah equal in value to a dead slave!^d When God again deals with Israel the remnant will confess, He was “despised, and we did not esteem Him.”^e

a. Mt.27:9-10

b. Zech.11:12-13

c. Mt.26:15

d. Ex.21:32

e. Isa.53:3

How different were His thoughts who, “being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation.”^f He sold all He had for that one pearl of great price.^g “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”^h

f. Phil.2:6-7

g. Mt.13:46

h. Ti.2:14

* This word of Jeremiah has not been delivered to us. One explanation is that, in their estimation, Jeremiah ranked very highly among the prophets, and therefore in quoting prophecy the Jews often said, “Jeremiah or another of the prophets,” or simply, “Jeremiah.” (cf. Mt. 16:14).

Chapter 9

BARABBAS OR JESUS

**Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15;
Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40**

Whom Shall I Release to You?

As we consider the great struggle between darkness and light, we are again confronted by the truth of the words at the beginning of John's Gospel: "That was the true light which, coming into the world, gives light to [i.e., sheds its light upon] every man."^a Whether it was Judas or another disciple, whether the high priest together with the elders and scribes or the entire Sanhedrin, whether Pilate or Herod, or whether it even concerned all the people, the fact ever remained: the closer each came to the rays of that "true light," the more his real condition of heart was made manifest.

a. Jn.1:9

As the governor came out of the inner courtyard of the Praetorium, he heard the noise of an angry mob. "Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them," for "at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested."^b Only two could possibly come into question here, the Lord and Barabbas – a prisoner who had been brought to ruin because he had not been able to keep this foreign ruler's laws. Which of the two the people would favor was by no means clear. But Pilate saw in this

b. Mk.15:6-8

a. *Lk.23:17* custom a way out of his predicament.^a Once more he could avoid making a decision.

“Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, ‘You have brought this Man to me as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod...and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.’”^b He

b. *Lk.23:13-15*

c. *Lk.23:4*

was convinced, as he had said before,^c that the Lord was innocent. Herod too, by the way in which he had sent the Lord back to Pilate, had testified – we say it in his own language – to the insignificance and harmlessness of this alleged competitor. Would he not be making himself and his office as Roman judge ridiculous by sentencing such a Man? “I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.”^d

d. *Lk.23:16*

Would not the people now, as ever before, be split into two parties: “for” and “against”? Would not the governor’s influence, or the spiritual deliberations, or political wisdom manage to give the upper hand to the more moderate element of the people? Pilate placed his hopes on the One standing before him having a large following, but the high priests were envious of such a following. “For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.”^e So he puts the responsibility on their shoulders. “Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”^f “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”^g Never before had there been a plebiscite like this, nor will there ever be another like it. This was a turning point in the history of mankind.

e. *Mt.27:18*

f. *Jn.18:39*

g. *Mt.27:17*

Reasons for Releasing Jesus

Let us assume that someone is reading this gripping story for the first time and has never heard anything of the “departure” which the Lord of Glory, the Man from Heaven, accomplished in Jerusalem. With breathless tension he’ll read each successive verse. He’ll come to the high priests’ and elders’ decision. He can hardly doubt that these leaders had already indicated their plans, and that they would also pursue these plans to the end. Pilate and Herod’s roles, when put to the test and acting against their better judgment and against the simplest commandments of humanity, would awaken only passing interest in him. But these people, the Lord’s people, how will they decide? How will they make the great choice put before them? The choice: Barabbas or Jesus.

Humanly speaking, can there be much doubt? Must not the people favor the rejected Nazarene? From the beginning of His ministry and throughout His entire walk He had been followed by great multitudes; yes, by multitudes from all parts of the land.^a They pressed upon Him, “so that they trampled one another”;^b they thronged Him; they came and went so that He and His disciples “could not so much as eat bread.” Often He could not even retire to a place of quietness, because all sought Him.^c How they desired Him!

With what love He met all their needs! How often we read of Him that “He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”^d He taught them, fed them, healed all their

- a. *Mt.4:25;*
Mt.8:1;
Mt.19:2; etc.
- b. *Lk.12:1*

- c. *Mk.1:37,45;*
Mk.2:2;
Mk.3:9-10,20;
Mk.5:24,31;
Mk.6:31,54;
etc.

- d. *Mt.9:36;*
Mt.15:32; etc.

sick and weak. Did none of this find an echo in their hearts? It had! We read, “And the common people heard Him gladly”;^a “all bore witness to Him;”^b “the people were astonished at his teaching”; they “glorified God” because of His wondrous works, saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!”^c Yes, they acknowledged, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” – and they wanted to make Him King.^d

a. *Mk.12:37*
b. *Lk.2:22*

c. *Mt.7:28-29;*
Mt.9:8,33;
Mt.15:30-31

d. *Jn.6:14-15*

e. *Mk.10:46;*
Lk.19:3

f. *Mt.21:9;*
Jn.12:12

g. *Mk.12:12;*
Mk.14:2;
Lk.22:2

h. *Jn.12:19*

What a mighty procession had been going through Jericho, to Jerusalem, and to the feast!^e What an entrance into the city! “Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”^f “All the city was moved” and came to Him. Under such circumstances we can well understand that the high priests “feared the multitude.”^g They confessed and “said among themselves, ‘You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him.’”^h

The Message From Pilate’s Wife

When Pilate throws out that question to the multitude, there is a moment of tension, of indecision and expectancy. He had not been wrong in hoping that there would be a sudden change in this excited mob’s reaction. But before the people respond – God allows this to happen – as he is sitting on the judgment seat prepared to announce his decision, he is distracted by a message from his wife. The message says, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of

Chapter 10

BEHOLD THE MAN

Matthew 27:26-30; Mark 15:15-19; John 19:1-6

Scourging

The chains were removed from the hands of Barabbas, the murderer and rebel, but at the same time the One who had been declared righteous by the highest judge of the land was delivered to the rough fists of His tormentors. “So then Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him.”^a The inspired writer here shrinks from reporting more than the bare fact of this inhumane disgraceful incident to us. But listen to the prophecy of His suffering! “The plowers plowed on My back; they made their furrows long.”^{*b} In these words the Lord specifically mentions His scourging,^c and this is one more evidence for us, if we need such, that this was a special step in His humiliation and suffering.

a. Jn.19:1

b. Ps.129:3

c. Lk.18:33

But this was not enough. Outside at the place of judgment the Lord had been made a spectacle to the lowest instincts of His people. Now, within its courts fresh shame and abuse from the Roman soldiers awaited Him. “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, and gathered the whole garrison around Him.”^d What a miserable creature man is! He finds himself constantly at war against his fellow man, and often it seems as though it

d. Mt.27:27

* On the straps of the scourge were pieces of lead or hooks. Often scourging resulted in unconsciousness and death. It was used together with crucifixion only for very severe crimes.

is his greatest wish to hurt someone else, as if he only wants to amuse himself at the cost of another person's feelings. "Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood...they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace."^a

a. *Isa.59:6-8*

The Son of God also experienced such treatment as He trod human pathways, for men did not know how to distinguish Him from one of their own kind, and they would fall upon their own in this wanton, merciless manner. "And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him."^b To this they added a crown of thorns and a reed for a scepter. Then they bowed their knees insincerely and mocked Him with the words, "Hail, King of the Jews!" "Blows on the face" were not lacking either.^c Previously the high priests and their servants had mistreated the Lord; now Pilate's soldiers were the guilty ones. Both of these parties – the high priests and the soldiers alike – were not even aware that it was base and cowardly to act in this way toward One who was not only defenseless, but also who voluntarily renounced all resistance.

b. *Mt.27:28-29*

c. *Jn.19:3*

Is it possible that He did not raise a hand in self-defense or speak one word? Was not now the right time to call those "more than twelve legions of angels" against this crowd? He had given proof in the Garden of Gethsemane that one word from His mouth was sufficient to hurl the superior strength of His enemies to the ground, but He did not avail Himself of this power. "He endured," as another has said, "everything without relief, rather than to fail in obedience

to His Father.” He “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.”^a His patience had its perfect work.^b

a. *Phil.2:8*
b. *Jas.1:4*

As He was the Author of faith, so He was the Finisher, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.”^c Nothing less than the accursed tree was His goal, but even on the way to the cross the Lord went from one humiliation to another with respect to both His physical sufferings and the torments of His soul. He did this for us, and we feel deeply our inability to enter into His experiences and feelings there.

c. *Heb.12:2*

Behold the Man!

We have seen that the Roman governor was convinced of his prisoner’s innocence but was without strength to act on that conviction. Even he could not help but be deeply impressed by the sight of the Lord, unbent by bodily suffering and majestic in His humiliation. Yes, Pilate had watched all of these developments; he had caused them to take place. Now, however, he turned and stepped out of the building. Was there yet another avenue of escape open to him? Could he succeed in satisfying the people after all? “Pilate then went out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.’ Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.”^d

d. *Jn.19:4-5*

“I am bringing Him out to you’...Then Jesus came out...” Do we understand the sublime language of these inspired words? In a similar position, would anyone of us have been able to do this and to do it voluntarily? Would

not such chastisement rather have left us broken? Would we not have struggled with all the rest of our declining strength had we had to appear before the eyes of this multitude in such a condition so that everyone might be able to deride and mock us? Not so the Lord. He came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

Thus Pilate presented Him to the people as he cried,
a. Jn.19:5 “BEHOLD THE MAN!”^a

The story of the Lord’s passion is truly rich with moments that grip the heart, but this is one of the most moving. Behold the Man! Have we each ever stood still before this momentous scene and beheld this One?

b. Heb.10:4 It was a Man who stood there, but He was not one such as you and I. Streams of sacrificial blood of thousands of animals had soaked into the earth ever since sin had brought it under the curse, but “types and shadows” had not set aside the curse. They had not in the least changed man’s condition as fallen away from God, and they could not take away one sin. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”^b An upright person felt this. The sacrifices only reminded him of what he had done and of what he was before God. No way led back to a paradise which had vanished from the earth and was guarded by “a flashing sword.”^c No bridge spanned the deep gulf between God and man. There was no possibility of again restoring the fellowship which had been broken. In other words, man’s condition was hopeless. Help could only come from outside himself.

c. Gen.3:24

In response to this we find the words, “Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God.”^a He came to finish the perfect eternal work of redemption. “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren,”^b and to be a partaker of flesh and blood.^c He “emptied Himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking His place in the likeness of men”;^d yes, “in likeness of flesh of sin.”^e

a. Heb.10:7

b. Heb.2:17

c. Heb.2:14

d. Phil.2:7

e. Rom.8:3

Such was Thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down;
With us of flesh and blood partake,
And make our woes Thine own.

He, the Son of God, had humbled Himself by coming down to earth, but when He humbled Himself unto death it was a totally different kind of humiliation to which He descended. How did those for whose salvation He had come receive him? We know, for we have retraced His path in some detail to this point where He pours out His inmost thoughts before God in those touching words, “You know My reproach, My shame, and My dishonor; My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness.”^f

f. Ps.69:19-20

Future Glory

Behold the Man! Of this Man it was written what He would do to all of the world’s people. “You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”^g What did He hold in His hands here? He held a slender, shaking reed which was not even fit to lean on,^h

g. Ps.2:9

h. Ezek.29:6-7

a. *Ps.93:1*

b. *Ps.45:3*

c. *Rev.19:16*

but which His enemies now used to beat Him on the head. When at the end of the Tribulation He will descend to this earth the second time, He will be clothed with “majesty” and “strength,”^a with “glory” and “majesty,”^b and on His “robe, and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”^c

d. *Rev.19:12*

e. *Ps.21:3*

f. *Gen.3:18*

g. *Gal.3:13*

h. *Rev.19:15*

i. *Rev.1:16*

j. *Isa.52:14*

k. *Isa.53:3*

But what were His garments now? A soldier’s soiled coat in mockery represented the purple,* but the King of Israel’s true glory was hidden by unspeakable suffering. Soon when the world sees Him again, there will be “many crowns,”^d yes, “a crown of pure gold upon his head.”^e Here, however, His crown was made of that substance which was the visible evidence that the curse had come on the earth.^f We are reminded of the words, “Christ...having become a curse for us...”^g Soon “a sharp two-edged sword” will go out of His mouth;^h here He remained silent. His countenance will be “like the sun shining in its strength,”ⁱ but here His appearance must have called forth feelings of shame and horror in anyone who still had feelings. “His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”^j Yes, behold the Man! “He is despised and rejected by men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”^k

* In Matthew 27:28 we read, literally translated, of a soldier’s scarlet coat; in Mark and John it is called “purple.” Scarlet is the color of blood and purple that of royal dignity.

O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

What was the response when Pilate thus presented the Lord? “Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him.’”^a *a. Jn.19:6*
Again Israel’s leaders were successful in suppressing any feelings of pity, sympathy or justice that arose among the people. The Lord felt this completely. Here, in a special way the words of the psalm so often quoted were fulfilled: “I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”^b *b. Ps.69:20*

Chapter 19

IT IS FINISHED

Burnt Offering

There is still another aspect to the work the Lord completed on the cross. Those who have considered it have always been filled with awe and wonder. The poet expresses it in these words:

Fully surrounded by powers of darkness,
Fully devoted to God didst Thou prove;
Willingly didst Thou Thy precious life render,
All to the honor and glory of God.

a. Ps.40:6-8

b. Heb.5:8

c. Lk.9:51

d. Heb.9:14

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come...I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your law is within My heart.’”^a The Lord spoke these words through the psalmist. They express the reason why He, the Second Man, the Man from heaven, came to this scene. He had to come because the first man, the man from the earth, from the dust, had proven that he was utterly incapable of keeping even one of God’s commandments. These words also express why, “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,”^b and “when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”^c There – adorable word – He, “through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God.”^d

customarily given to criminals that were crucified. Undoubtedly He thirsted, and His cry, “I thirst!” must first be taken literally, but – how wonderful – He only spoke these words after He knew “that all things were now accomplished.”

He had indeed thirsted in His physical agony, but how much more had His soul thirsted! The people’s enmity and hatred had pursued Him as He endured the cross, and even now, as they once more derided and mocked Him, how He must have longed for “the joy that was set before Him.”^a His soul had been made “an offering for sin.” But He must have longed to “see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and...be satisfied.”^b What love! Can it be that in His death He thirsted for you and for me?

a. *Heb.12:2*

b. *Isa.53:10-11*

Yet let us look beyond our own interests, beyond what is in Golgotha’s events for us. The Lord’s sufferings there were between Him and God alone. Now, as He reached the depths of those sufferings, how He must have thirsted to “depart from this world to the Father.”^c “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me, together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”^d

c. *Jn.13:1*

d. *Jn.17:4-5*

As the Lord spoke these words earlier, in His spirit He had seen the work completed. He had seen the cross, as it were, behind Him. Turning to His own, He had expected them to understand His feelings. “If you loved Me you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father.’”^e Who of us would not want in some small measure to understand

e. *Jn.14:28*

this thirst of the Lord? “O God, You are My God...My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You, in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So have I looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.”^a “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants My soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”^b They “filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth,”^c but this did not quench His thirst. No, it increased His thirst by adding to His humiliation.

a. Ps.63:1-2

b. Ps.42:1-2

*c. Jn.19:29;
Mt.27:48*

Let us not err. These few thoughts have by no means exhausted the depths of those words, “I thirst,” coming from the cross. Again, only in John’s Gospel do we find these words, and in this Gospel, as we have mentioned, we see the Lord rising above suffering and death. As the sun breaks through the clouds, so the glory of the Only Begotten with the Father had to break through the darkness of enmity and hatred and the doom of fallen man. We saw His glory at the beginning of this passage and we see it again now. It is the glory of Him who said, “I have food to eat which you do not know...My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”^d

d. Jn.4:32,34

This is why the Lord, “knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’”^e He said it that the Scripture might be fulfilled. He had finished the work that had been committed to Him, and now He looked back once again and found, so to speak, that one small detail of the prophetic word referring to the cross had not yet been fulfilled. “Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass

e. Jn.19:28

- a. *Mt.5:18* from the law till all is fulfilled.”^a These were the Lord’s words. Long before, the psalmist had written prophetically, “They also gave Me gall for My food”;^b this Scripture had been fulfilled at the beginning of the crucifixion, even before the Lord had been nailed to the cross.^c But the psalmist had said more: “And for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.” This Scripture still had to be fulfilled.
- b. *Ps.69:21*
- c. *Mt.27:34*

It Is Finished!

- d. *Jn.19:30* “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”^d Now everything was fulfilled. Now He had “finished the work” which the Father had given Him to do.^e Was there something else, then, that could keep Him on this earth? No. So He “gave up His spirit.” Before He did so, however, He announced to all who heard, in a word more effective than we can imagine, that the work was finished.
- e. *Jn.17:4*

“It is finished!” God’s will, His eternal counsels of love, had been fulfilled. The great work of glorifying God and of redeeming sinners had come to its blessed conclusion.

- f. *Gen.1:31* When the work of creation was completed, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”^f But after this we do not hear of another finished, perfect work until the Lord cried out, “It is finished!” from the cross. God had placed man in the Garden of Eden. From that moment on, man had worked, and his labors had brought him deeper and deeper into sin’s abyss, further and further from God – to destruction.

Yet, was not the law given by God? Was it not “holy and just and good”?^a Certainly! But under the law man was active; man had to be active because the law put him to the test.^b Thus, “the law made nothing perfect.”^c Even “gifts and sacrifices” could not “make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.”^d The religious person still stands on this ground. All his efforts center on being active and saving himself. What a useless effort that is! It does not accomplish or finish anything. Besides, it is presumptuous, for it assumes that man who is imperfect and in his sins can approach a holy and righteous God.

a. Rom.7:12

*b. Rom.5:20;
Gal.3:24*

c. Heb.7:19

d. Heb.9:9

Yes, service under the law was a hopeless service. “And every priest stands daily ministering, and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” But what a contrast to go on to read, “But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, waiting from henceforth until His enemies be set for the footstool of His feet. For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified.”^e

e. Heb.10:11-14

As we see all the imperfection around us, have we not often longed for perfection? We do not find it around us, for when we seek perfection in ourselves or in this world, we look in vain. True perfection can only be found at the cross of Calvary. Here we find a work that is perfect and makes perfect. Here is a work that was done “once for all,”^f and therefore will never have to be repeated. We need not – indeed, we cannot – add anything to it. The personal testimony of the Lord Jesus with regard to this work is, “It is finished.”

f. Heb.10:10

Triumphantly the cry echoed through the silence in this scene of the greatest conflict heaven and earth had ever seen. And God, who had silently been watching, now testified to the perfection of this work by the rent veil, the way to Himself opened; by the opened graves;^a and by the witness of the blood and water coming from the Savior's wounded side.^b

a. *Mt.27:51-53*

b. *Jn.19:31*

O Lamb of God,
You have gloriously conquered at Calvary.
Amen. Hallelujah!
You've won salvation for the world,
You've fully paid the ransom price,
You loudly cried through death's dark night:
"It is finished! It is finished!"

Laying Down His Life

"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."^c That last testimony – "It is finished" – coming from Him in the garb of lowliness, was followed immediately by His last utterance, that "loud voice"^d with which He "yielded up His spirit."^e We cannot imagine it to be otherwise. In the verse in Luke we have the Man Christ Jesus before us. But His cry here is not a cry of deepest anguish of soul at being separated from God, nor is it an expression of longing for release from His anguish. No, in simple, perfect trust and deep peace He takes the last step, which is death. Death eternally separates the sinner from God, but death brought the Lord back to His God and Father. How could God turn away the One who had

c. *Lk.23:46*

d. *Mk.15:37*

e. *Mt.27:50*

perfectly glorified Him and who had “tasted death for everyone”?^a It was impossible. God could not do this, just as He could not “allow” His “Holy One to see corruption.”^b

a. Heb.2:9

b. Ps.16:10

Our Lord did not die as a consequence of crucifixion. Natural forces did not cause His death. He expired with “a loud cry.” With such a cry no other person crucified before Him or after Him has ever died. “Pilate marveled that He was already dead.”^c We also have another witness – an unimpeachable witness – to this strange, unique death: the centurion “who stood opposite Him.”^d No detail of this remarkable incident escaped that centurion’s eyes and ears. He was a Gentile and was only performing his duty, but as he “saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of God.’”

c. Mk.15:44

d. Mk.15:39

What an event this was! It was one last, overwhelming manifestation that “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.”^e He was both God and Man in one Person. He was God manifested in flesh. Truly, as we see Him hanging on the cross, we see Him enduring deepest humiliation, but we also see all His majesty. He laid down His life for the sheep. No man took it from Him. “I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received from My Father.”^f With head held high He had finished the work, and not until then did He bow His head and give up His spirit.^g He became “obedient to the point of death,

e. 1 Tim.3:16

f. Jn.10:15,18

g. Jn.19:30

* It was an act arising from the power of His personal will. The Greek word for “gave up” or “dismissed” is not the same as in Luke 23:46, but is the same as in Ephesians 5:2. It is never used otherwise in connection with a person’s death. Its use here is unique.

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a. Phil.2:8 even the death of the cross.”^a Such a death filled the centurion with awe and wonder, and not upon him alone has it had this effect.

b. Isa.53:8 Thus the Lord was “taken from oppression and from judgment.”^b Thus He, the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”^c left this earth to enter into another world, into a new life that has nothing to do with the great question of sin. He had accomplished “His decease which
c. 1 Cor.15:20
d. Lk.9:31 He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”^d

