

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke Chapter 23- Luke 23:32-46 348- The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ- Part 4

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May 21, 2017

## Luke 23:32-46

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

34 But Jesus was saying, "**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**" And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"

38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

43 And He said to him, "**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**"

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,

45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

**46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.**

To the Glory of God

Now normally, in the Spring of the year, people are shaking off the lethargy that winter brings, and they are coming out from their houses and cleaning up. People are beginning to make plans for the summer, and outdoor activities are once again filling everyone's mind. Flowers are blooming and there is a sense of new life budding from the bleakness of winter.

And Fridays in the spring of the year are usually very busy and exciting as people are making plans for the weekend, and the laughter of children fills the air. The bright sunshine of the Springtime just makes everyone come alive.

But, this Friday is different. The discussions around Jerusalem on this day do not concern plans for the weekend, but center on an itinerate Preacher who is hanging on a Cross just outside the city gate. This Man once commanded large crowds, who listened to Him speak about things they had never heard. And O, the miracles! This Man performed miracles. He healed their sick bodies. He opened their blind eyes. He caused cripples to walk again. But even more than the miracles, nobody ever spoke like this Man spoke.

Many of them had hoped that this Man was the long-awaited military leader who would finally bring an end to the rule of the despised Romans. I mean, He had talked about a Kingdom, and so, they naturally thought that He was going to defeat the pagans, drive them out of the Promised Land, and restore David's Throne again.

But, whatever hope this Man had caused to stir inside people is being dashed to pieces as they watch Him hanging there, so helpless, so weak, so bloody, just one more Jew being punished by the Romans. And they seethed in their teeth at the insult of the sign above His Head, a sign put there by Pilate himself, a sign in three languages that read:

This is Jesus, the Nazarene- the King of the Jews

So, the plans this weekend for the Jews of the city of Jerusalem are about what they will do with this Man once He dies, because He is

surely going to die. There is no longer any hope of this Man getting off that Cross. And with His death the hopes and aspirations of many people are being thrown into the trash.

And maybe out of anger that He had led them to believe that He would rescue them, or maybe out of fear of the Romans, or maybe just as a part of their ongoing bitterness at how God had forsaken them and left them into the hands of barbarians, but whatever the reason, many of the Jews joined in with the Romans that day to hurl insults at this Man. The Apostle Levi wrote:

**Matthew 27:39-43**

**39** And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads

**40** and saying, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

**41** In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *Him* and saying,

**42** "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.

**43** "*HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him* now, *IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM*; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The Apostle Peter's disciple, John Mark wrote this in **Mark 15:29-32**:

**29** Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

**30** save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

**31** In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself.

**32** "Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

And Dr. Luke wrote this in **Luke 23:35-37**:

**35** And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at

**Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."**

**36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"**

And this tells us that most of the common Jews, as well as the ruling religious elite, had the very same theology about suffering that the pagan Romans had. They believed that a person who suffered were cursed by God. They believed and taught that if God loved you, He would heal your sick body and cause you to prosper financially and materially. They believed that those who were sick and poor and who were not delivered were not in Favor with God. And it was their theology, it was what they believed that caused them to act this way toward Jesus. What they didn't know was that their response to Jesus was a fulfillment of a 600 year old Prophecy that God gave to Isaiah that said,

**Isaiah 53:2b-4**

**2 ... He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.**

**3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

**4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.**

Now when verse 3 says:

**... And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

... this is talking about shame. So, at this point, the people who had followed Jesus were *ashamed* of Jesus as He hung on the Cross. The average Jew, who saw Jesus hanging there, didn't think this was an example of God's Love at all. They didn't consider the Crucifixion of the only Man Who had never sinned to be the payment for their sins. They never even considered that God's Righteousness was being defended as the Darling of the Trinity was screaming in agony.

No, they saw a Man Who had stirred them up like no one had ever done before, now being totally defeated by the Romans. They saw a Man Who spoke about God and Heaven and the Kingdom, and Who had performed miracles and cast out demons and raised the dead completely defeated now by the enemies of God.

And their minds screamed out, *"How could this be a good thing? Why would God kill a good Man? Why would God not destroy the Romans for what they were doing to Jesus? How are we supposed to understand what is going on here? All this is, is death. All this is is another injustice, another travesty, one more miserable act of humiliation against God's people! How could anything Good come from this?"*

And when Isaiah said:

### **Isaiah 53:4b**

**... Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.**

... this meant that the average Jew on that day came to the conclusion that Jesus was *not* the Man many said He was, but that He was actually the enemy of God. They came to the conclusion that it was none other than God Himself Who had struck Jesus down. It was God Who smote Jesus. God had afflicted Jesus. And they turned their faces away from Jesus in embarrassment.

And Dr. Luke wrote this in verses 44-45a:

**44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,**  
**45 because the sun was obscured...**

So, on this particular Friday, in the spring of the year, it is now about noon. And the Savior of the world has been agonizing on the Cross for about three hours. Ever since nine in the morning, Jesus has been pushing His Body weight up the rough side of the Cross so He could take the load off His Arms (which were now in perpetual cramps), so He could exhale. The skin of His beaten Back was hanging in ribbons away from His Body. But the pain from the single spike in His Feet was so great that He couldn't stay there, and so, He slowly sank back down to hold His Body Weight by His Arms; the spike against the

median nerve sending arrows of pain through His ever-weakening Arms. Up and down, up and down, sucking in a short breath, and then sagging down to exhale. Excruciating agony; no end in sight.

But, at noon on the Friday, something amazing began to happen. The brightness of noon-day began to give way to darkness. But, this was not the normal darkness of impending rain. This was a darkness like they had never seen before. A darkness far heavier; more intense than any rain cloud. And it began to blot out the sun itself. And the people looked up and noticed it. And they knew that something terrible was happening here.

Now I can't find any biblical reference to lightning or thunder or rain, or even a strong wind that would normally go along with a darkness like this. It may have been, but I can't find any reference to any of the things that normally accompany a noon-day darkness anywhere in the Bible. And this leads me to believe that there wasn't, which would make *this* darkness very different from the average rain storm.

Levi wrote this:

**Matthew 27:45**

**Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.**

... showing us that this darkness was not only on Golgotha, but the entire region. John Mark says something similar:

**Mark 15:33**

**When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.**

The Apostle John says nothing about this strange darkness. But what he does say is very informative for us. **John 19:25-27** says:

**25 ... But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.**

**26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**"**

**27 Then He said to the disciple, "**Behold, your mother!**" From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*.**

... so, according to John, there were at least five people (four women and one man) standing by the Cross during the time of this great darkness, immediately after all of the verbal insults were given:

1. Mary, Jesus' mother
2. Her sister
3. Mary (wife of Clopas)
4. Mary Magdelene
5. The Apostle John

Now what we can get out of this is amazing. These five people were not afraid of the soldiers or the Jewish leaders, and had no concern for their own safety or welfare. And, even more importantly, these five people, four women and one man, were not ashamed of being identified with Jesus. They withdrew only because they were devastated at the suffering and death of the One they had loved so dearly. Their grief was deep and their hopes seemed shattered, but their courage was undaunted.

Now, besides John, the Gospel writers don't mention the disciples being here at all. Judas has committed suicide, but where is Andrew and James and Simon? Where is Nathaniel and Phillip and Levi? Where is Peter? They aren't by the Cross.

Even though it seems as though ten of the remaining disciples are not here near the Cross, we *do* see four believing women. And this is very important. Because one of the most telling signs of a godly, believing woman is her loyalty. Far more than most men. A genuinely spiritual woman has the capacity for incredible loyalty in the face of ridicule and danger.

Now I don't think these women understood at this point that Jesus was dying for their sins, or that He would rise from the dead in three days. I think they were devastated, confused, and deeply disillusioned. But the love for Jesus, that God had gifted these women with, was so great that it compelled them to be near the Cross.

We don't know exactly how many women were there, but the Apostle Levi said, there were "many". And in **Matthew 27:55** he says:

**Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him.**

Now what is interesting is that the word “**ministering**” at the end of verse 55 comes from the Greek word from which we get the English word “deacon” from. And this word has the basic meaning of “serving”, and is the verb form of the noun from which *deacon* is derived.

Now it wasn't until the Apostle Paul wrote the greatest letter ever written, the Epistle to the Romans, many years later that the feminine form of this word was used to describe a specific type of ministry that a woman named “Phoebe” had. And in **Romans 16:1&2**- we read:

**1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;**

**2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.**

... where the word “**servant**” here in verse 1 is this very same root word that we find in **Matthew 27:55**. So, we see that none other than the Apostle Paul wrote this inspired text to say that Phoebe was a “female deacon” or a “deaconess” of the Church that was at Cenchrea. Now this is very controversial, *especially* down here in the South where many Southern Baptist churches have altered what the Bible teaches about Church Government.

Most Southern Baptist churches *incorrectly* have what is called “Congregational Rule”, where every member of the Church votes on Church matters. This leads to the carnal activity called “Church politics” that promotes people into positions of authority based on their ability to capture 51% of the vote. Sadly, this unbiblical form of Government also causes the many “Church-splits”, which according to Lifeway Research is the single biggest cause of the proliferation of Southern Baptist Churches.

So, let me say this another way. The single biggest reason why there are so many Southern Baptist churches is *not* because God has led people to plant new missions in recently evangelized areas, but because people got so mad at what happened at the last election that they split the Church and started a new one. And that is a reproach to Jesus Christ.



The correct form of Government is with a plurality of highly trained and godly Elders who oversee the Teaching and Doctrine of the Church, and who shepherd the sheep into a holy walk with God. Whereas, in most Southern Baptist churches, those who lead are all deacons with only the Pastor as an Elder.

So, to a Southern Baptist, the thought that a woman can be a deacon is anathema, because they equate the role of a deacon with what the Bible says belongs to an Elder. But, the Bible doesn't teach that deacons lead in the Church. The Bible says that deacons *serve* the Church. Elder rule, and the Bible is crystal clear that women *cannot* be Elders or Pastors. But, women can certainly serve the people of the Church, and so, there is no biblical reason to prohibit them from being deacons.

Because Southern Baptist have confused the role of Elders with Deacons, they incorrectly and unbiblically put elected deacons into Positions of authority, and they prohibit women from serving the Church. So, what we need to know is that the "many" women who were ministering to Jesus, here in **Matthew 27**, were, in effect, the first deaconesses of the Christian faith.

Now, **John 19** says that Mary, the mother of Jesus had a sister, who, evidently, was *also* named Mary. And verse 25 says that *this* Mary, Jesus' aunt, was the wife of a man named "Clopas". And this is the only place in the entire Bible that this name is mentioned. And, interestingly, the King James renders his name as "Cleopas". So, just who is the husband of Jesus' aunt, and why did the Apostle John see the need to name him? Well, there are a few possibilities.

One possibility is that after the Resurrection, there is a very strange and very long narrative in **Luke 24** about the risen Christ meeting two men on the road to Emmaus. And this narrative is found only in **Luke**, and covers 23 verses, which is longer than Luke's account of the Crucifixion. And, in **Luke 24:18**, we read:

**One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"**

So, is the “Cleopas” of **Luke 24:18** the same man as the “Clopas” of **John 19:25**? Maybe. And this would mean that Jesus’ uncle was one of the men who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

Another possibility is that the word “Clopas” was incorrectly translated from a name we already know, “Alphaeus”. You will remember that, back in **Luke 6**, we met a man named:

“James, the son of Alphaeus” (verse 15)

... who was chosen by Jesus personally to be an Apostle. And I told you back then that this James was called “James the less” by the early Church to distinguish him from the other three James’ of the New Testament, *including* “James the greater”, who was Jesus’ half-brother. And I told you then that the name “Alphaeus” is considered by many biblical scholars to be simply a bad translation of “Clopas” or “Cleopas”.

Now, at the end of verse 45, Luke is careful to tell us:

**... and the veil of the temple was torn in two.**

... and this was a huge woven veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple, and the Jewish historian, Josephus, said that this massive curtain was...

“... predominantly blue and was ornately decorated.”

Once a year, the high priest was allowed to pass through the veil, on the Day of Atonement, to sprinkle blood on the altar for the sins of the people. And even though this ritual was symbolic, it had to be repeated every year.

But, upon the Death of Jesus, Who Himself was the perfect, once-for-all Sacrifice, the need for this veil, along with the Levites who served in it and the Temple itself, no longer existed. So, the spontaneous miracle of this veil being ripped from top to bottom signified that the barrier of sin was forever removed for all those who put their trust in Jesus as both God and Savior.

The tearing in two of this veil was an unmistakable Sign from God that the Old Covenant was abolished, and access into God’s holy

Presence comes through faith in Jesus and not in sacrificing animals or religious rituals or Sacraments or Temple worship.

Now, what is fascinating is that dramatic tearing of the veil was made while the Temple was filled with worshipers, which included not only countless priests, but also many thousands of pilgrims who were at that very moment celebrating the Passover Sacrifice. And even though the Temple itself was not destroyed until some forty years later, in AD 70, the entire sacrificial system of Israel and its attendant priesthood ceased to have even symbolic value when the veil was torn in two and the Holy of Holies was exposed.

The ceremonies and priestly functions continued until the Temple was destroyed, but their Divine Significance ended the very moment Jesus died, as the inferior Old Covenant was completely cast aside to make room for the infinitely superior New Covenant.

At this point, every breath Jesus takes is precious. His Arms are becoming so cramped that He cannot continue to hold Himself up, and yet the single spike in His Feet is hurting Him so bad that He cannot push up much longer. His Heart is struggling to pump Blood and is now under tremendous strain. The result is that Jesus is now entering into congestive heart failure as fluid is now accumulating around His Heart, literally squeezing it until He can no longer get the correct amount of oxygen to His other vital organs. In other words, the God/Man is now near death.

And the Bible tells us that Jesus was offered wine on two different occasions while He was on the Cross. And yet, He refused the first offer while taking the second. Now why was that? **Mark 15:23** says:

**They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.**

Christian apologist, William Lane Craig, said:

“According to an old tradition, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to those condemned to death in order to decrease their sensitivity to the excruciating pain . . . . When Jesus arrived at Golgotha he was offered . . . wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it, choosing to endure with full consciousness the sufferings appointed for him”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Craig, William Lane; *The Gospel of Mark*; p 564

So, this first wine represented an offer to ease the pain in the beginning of His Crucifixion, to opt for a small shortcut, albeit, not a major one in view of the excruciating pain of the Cross, but a little one, nonetheless. But this offer Jesus refused, and in doing so, chose "to endure with full consciousness the sufferings appointed for Him." But after being on the Cross for six hours, the Bible records that this happened in **Mark 15:34**:

**At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?*" which is translated, "*MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?*"**

... and the Apostle Levi recorded that Jesus said:

***"ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?"***

Now this is the first and only time that Jesus has addressed His Father as "God". And the impersonal way Jesus uses the generic name "God" is significant. Now, right of "jump street", there are those who point to the differences between John Mark's account and Matthew as being some contradiction, thus, supposedly "proving" the Bible to be false. But the differences are merely linguistic. "Eloi" is from the Aramaic, while "Eli" is Hebrew, and both of them mean "God". So, which one did Jesus say? Well, He could have said it in both languages, but He probably uttered this in Aramaic, as Jesus never spoke Hebrew. And so, Levi, writing his Gospel record to the Jews, simply translated the Aramaic into Hebrew.

But what is going on here is two-fold. Firstly, Jesus is answering His critics by quoting from **Psalm 22**, which every Jewish scholar of the First Century knew was a Psalm about the Messiah. So, by referencing the quote that King David wrote, as he was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down this Psalm, some 1,000 year earlier, Jesus was once again equating Himself with the promised Messiah.

But secondly, Jesus was actually agonizing over the fact that God the Father had separated Himself from Him. We must remember that God has now taken all of the sins of all of Gods' elect and has placed them onto Jesus by the miracle of Imputation. And the result is that for

the first time in all of eternity, God the Father has separated Himself from God the Son.

Now this amazing moment is so hard to grasp that it is not surprising that Martin Luther is said to have gone into seclusion for a long time trying to understand it and came away as confused as when he began. So, the best we can say is that "in some way" and "by some means", that we don't know and cannot fathom, as operating in the hidden secrets of Divine Sovereignty and Omnipotence, the God-Man was separated from the Father for a brief time at Golgotha while He was pouring out His terrifying Wrath against our sins on the perfectly sinless Son. About 600 years earlier, the Prophet Habakkuk said this about God:

### **Habakkuk 1:13**

***Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor...***

So, God the Father turned His Back when Jesus was on the Cross because He could not look upon sin, *especially* sin in His Own Son. And the Act of God forsaking Jesus was only matched by the cry that Jesus gave when He realized that God had, indeed, forsaken Him.

We need to remember that Jesus was not a hero, dying a hero's death. Jesus was not a martyr to a righteous cause, or simply an innocent man wrongly accused and condemned. God the Father could have looked favorably on all of those kinds of selfless deaths. Jesus died differently than anyone has ever or will ever die. Jesus died as a Substitute, a Propitiation. Jesus died as a "scape goat", Who had the Hand of God placed on His Head to impart or impute the guilt of God's elect.

And all of the wickedness of ten thousand people, all the dirt of a million rebels, all the evil of all the sons of Adam was imputed to Jesus, and He legally became a guilty, dirty, wicked, evil Sacrifice while personally maintaining perfect sinlessness. But, as a guilty scape goat, the sins that were credited to Jesus had to be judged and they had to be damned. The New Testament is crystal clear about this:

✓ Jesus "**was delivered up because of our transgression**" (Romans 4:25)

- ✓ Jesus "**died for our sins according to the Scriptures**" (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- ✓ He "**who knew no sin [became] sin on our behalf**" (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- ✓ **Jesus became "a curse for us"** (Galatians 3:13)
- ✓ **"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross"** (1 Peter 2:24)
- ✓ Jesus **"died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust"** (1 Peter 3:18)
- ✓ Jesus became **"the propitiation for our sins"** (1 John 4:10).

Jesus Christ not only bore man's sin, but actually *became* sin on man's behalf, in order that those who believe in Him might be saved from the penalty of their sin. Jesus came to teach men perfectly about God, and to be a perfect example of God's holiness and righteousness. But, as He Himself declared, the supreme reason for His coming to earth was not to teach or to be an example, but **"to give His life a ransom for many"** (Matthew 20:28).

Now I realize that this may be too deep for some, but it is very important that I tell you that even though Jesus was absolutely forsaken by the Father, their separation was not one of "Nature", "Essence", or "Substance". Jesus did not, in any sense or degree, cease to exist as God, or as a member of the Trinity, the entire time He was on the Cross.

Jesus did not cease to be God the Son, any more than a child who sins severely against his human father ceases to be his child. For a moment, Jesus no longer enjoyed the intimacy of Fellowship with His heavenly Father, just as a disobedient child ceases when he sins. Matthew Henry wrote:

"Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a terror to himself; but the heart knows its own bitterness. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the *ears of every one that hears it to tingle*, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence."<sup>2</sup>

Now there are many highly educated people who will go to great lengths to tell you that there is just no physical way that Jesus could

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<sup>2</sup> (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

have cried out here with a loud voice. They will show that during Crucifixion, the diaphragm will simply not allow any sound other than a weak whisper. But the infallible Word of the living God says:

**At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice ...**

And, as we have already seen, the two robbers spoke to Jesus and He answered one of them. So, even though these people are basically correct as far as their understanding of both human anatomy and crucifixion, in general, are concerned, they err in that they do not trust the inerrancy of Scripture. **Joel 3:16a** says:

**The Lord roars from Zion And utters His Voice from Jerusalem...**

So, evidently, God performed a miracle on Jesus here and supernaturally empowered His weak Voice to cry out loudly. God the Father delivered God the Son into the hands of His enemies, and did not appear to deliver Him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against His Own Son, and suffered them to do *worse* with Jesus than with Job, who said:

**Job 16:11-16**

**11 "God hands me over to ruffians And tosses me into the hands of the wicked.**

**12 "I was at ease, but He shattered me, And He has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces; He has also set me up as His target.**

**13 "His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours out my gall on the ground.**

**14 "He breaks through me with breach after breach; He runs at me like a warrior.**

**15 "I have sewed sackcloth over my skin And thrust my horn in the dust.**

**16 "My face is flushed from weeping, And deep darkness is on my eyelids,**

There will be no angel sent from heaven to deliver Him this time, no friend on earth to rise up to defend Him. This Agony was different than anything even Jesus had experienced. Back in **John 12**, when Jesus' Soul was first *troubled*, He had a Voice from heaven to comfort Him. When He was in His Agony in the Garden, there appeared an

angel from heaven strengthening Him. But now, Jesus had neither the one nor the other. God hid His Face from Him, and for a while, withdrew His comforting Rod and Staff in this valley of death. God *forsook* Him, not like He forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as did with David, causing a present despondency that would yield eternal glory.

Notice that Jesus never asked, "*Why am I being Crucified?*", or "*Why am I being railed against and spit upon?*" Jesus never asked, "*Why am I being nailed to this Cross?*" He also never said, "*Why have you forsaken Me*" to His disciples, when they turned their back upon Him. But when the Father stood at a distance, it was more than Jesus could bear. And so, Jesus cried out as King David did in **Psalm 69:1-3:**

**1 Save me, O God, For the waters have threatened my life.**

**2 I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.**

**3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.**

Now look at the reaction by the crowd to this amazing cry:

**Mark 15:35**

**When some of the bystanders heard it, they *began* saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah."**

... so, right off the bat, these bystanders actually heard Jesus, which again shows that His words were not given in a weak whisper. But, their response is interesting.

First of all, Jesus using the Aramaic would *not* have been confusing to any Jew who lived in the First Century. They would have understood clearly that Jesus was saying, "*My God!*", and was *not* calling for the Prophet Elijah.

Secondly, any Jew worth his salt, would have recognized **Psalm 22** and would have *immediately* understood that Jesus was equating Himself with the Messiah that David prophesied about. So, we are left with only one thing, the idea that Jesus was crying out for Elijah was simply another way they could mock Jesus. Now, the Apostle John said this in **John 19:28-29:**



**28** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "**I am thirsty.**"

**29** A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon *a branch of hyssop* and brought it up to His mouth.

... while **Matthew 27:47-49** says:

**47** And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

**48** Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

**49** But the rest *of them* said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

Now, the "**one who ran**" was probably one of the Roman military guards, and by taking a sponge and filling it with sour wine, he hoped temporarily to quench Jesus' thirst.

William Lane Craig says:

"A sour wine 'vinegar' is mentioned in the OT as a refreshing drink (Numbers 6:13; Ruth 2:14), and in Greek and Roman literature as well. It is a common beverage appreciated by laborers and soldiers because it relieved thirst more effectively than water and was very inexpensive ... There are no examples of its use as a hostile gesture. The thought, then, is not of a corrosive vinegar offered as a cruel jest, but of a sour wine of the people. While the words "Let us see if Elijah will come" express a doubtful expectation, the offer of the sip of wine was intended to keep Jesus conscious for as long as possible for no other reason than to suffer longer"<sup>3</sup>

Now, in **John 19:29**, the Apostle says that the reed used to give Jesus this sour wine was a hyssop branch. Now why this is significant is that hyssop branches were no longer than eighteen inches. So, the fact that a short branch like this was used to reach Jesus' Lips shows us that the horizontal beam of the Cross had to be very low to the ground. Some scholars suggest that Jesus' Head would have been no higher than 8 feet above the ground.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 573-574

Now why did Jesus ask for this drink? John says that it was to fulfill the Scriptures. **Psalms 69:21** says:

**They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.**

So, the first wine (mixed with myrrh) was designed to dull Jesus' pain and to keep Him from having to endure the Cross with full consciousness. But, *that* was the wine He refused. The second (sour) wine was given to keep Jesus conscious for as long as possible, and thus have the effect of *prolonging* His Pain. And this is the wine Jesus drank.

Now the other condemned criminals all gladly took the first wine to ease their torment, and they passed on the second, so as not to prolong their horrific pain. But, Jesus was just the opposite. He rejected the wine that would give Him some measure of comfort while asking for the wine that would allow Him to hurt even more. Truly we should marvel that our dear Lord took no shortcuts on the way to our Redemption!

At the Cross, Jesus drank the Wine of his Father's Wrath down to its very dregs. And He did so for us, that we might enjoy the Wine of His Father's Love, join with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and live redeemed forever in the glorious Presence of the One Who took no shortcuts in saving us.

Now it is possible that the man who gave Jesus the drink meant it as an act of mercy, but it was minimal in its effect and served only to prolong the torture before death brought relief. But the rest of those standing near the Cross used that gesture of kindness as another opportunity to carry their mockery of the Lord still further, saying, "**Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.**"

This shows us the depth of sin and how that spiritual blindness has nothing to do with intelligence or common sense. It seems incredible that even the pitch darkness of midday did not alarm the wicked crowd. They were so bent on scorning Jesus that even such a momentous phenomenon as the blocking out of the sun did not deter them. Being aware of the many Old Testament associations of *unnatural darkness with judgment*, it would seem they *would* at least briefly have considered the possibility that Divine Judgment was

occurring at that very moment. Yet the single thought now on their minds was to make Jesus' death as painful and humiliating as they could. Truly, if God doesn't open the eyes of the lost, no amount of supernatural events will do so.

And finally, Dr. Luke wrote:

**And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.**

The Apostle John said:

**John 19:30**

**Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.**

John Mark wrote:

**Mark 15:37**

**And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.**

... while Levi said:

**Matthew 27:50**

**And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.**

Once again, the Gospel writers are unanimous:

**Jesus cried out again with a loud voice**

... so, once again, God must have performed a miracle to give Him the air to cry out loud like that. Now both Luke and John gave us the actual words that Jesus cried out loud:

**"Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT."**

... which was a quote from another one of David's prophecies from **Psalm 31:5**. But, John says that Jesus cried out:

**"It is finished!"**

... which means that Jesus actually accomplished *everything* that God the Father sent Him to do. And the spirit and breath that entered into Jesus while He was in the womb of the virgin Mary at that amazing moment of Incarnation left Him and went back to the God Who gave it, and Jesus died.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.