

Jesus On The Cross

“The Seven Words”

General Information

Our Lord uttered seven memorable "words" (or statements) from the cross, namely,

- ?? (1) Luke 23:34;
 - ?? (2) Luke 23:43;
 - ?? (3) John 19:26;
 - ?? (4) Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34;
 - ?? (5) John 19:28;
 - ?? (6) John 19:30;
 - ?? (7) Luke 23:46.
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The Seven Words

Advanced Information

(Beginning in Book 5, Chapter 15, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, 1886)

It was when they thus nailed Him to the Cross, and parted His raiment, that He spake the first of the so-called 'Seven Words': **'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'** (Luke 23:34) [4 The genuineness of these words has been called in question. But alike external and internal evidence demands their retention.] Even the reference in this prayer to 'what they do' (not in the past, nor future) points to the soldiers as the primary, though certainly not the sole object of the Saviour's prayer. [b Comp. Acts iii. 17 1 Cor. ii. 8.]

[5 It would be presumptuous to seek to determine how far that prayer extended. Generally, I agree with Nebe, to all (Gentiles and Jews) who, in their participation in the sufferings inflicted on Jesus, acted in ignorance.] But higher thoughts also come to us. In the moment of the deepest abasement of Christ's Human Nature, the Divine bursts forth most brightly.

It is, as if the Saviour would discard all that is merely human in His Sufferings, just as before He had discarded the Cup of stupefying wine. These soldiers were but the unconscious instruments: the form was nothing; the contest was between the Kingdom of God and that of darkness, ~~between the Christ and Satan, and these sufferings were but the necessary path of obedience~~

Jesus On The Cross

Page 2

everyone who, in the midst of all that seems most opposed to it, can rise, beyond mere forgetfulness of what is around, to realising faith and fellowship with God as 'the Father', who through the dark curtain of cloud can discern the bright sky, and can feel the unshaken confidence, if not the unbroken joy, of absolute trust.

This was His first Utterance on the Cross, as regarded them; as regarded Himself; and as regarded God. So, surely, suffered not Man. Has this prayer of Christ been answered? We dare not doubt it; nay, we perceive it in some measure in those drops of blessing which have fallen upon heathen men, and have left to Israel also, even in its ignorance, a remnant according to the election of grace. [1 In reference to this St. Augustine writes: '*Sanguinem Christi, quem saevientes fuderunt, credentes biberunt.*' The question why Christ did not Himself forgive, but appeal for it to the Father, is best answered by the consideration, that it was really a *crimen laesae majestatis* against the Father, and that the vindication of the Son lay with God the Father.]

And now began the real agonies of the Cross, physical, mental, and spiritual. It was the weary, unrelieved waiting, as thickening darkness gradually gathered around. Before sitting down to their melancholy watch over the Crucified, [a St. Matthew.] the soldiers would refresh themselves, after their exertion in nailing Jesus to the Cross, lifting it up, and fixing it, by draughts of the cheap wine of the country. As they quaffed it, they drank to Him in their coarse brutality, and mockingly came to Him, asking Him to pledge them in response.

Their jests were, indeed, chiefly directed not against Jesus personally, but in His Representative capacity, and so against the hated, despised Jews, whose King they now derisively challenged to save Himself. [b St. Luke.] Yet even so, it seems to us of deepest significance, that He was so treated and derided in His Representative Capacity and as the King of the Jews. It is the undesigned testimony of history, alike as regarded the character of Jesus and the future of Israel. But what from almost any point of view we find so difficult to understand is, the unutterable abasement of the Leaders of Israel, their moral suicide as regarded Israel's hope and spiritual existence.

There, on that Cross, hung He, Who at least embodied that grand hope of the nation; Who, even on their own showing, suffered to the extreme for that idea, and yet renounced it not, but clung fast to it in unshaken confidence; One, to Whose Life or even Teaching no objection could be offered, save that of this grand idea. And yet, when it came to them in the ribald mockery of this heathen soldiery, it evoked no other or higher thoughts in them; and they had the indescribable baseness of joining in the jeer at Israel's great hope, and of leading the popular chorus in it!

For, we cannot doubt, that, perhaps also by way of turning aside the point of the jeer from Israel, they took it up, and tried to direct it against Jesus; and that they led the ignorant mob in the piteous attempts at derision. And did none of those who so reviled Him in all the chief aspects of His Work feel, that, as Judas had sold the Master for naught and committed suicide, so they were doing in regard to their Messianic hope?

For, their jeers cast contempt on the four great facts in the Life and Work of Jesus, which were

Jesus On The Cross

Page 3

of the passersby, rendered in the A.V. 'reviled' and 'railed.' of doubt. We compare with theirs the account of St. Luke and St. John. That of St. Luke reads like the report of what had passed, given by one who throughout had been quite close by, perhaps taken part in the Crucifixion.

[2 The peculiarities in it are (besides the *titulus*): what passed on the procession to Golgotha (St. Luke xxiii. 27-31); the prayer, when affixed to the Cross (ver. 34 a); the bearing of the soldiers (vv. 36, 37); the conversion of the penitent thief; and the last words on the Cross (ver. 46).] one might almost venture to suggest, that it had been furnished by the Centurion. [3 There is no evidence, that the Centurion was still present when the soldier 'came' to pierce the Saviour's side (St. John xix. 31-37). The narrative of St. John reads markedly like that of an eyewitness, and he a Judaen. [1 So from the peculiar details and O.T. quotations.]

And as we compare both the general Judaen cast and Old Testament quotations in this with the other parts of the Fourth Gospel, we feel as if (as so often), under the influence of the strongest emotions, the later development and peculiar thinking of so many years afterwards had for the time been effaced from the mind of St. John, or rather given place to the Jewish modes of conception and speech, familiar to him in earlier days. Lastly, the account of St. Matthew seems as if written from the priestly point of view, as if it had been furnished by one of the Priests or Sanhedrist party, present at the time.

Yet other inferences come to us. First, there is a remarkable relationship between what St. Luke quotes as spoken by the soldiers: 'If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself,' and the report of the words in St. Matthew: [a St. Matt. xxvii. 42] He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He [2 The word 'if' (if He) in our A.V. is spurious.] is the King of Israel! Let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe on Him! These are the words of the Sanhedrists, and they seem to respond to those of the soldiers, as reported by St. Luke, and to carry them further. The 'if' of the soldiers: 'If Thou art the King of the Jews,' now becomes a direct blasphemous challenge. As we think of it, they seem to re-echo, and now with the laughter of hellish triumph, the former Jewish challenge for an outward, infallible sign to demonstrate His Messiahship.

But they also take up, and re-echo, what Satan had set before Jesus in the Temptation of the wilderness. At the beginning of His Work, the Tempter had suggested that the Christ should achieve absolute victory by an act of presumptuous self-assertion, utterly opposed to the spirit of the Christ, but which Satan represented as an act of trust in God, such as He would assuredly own. And now, at the close of His Messianic Work, the Tempter suggested, in the challenge of the Sanhedrists, that Jesus had suffered absolute defeat, and that God had publicly disowned the trust which the Christ had put in Him. 'He trusteth in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him.' [3 This is the literal rendering.

The 'will have Him' has pleasure in Him, like the German: '*Wenn Er Ihn will.*' Here, as in the Temptation of the Wilderness, the words misapplied were those of Holy Scripture, in the present instance those of Ps. xxii. 8. And the quotation, as made by the Sanhedrists, is the more remarkable, that, contrary to what is generally asserted by writers, this Psalm [b Ps. xxii.] was Messianically applied by the ancient Synagogue. [1 See Appendix IX.]

Jesus On The Cross

Page 4

The derision of the Sanhedrists under the Cross was, as previously stated, not entirely spontaneous, but had a special motive. The place of Crucifixion was close to the great road which led from the North to Jerusalem. On that Feast-day, when, as there was no law to limit, as on the weekly day of rest, locomotion to a 'Sabbath day's journey,' many would pass in and out of the City, and the crowd would naturally be arrested by the spectacle of the three Crosses. Equally naturally would they have been impressed by the titulus over the Cross of Christ. The words, describing the Sufferer as 'the King of the Jews,' might, when taken in connection with what was known of Jesus, have raised most dangerous questions.

And this the presence of the Sanhedrists was intended to prevent, by turning the popular mind in a totally different direction. It was just such a taunt and argumentation as would appeal to that coarse realism of the common people, which is too often misnamed 'common sense.' St. Luke significantly ascribes the derision of Jesus only to the Rulers, [3 The words, 'with them,' in St. Luke xxiii. 35, are spurious.] and we repeat, that that of the passers by, recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark, was excited by them. Thus here also the main guilt rested on the leaders of the people. [4 St. Mark introduces the mocking speeches (xv. 29) by the particle ova ('Ah') which occurs only here in the N.T. It is evidently the Latin '*Vah*,' an exclamation of ironical admiration. (See Bengel and Nebe, ad loc.) The words literally were: 'Ha! the downbreaker of the sanctuary and upbuilding it in three days, save Thyself.' Except the introductory particle and the order of the words, the words are the same in St. Matthew. The is used in the sense of a substantive (comp. Winer, Gram. p. 122, and especially p. 316).]

One other trait comes to us from St. Luke, confirming our impression that his account was derived from one who had stood quite close to the Cross, probably taken official part in the Crucifixion. St. Matthew and St. Mark merely remark in general, that the derision of the Sanhedrists and people was joined in by the thieves on the Cross. [5 The language of St. Matthew and St. Mark is quite general, and refers to 'the thieves;' that of St. Luke is precise and detailed. But I cannot agree with those who, for the sake of 'harmony,' represent the penitent thief as joining in his comrade's blasphemy before turning to Christ.

I do not deny, that such a sudden change might have taken place; but there is no evidence for it in the text, and the supposition of the penitent thief first blaspheming gives rise to many incongruities, and does not seem to fit into the text.] A trait this, which we feel to be not only psychologically true, but the more likely of occurrence, that any sympathy or possible alleviation of their sufferings might best be secured by joining in the scorn of the leaders, and concentrating popular indignation upon Jesus. But St. Luke also records a vital difference between the two 'robbers' on the Cross. [1 Tradition names the impenitent thief Gestas, which Keim identifies with, silenced, hardened, although the derivation seems to me forced.

The penitent thief is called Dysmas, which I would propose to derive from in the sense of 'the setting,' viz, of the sun: he who turns to the setting sun. Sepp very fancifully regards the penitent thief as a Greek (Japhetisch), the impenitent as a negro.] The impenitent thief takes up the jeer of the Sanhedrists: 'Art Thou not the Christ?' [2 So according to the right reading.] Save Thyself and us!' The words are the more significant, alike in their bearing on the majestic calm and pitying

Jesus On The Cross

Page 5

joining in the vile jeers of those who insulted the dying agonies of the Sufferer? [4 'Dost not thou even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?' Condemnation here means that to which one is condemned: the sufferings of the cross; and the expostulation is: Suffering as thou art like Him and me, canst thou join in the jeers of the crowd? Dost thou not even fear God, should not fear of Him now creep over thy soul, or at least prevent thee from insulting the dying Sufferer? And this all the more, since the circumstances are as immediately afterwards described.]

And this all the more, in the peculiar circumstances. They were all three sufferers; but they two justly, while He Whom he insulted had done nothing amiss. From this basis of fact, the penitent rapidly rose to the height of faith. This is not uncommon, when a mind is learning the lessons of truth in the school of grace. Only, it stands out here the more sharply, because of the dark background against which it is traced in such broad and brightly shining outlines. The hour of the deepest abasement of the Christ was, as all the moments of His greatest Humiliation, to be marked by a manifestation of His Glory and Divine Character, as it were, by God's testimony to Him in history, if not by the Voice of God from heaven. And, as regarded the 'penitent' himself, we notice the progression in his soul.

No one could have been ignorant, least of all those who were led forth with Him to crucifixion, that Jesus did not suffer for any crime, nor for any political movement, but because He professed to embody the great hope of Israel, and was rejected by its leaders. And, if any had been ignorant, the 'title' over the Cross and the bitter enmity of the Sanhedrists, which followed Him with jeers and jibes, where even ordinary humanity, and still more Jewish feeling, would have enjoined silence, if not pity, must have shown what had been the motives of 'the condemnation' of Jesus. But, once the mind was opened to perceive all these facts, the progress would be rapid. In hours of extremity a man may deceive himself and fatally mistake fear for the fear of God, and the remembrance of certain external knowledge for spiritual experience. But, if a man really learns in such seasons, the teaching of years may be compressed into moments, and the dying thief on the Cross might outdistance the knowledge gained by Apostles in their years of following Christ.

One thing stood out before the mind of the 'penitent thief,' who in that hour did fear God. Jesus had done nothing amiss. And this surrounded with a halo of moral glory the inscription on the Cross, long before its words acquired a new meaning. But how did this Innocent One bear Himself in suffering? Right royally, not in an earthly sense, but in that in which alone He claimed the Kingdom. He had so spoken to the women who had lamented Him, as His faint form could no longer bear the burden of the Cross; and He had so refused the draught that would have deadened consciousness and sensibility.

Then, as they three were stretched on the transverse beam, and, in the first and sharpest agony of pain, the nails were driven with cruel stroke of hammer through the quivering flesh, and, in the nameless agony that followed the first moments of the Crucifixion, only a prayer for those who in ignorance, were the instruments of His torture, had passed His lips. And yet He was innocent, Who so cruelly suffered. All that followed must have only deepened the impression. With what calm of endurance and majesty of silence He had borne the insult and jeers of those who, even to

Jesus On The Cross

Page 6

'patient thief' looked to Christ for admission into the Heavenly Kingdom. The words are true to the Jewish point of vision of the man. He recognised and owned Jesus as the Messiah, and he did so, by a wonderful forth going of faith, even in the utmost Humiliation of Christ. And this immediately passed beyond the Jewish standpoint, for he expected Jesus soon to come back in His Kingly might and power, when he asked to be remembered by Him in mercy.

And here we have again to bear in mind that, during the Life of Christ upon earth, and, indeed, before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, men always first learned to believe in the Person of the Christ, and then to know His teaching and His Mission in the forgiveness of sins. It was so in this case also. If the 'penitent thief' had learned to know the Christ, and to ask for gracious recognition in His coming Kingdom, the answering assurance of the Lord conveyed not only the comfort that his prayer was answered, but the teaching of spiritual things which he knew not yet, and so much needed to know.

The 'patient' had spoken of the future, Christ spoke of 'to-day'; the penitent had prayed about that Messianic Kingdom which was to come, Christ assured him in regard to the state of the disembodied spirits, and conveyed to him the promise that he would be there in the abode of the blessed, 'Paradise', and that through means of Himself as the Messiah: **'Amen, I say unto thee, To-day with Me shalt thou be in the Paradise.'** (Luke 23:43) Thus did Christ give him that spiritual knowledge which he did not yet process, the teaching concerning the 'to-day,' the need of gracious admission into Paradise, and that with and through Himself, in other words, concerning the forgiveness of sins and the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. This, as the first and foundation-creed of the soul, was the first and foundation-fact concerning the Messiah.

This was the Second Utterance from the Cross. The first had been of utter self-forgetfulness; the second of deepest, wisest, most gracious spiritual teaching. And, had He spoken none other than these, He would have been proved to be the Son of God. [1 Fully to understand it, we ought to realise what would be the Jewish ideas of the 'penitent thief,' and what his understanding of the words of Christ. Broadly, one would say, that as a Jew he would expect that his 'death would be expiation of his sins.' Thoughts of need of forgiveness through the Messiah would not therefore come to him. But the words of Christ must have supplied all this. Again when Christ spoke of 'Paradise,'

His hearer would naturally understand that part of Hades in which the spirits of the righteous dwelt till the Resurrection. On both these points there are so many passages in Rabbinic writings that it is needless to quote (see for ex. Westein, ad loc., and our remarks on the Parable of Lazarus and Dives). Indeed, the prayer: let my death be the expiation of my sins, is still in the Jewish office for the dying, and the underlying dogma is firmly rooted in Rabbinic belief. The words of our Lord, so far from encouraging this belief, would teach him that admission to Paradise was to be granted by Christ. It is scarcely necessary to add, that Christ's words in no way encouraged the realistic conceptions which Judaism attached to Paradise. In Biblical Hebrew the word is used for a choice garden: in Eccl. ii. 5; Cant. iv. 13; Nehem. ii. 8. But in the LXX. and the Apocr. the word is already used in our sense of Paradise. Lastly, nothing which our Lord had

Jesus On The Cross

Page 7

from the scene. We part company with him after his detailed account of the last scene before Pilate. [a St. John xix. 2-16]

The final sentence pronounced, we suppose him to have hurried into the City, and to have acquainted such of the disciples as he might find, but especially those faithful women and the Virgin-Mother, with the terrible scenes that had passed since the previous evening. Thence he returned to Golgotha, just in time to witness the Crucifixion, which he again describes with peculiar fulness of details. [b vv. 17-24] When the Saviour was nailed to the Cross, St. John seems once more to have returned to the City, this time, to bring back with him those women, in company of whom we now find him standing close to the Cross. A more delicate, tender, loving service could not have been rendered than this. Alone, of all the disciples, he is there, not afraid to be near Christ, in the Palace of the High-Priest, before Pilate, and now under the Cross.

And alone he renders to Christ this tender service of bringing the women and Mary to the Cross, and to them the protection of his guidance and company. He loved Jesus best; and it was fitting that to his manliness and affection should be entrusted the unspeakable privilege of Christ's dangerous inheritance. [1 The first impression left is, of course, that the 'brothers' of Jesus were not yet, at least in the full sense, believers. But this does not by any means necessarily follow, since both the presence of John under the Cross, and even his outward circumstances, might point him out as the most fit custodian of the Virgin-Mother. At the same time it seems the more likely supposition, that the brothers of Jesus were converted by the appearance to James of the Risen One (1 Cor. xv. 7).]

The narrative [a St. John xix. 25-27] leaves the impression that with the beloved disciple these four women were standing close to the Cross: the Mother of Jesus, the Sister of His Mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. [2 This view is now generally adopted.] A comparison with what is related by St. Matthew [b St. Matt. xxvii. 55] and St. Mark [c St. Mark xv. 40, 41] supplies further important particulars. We read there of only three women, the name of the Mother of our Lord being omitted. But then it must be remembered that this refers to a later period in the history of the Crucifixion. It seems as if John had fulfilled to the letter the Lord's command: **'Behold thy mother,'** (John 19:26-27) and literally 'from that very hour' taken her to his own home. If we are right in this supposition, then, in the absence of St. John, who led away the Virgin-Mother from that scene of horror, the other three women would withdraw to a distance, where we find them at the end, not 'by the Cross,' as in St. John xix. 25, but 'beholding from afar,' and now joined by others also, who had loved and followed Christ.

We further notice that, the name of the Virgin-Mother being omitted, the other 'three are the same as mentioned by St. John; only, Mary of Clopas is now described as 'the mother of James and Jose,' [3 There is, of course, the difficulty that Judas (Lebbaeus) and Simon Zelotes are not here mentioned as her sons. But they may have been her stepsons, or there may have other reasons for the omission. 'Judas of James' could scarcely have been the son of James, and Simon is expressly mentioned by Hegesippus as the son of Clopas.] and Christ's Mother's Sister' as 'Salome' [d St. Mark] and 'the mother of Zebedee's children.' [e St. Matthew] Thus Salome, the wife of Zebedee and St. John's mother, was the sister of the Virgin, and the beloved disciple the

Jesus On The Cross

Page 8

And so we notice among the twelve Apostles five cousins of the Lord: the two sons of Salome and Zebedee, and the three sons of Alphaeus or Clopas [1 Alphaeus and Clopas are the same name. The first occurs in the Babylon Talmud as Ilphai, or Ilpha [] as in R. haSh. 17 b, and often; the other in the Jerusalem Talmud as Chilphai [] , as for ex. in Jer. B. Kama 7 a.] and Mary: James, Judas surnamed Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus, and Simon surnamed Zelotes or Cananaean. [2 I regard the Simon Zelotes of the list of Apostles as the Simon son of Clopas, or Alphaeus, of Hegesippus, first, because of his position in the lists of the Apostles along with the two other sons of Alphaeus; secondly, because, as there were only two prominent Simons in the N.T. (the brother of the Lord, and Zelotes), and Hegesippus mentions him as the son of Clopas, it follows that the Simon son of Clopas was Simon Zelotes. Levi Matthew was, indeed, also a son of Alphaeus, but we regard this as another Clopas than the husband of Mary.]

We can now in some measure realise events. When St. John had seen the Saviour nailed to the Cross, he had gone to the City and brought with him for a last mournful farewell the Virgin, accompanied by those who, as most nearly connected with her, would naturally be with her: her own sister Salome, the sister-in-law of Joseph and wife (or more probably widow) of Clopas, and her who of all others had experienced most of His blessed power to save, Mary of Magdala. Once more we reverently mark His Divine calm of utter self-forgetfulness and His human thoughtfulness for others. As they stood under the Cross, He committed His Mother to the disciple whom He loved, and established a new human relationship between him and her who was nearest to Himself. [3 Incongruous though the interruption be, we cannot help noticing that the introduction of such a scene seems inconsistent with the whole theory of an Ephesian authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

On the other hand, it displays evidence of the true human interest of an actor in the scene.] And calmly, earnestly, and immediately did that disciple undertake the sacred charge, and bring her, whose soul the sword had pierced, away from the scene of unutterable woe to the shelter of his home. [4 Nothing is really known of the later history of the Blessed Virgin.] And this temporary absence of John from the Cross may account for the want of all detail in his narrative till quite the closing scene. [a St. John xix. 28.]

Now at last all that concerned the earthward aspect of His Mission, so far as it had to be done on the Cross, was ended. He had prayed for those who had nailed Him to it, in ignorance of what they did; He had given the comfort of assurance to the penitent, who had owned His Glory in His Humiliation; and He had made the last provision of love in regard to those nearest to Him. So to speak, the relations of His Humanity, that which touched His Human Nature in any direction, had been fully met. He had done with the Human aspect of His Work and with earth. And, appropriately, Nature seemed now to take sad farewell of Him, and mourned its departing Lord, Who, by His Personal connection with it, had once more lifted it from the abasement of the Fall into the region of the Divine, making it the dwelling-place, the vehicle for the manifestation, and the obedient messenger of the Divine.

For three hours had the Saviour hung on the Cross. It was midday. And now the Sun was craped in darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. No purpose can be served by attempting to trace the

Jesus On The Cross

Page 9

invalidate the argument, since he might have used the term inaccurately. It is in this sense that St. Luke (xxiii. 45) uses the verb, that is, if we adopt the amended reading. What Nebe writes on this subject (vol. ii. p. 301), and the illustrations of the popular use of the word from Pliny and Plutarch, deserve the most serious consideration. But, I repeat, I cannot attach weight in this argument to such testimonies, nor yet to the sayings of Origen, Tertullian, &c., nor to the Acta Pilati (the ecclesiastical testimonies are discussed by Nebe, u. s. p. 299).]

It seems only in accordance with the Evangelic narrative to regard the occurrence of the event as supernatural, while the event itself might have been brought about by natural causes; and among these we must call special attention to the earthquake in which this darkness terminated. [a St. Matt. xxvii. 51.] For, it is a well-known phenomenon that such darkness not infrequently precedes earthquakes. On the other hand, it must be freely admitted, that the language of the Evangelists seems to imply that this darkness extended, not only over the land of Israel, but over the inhabited earth. The expression must, of course, not be pressed to its full literality, but explained as meaning that it extended far beyond Judaea and to other lands.

No reasonable objection can be raised from the circumstance, that neither the earthquake nor the preceding darkness are mentioned by any profane writer whose works have been preserved, since it would surely not be maintained that an historical record must have been preserved of every earthquake that occurred, and of every darkness that may have preceded it. [2 There are frequent notices in classical writers of eclipses preceding disastrous events or the death of great men, such as of Caesar (Nebe, u. s. p. 300). But these were, if correctly related, eclipses in the true sense, and, as such, natural events, having in no way a supernatural bearing, and hence in no sense analogous to this 'darkness' at the Crucifixion.] But the most unfair argument is that, which tries to establish the unhistorical character of this narrative by an appeal to what are described as Jewish sayings expressive of similar expectancy.

[1 So Strauss (after Wetstein) and even Keim. Painful as controversy is in connection with the last hours of Jesus, I would not have shrunk from contesting the positions of Keim, if I had not felt that every unprejudiced person must see, that most of them are mere assertions, without an attempt at anything like historical evidence.] It is quite true that in old Testament prophecy, whether figuratively or really, the darkening, though not only of the sun, but also of the moon and stars, is sometimes connected, not with the Coming of Messiah, still less with His Death, but with the final Judgement. [2 Strauss (ii. p. 556), and more fully Keim (iii. p. 438, Note 3), quote Joel ii. 10, 31; Amos viii. 9; Is. xiii. 10; 1. 3; Job ix. 7; Jer. xv. 9. Of these passages some have no bearing, however remote, on the subject, while the others refer not to the Messiah but to the final judgement.]

But Jewish tradition never speaks of such an event in connection with Messiah, or even with the Messianic judgments, and the quotations from Rabbinic writings made by negative critics must be characterised as not only inapplicable but even unfair. [3 To be quite fair, I will refer to all the passages quoted in connection with the darkening of the sun as a token of mourning.

The first (quoted by Wetstein) is from the Midrash on Lament. iii. 28 (ed. Warsh. p. 72 a). But the

Jesus On The Cross

Page 10

The passage therefore can have no possible connection with such a phenomenon as the death of Messiah. (2) This is further confirmed by the enumeration of certain sins for which heavenly luminaries are eclipsed. Some are not fit for mention, while others are such as false witness-bearing, the needless cutting down of fruit-trees, &c. (3) But the unfairness, as well as the inaptitude, of the quotation appears from this, that only the beginning of the passage is quoted (Strauss and Keim): 'At a time when the sun is obscured, it is an evil sign to all the world,' while what follows is omitted: 'When the sun is obscured, it is an evil sign to the nations of the world; when the moon is obscured, it is an evil sign to Israel, because Israel reckons according to the moon, the nations of the world according to the sun.' And yet Wunsche (Erlauter. pp. 355, 356) quotes both that which precedes and that which follows this passage, but leaves out this passage itself. (Comp. Mechilta, p. 3 b.)

But to return from this painful digression. The three hours' darkness was such not only to Nature; Jesus, also, entered into darkness: Body, Soul, and Spirit. It was now, not as before, a contest, but suffering. Into this, to us, fathomless depth of the mystery of His Sufferings, we dare not, as indeed we cannot, enter. It was of the Body; yet not of the Body only, but of physical life. And it was of the Soul and Spirit; yet not of them alone, but in their conscious relation to man and to God. And it was not of the Human only in Christ, but in its indissoluble connection with the Divine: of the Human, where it reached the utmost verge of humiliation to body, soul, and spirit, and in it of the Divine, to utmost self-examination.

The increasing, nameless agonies of the Crucifixion were deepening into the bitterness of death. All nature shrinks from death, and there is a physical horror of the separation between body and soul which, as a purely natural phenomenon, is in every instance and overcome, and that only by a higher principle. And we conceive that the purer the being the greater the violence of the tearing asunder of the bond with which God Almighty originally bound together body and soul. In the Perfect Man this must have reached the highest degree. So, also, had in those dark hours the sense of man-forsakenness and His own isolation from man; so, also, had the intense silence of God, the withdrawal of God, the sense of His God-forsakenness and absolute loneliness.

We dare not here speak of punitive suffering, but of forsakenness and loneliness. And yet as we ask ourselves how this forsakenness can be thought of as so complete in view of His Divine consciousness, which at least could not have been wholly extinguished by His Self-examination, we feel that yet another element must be taken into account. Christ on the Cross suffered for man; He offered Himself a sacrifice; He died as the Representative of man, for man and in room of man; He obtained for man 'eternal redemption,' [a Hebr. ix. 12] having given His Life 'a ransom,' [b St. Matt. xx. 28] for many. For, men were 'redeemed' with the 'precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot;' [c 1 Pet. i. 19] and Christ 'gave Himself for us, that He might "redeem" us from all iniquity; [d Tit. ii. 14] He 'gave Himself "a ransom" for all;' [e 1 Tim. ii. 6.] Christ died for all;' [f 2 Cor. v. 15.] Him, Who knew no sin, God 'made sin for us;' 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us', and this, with express reference to the Crucifixion.

[g Ga. iii. 13.] This sacrificial, vicarious, expiatory, and redemptive character of His Death, if it

Jesus On The Cross

Page 11

sabachthanei? (Mark 15:34). Might it be that St. Matthew represents the current Judaeon or Galilean dialect, and St. Mark the Syrian, and that this casts light alike on the dialects in Palestine at the time of Christ, and even, to some extent, on the composition of the Gospels, and the land in which they were written? The Targum renders Ps. xxii. 2: Eli, Eli, metul mah shebhaqtani? ('On account of what hast Thou forsaken me?').]

These words, cried with a loud voice [2 This in the extreme agony of soul, not to mark His Divinity.] at the close of the period of extreme agony, [3 'About the ninth hour.' I cannot bring myself here to discuss the supposed analogous quotations of Ps. xxii. 1 in Rabbinic writings. The comparison is equally inapt and irreverent.] marked the climax and the end of this suffering of Christ, of which the utmost compass was the withdrawal of God and the felt loneliness of the Sufferer. But they that stood by the Cross, misinterpreting the meaning, and mistaking the opening words for the name Elias, imagined that the Sufferer had called for Elias. We can scarcely doubt, that these were the soldiers who stood by the Cross. They were not necessarily Romans; on the contrary, as we have seen, these Legions were generally recruited from Provincials.

On the other hand, no Jew would have mistaken Eli for the name of Elijah, not yet misinterpreted a quotation of Psalm xxii. 1 as a call for that prophet. And it must be remembered, that the words were not whispered, but cried with a loud voice. But all entirely accords with the misunderstanding of non-Jewish soldiers, who, as the whole history shows, had learned from His accusers and the infuriated mob snatches of a distorted story of the Christ.

And presently the Sufferer emerged on the other side. It can scarcely have been a minute or two from the time that the cry from the twenty-second Psalm marked the high-point of His Agony, when the words '**I thirst**' [a St. John xix. 28.] seem to indicate, by the prevalence of the merely human aspect of the suffering, that the other and more terrible aspect of sin-bearing and God-forsakenness was past. To us, therefore, this seems the beginning, if not of Victory, yet of Rest, of the End. St. John alone records this Utterance, prefacing it with this distinctive statement, that Jesus so surrendered Himself to the human feeling, seeking the bodily relief by expressing His thirst: 'knowing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.'

[1 The words last quoted can, of course, and have by most writers been connected with the thirst of Christ, as the fulfilment of Ps. lxix. 21. But the structure of the sentence leads rather to the punctuation adopted in the text, while I have the greatest difficulty in applying Ps. lxix. 21 in the manner proposed, and still more grave objection to the idea that Christ uttered the words in order to fulfil the Psalm, although the word 'that' must, as previously shown (p. 503), not be taken in the sense of 'in order that.' There is, of course, a tertium quid, and the Evangelist may be supposed to have expressed only his own sense that the Scripture was fulfilled, when he saw the thirst of the Saviour quenched in the 'vinegar' of the soldiers. But in that case we should expect the words 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled,' placed after the 'I thirst.']

In other words, the climax of Theanthropic Suffering in His feeling of God-forsakenness, which had led to the utterance of Psalm xxii. 1, was now, to His consciousness, the end of all which in

Jesus On The Cross

Page 12

recorded in the Fourth Gospel. But we can quite understand it, if the Utterance, 'I thirst,' followed immediately on the previous cry.

One of the soldiers, may we not be allowed to believe, one who either had already learned from that Cross, or was about to learn, to own Him Lord, moved by sympathy, now ran to offer some slight refreshment to the Sufferer by filling a sponge with the rough wine of the soldiers and putting it to His lips, having first fastened it to the stem ('reed') of the caper ('hyssop'), which is said to grow to the height of even two or three feet. [3 Comp. Tristram Nat. Hist. of the Bible, p. 457.] But, even so, this act of humanity was not allowed to pass unchallenged by the coarse jibes of the others who would bid him leave the relief of the Sufferer to the agency of Elijah, which in their opinion He had invoked. Nor should we perhaps wonder at the weakness of that soldier himself, who, though he would not be hindered in his good deed, yet averted the opposition of the others by apparently joining in their mockery. [b St. Matt. xxvii. 48, 49; St. Mark xv. 36.]

By accepting the physical refreshment offered Him, the Lord once more indicated the completion of the work of His Passion. For, as He would not enter on it with His senses and physical consciousness lulled by narcotised wine, so He would not pass out of it with senses and physical consciousness dulled by the absolute failure of life-power. Hence He took what for the moment restored the physical balance, needful for thought and word. And so He immediately passed on to 'taste death for every man.' For, the two last 'sayings' of the Saviour now followed in rapid succession: first, that with a loud voice, which expressed it, that the work given Him to do, as far as concerned His Passion, was 'finished;' (John 19:30) [a St. John.] and then, that in the words of Psalm xxxi. 5, in which He commended His Spirit into the Hands of the Father. (Luke 23:46) [b St. Luke.]

Attempts at comment could only weaken the solemn thoughts which the words awaken. Yet some points should be noted for our teaching. His last cry 'with a loud voice' was not like that of one dying. St. Mark notes, that this made such deep impression on the Centurion. [c St. Mark xv. 39.] In the language of the early Christian hymn, it was not Death which approached Christ, but Christ Death: He died without death. [1 *En pessima, non tu Pervenis ad Christum, sed Christus pervenit ad te, Cui licuit sine morte mori. Sedulius.*] Christ encountered Death, not as conquered, but as the Conqueror. And this also was part of His work, and for us: now the beginning of His Triumph. And with this agrees the peculiar language of St. John, that He 'bowed the Head, and gave up the Spirit'.

Nor should we fail to mark the peculiarities of His last Utterance. The 'My God' of the fourth Utterance had again passed into the 'Father' of conscious fellowship. And yet neither in the Hebrew original of this Psalm, nor in its Greek rendering by the LXX., does the word 'Father' occur. Again, in the LXX. translation of the Hebrew text this word expressive of entrustment, the commending, is in the future tense; on the lips of our Lord it is in the present tense. [2 So according to the better reading.] And the word, in its New Testament sense, means not merely commending: it is to deposit, to commit for safe keeping. [3 Comp. the use of the verb in such passages as St. Luke xii. 48; Acts xiv. 23; xx. 32; 1 Tim. i. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 2.] That in dying, or rather meeting and overcoming Death, He chose and adapted these words, is matter for deepest

Jesus On The Cross

Page 13

And now a shudder ran through Nature, as its Sun had set. We dare not do more than follow the rapid outlines of the Evangelic narrative. As the first token, it records the rending of the Temple-Veil in two from the top downward to the bottom; as the second, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks and the opening of the graves. Although most writers have regarded this as indicating the strictly chronological succession, there is nothing in the text to bind us to such a conclusion. Thus, while the rending of the Veil is recorded first, as being the most significant token to Israel, it may have been connected with the earthquake, although this alone might scarcely account for the tearing of so heavy a Veil from the top to the bottom.

Even the latter circumstance has its significance. That some great catastrophe, betokening the impending destruction of the Temple, had occurred in the Sanctuary about this very time, is confirmed by not less than four mutually independent testimonies: those of Tacitus, [1 Hist. v. 13.] of Josephus, [2 Jew. War vi. 5, 3.] of the Talmud, [3 Jer. Yoma 43 c; Yoma 39 b.] and of earliest Christian tradition. [4 So in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, from which St. Jerome quotes (in Matt. xxvii. 51, and in a letter to Hedibia) to the effect, that the huge lintel of the Temple was broken and splintered, and fell. St. Jerome connects the rending of the Veil with this, and it would seem an obvious inference to connect again this breaking of the lintel with an earthquake.]

The most important of these are, of course, the Talmud and Josephus. The latter speaks of the mysterious extinction of the middle and chief light in the Golden Candlestick, forty years before the destruction of the Temple; and both he and the Talmud refer to a supernatural opening by themselves of the great Temple-gates that had been previously closed, which was regarded as a portent of the coming destruction of the Temple. We can scarcely doubt, that some historical fact must underlie so peculiar and widespread a tradition, and we cannot help feeling that it may be a distorted version of the occurrence of the rending of the Temple-Veil (or of its report) at the Crucifixion of Christ. [5 A story is told in Jewish tradition (Gitt, 56 b, about the middle; Ber. R. 10; Vayyik. R. 22, and in other places) to the effect that, among other vilenesses, 'Titus the wicked' had penetrated into the Sanctuary, and cut through the Veil of the Most Holy Place with his sword, when blood dropped down.

I mention the legend to express my emphatic protest against the manner in which Dr. Joel (Blicke in d. Religionsgesch. i. pp. 7, 8, treating of the passage in the Midr. on Lam. ii. 17) has made use of it. He represents it, as if the Veil had been rent (Zerreissen des Vorhanges bei d. Tempelzerstörung), not cut through by Titus, and on the basis of this misrepresentation has the boldness to set a legend about Titus side by side with the Evangelic account of the rending of the Temple-Veil! I write thus strongly because I am sorry to say that this is by no means the only instance in which Jewish writers adapt their quotations to controversial purposes. Joel refers to Dr. Sachs, Beitr. i. p. 29, but that learned writer draws no such inference from the passage in question.]

But even if the rending of the Temple-Veil had commenced with the earthquake, and, according to the Gospel to the Hebrews, with the breaking of the great lintel over the entrance, it could not be wholly accounted for in this manner. According to Jewish tradition, there were, indeed, two Veils before the entrance to the Most Holy Place. [a Yoma v.] The Talmud explains this on the

Jesus On The Cross

Page 14

[d Yoma 54 a Kethub. 106 a; Sheqal. viii. 5.] The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 3000 priests to manipulate each. If the Veil was at all such as is described in the Talmud, it could not have been rent in twain by a mere earthquake or the fall of the lintel, although its composition in squares fastened together might explain, how the rent might be as described in the Gospel.

Indeed, everything seems to indicate that, although the earthquake might furnish the physical basis, the rent of the Temple-Veil was, with reverence be it said, really made by the Hand of God. As we compute, it may just have been the time when, at the Evening-Sacrifice, the officiating Priesthood entered the Holy Place, either to burn the incense or to do other sacred service there. To see before them, not as the aged Zacharias at the beginning of this history the Angel Gabriel, but the Veil of the Holy Place rent from top to bottom, that beyond it they could scarcely have seen, and hanging in two parts from its fastenings above and at the side, was, indeed, a terrible portent, which would soon become generally known, and must, in some form or other, have been preserved in tradition.

And they all must have understood, that it meant that God's Own Hand had rent the Veil, and for ever deserted and thrown open that Most Holy Place where He had so long dwelt in the mysterious gloom, only lit up once a year by the glow of the censer of him, who made atonement for the sins of the people. [1 May this phenomenon account for the early conversion of so many priests recorded in Acts vi. 7?]

Other tokens were not wanting. In the earthquake the rocks were rent, and their tombs opened. This, as Christ descended into Hades. And when He ascended on the third day, it was with victorious saints who had left those open graves. To many in the Holy City on that ever-memorable first day, and in the week that followed, appeared the bodies of many of those saints who had fallen on sleep in the sweet hope of that which had now become reality. [2 I dare express myself dogmatically on the precise import of St. Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. Does it mean that they were actually clothed with the Resurrection-body, or with the body which they had formerly borne, or that many saints from out Hades appeared to those who loved them, and with them had waited for the Kingdom, in the forms which they had known? We know too little of the connection between the other world and this, and the mode in which the departed may communicate with those here, to venture on any decided statement, especially as we take into account the unique circumstances of the occasion.]

But on those who stood under the Cross, and near it, did all that was witnessed make the deepest and most lasting impression. Among them we specially mark the Centurion under whose command the soldiers had been. Many a scene of horror must he have witnessed in those sad times of the Crucifixion, but none like this. Only one conclusion could force itself on his mind. It was that which, we cannot doubt, had made its impression on his heart and conscience. Jesus was not what the Jews, His infuriated enemies, had described Him. He was what He professed to be, what His bearing on the Cross and His Death attested Him to be: 'righteous,' and hence, 'the

Jesus On The Cross

Page 15

it was both a Sabbath and the second Paschal Day, which was regarded as in every respect equally sacred with the first, nay, more so, since the so-called Wavesheaf was then offered to the Lord.

And what the Jews now proposed to Pilate was, indeed, a shortening, but not in any sense a mitigation, of the punishment. Sometimes there was added to the punishment of crucifixion that of breaking the bones (*crucifragium*) by means of a club or hammer. This would not itself bring death, but the breaking of the bones was always followed by a coup de grace, by sword, lance, or stroke (the *perforatio* or *percussio sub alas*), which immediately put an end to what remained of life. [1 Comp. Friedlieb, *Archaeol. d. Leidensgesch.* pp.163-168; but especially Nebe, u. s. ii. pp. 394, 395.] Thus the 'breaking of the bones' was a sort of increase of punishment, by way of compensation for its shortening by the final stroke that followed.

It were unjust to suppose, that in their anxiety to fulfil the letter of the Law as to burial on the eve of that high Sabbath, the Jews had sought to intensify the sufferings of Jesus. The text gives no indication of this; and they could not have asked for the final stroke to be inflicted without the 'breaking of the bones,' which always preceded it. The irony of this punctilious care for the letter of the Law about burial and high Sabbath by those who had betrayed and crucified their Messiah on the first Passover-day is sufficiently great, and, let us add, terrible, without importing fictitious elements. St. John, who, perhaps, immediately on the death of Christ, left the Cross, alone reports circumstance.

Perhaps it was when he concerted with Joseph of Arimathaea, with Nicodemus, or the two Marys, measures for the burning of Christ, that he learned of the Jewish deputation to Pilate, followed it to Praetorium, and then watched how it was all carried out on Golgotha. He records, how Pilate acceded to the Jewish demand, and gave directions for the *crucifragium*, and permission for the after-removal of the dead bodies, which otherwise might have been left to hang, till putrescence or birds of prey had destroyed them. But St. John also tells us what he evidently regards as so great a prodigy that he specially vouches for it, pledging his own veracity, as an eyewitness, and grounding on it an appeal to the faith of those to whom his Gospel is addressed.

It is, that certain 'things came to pass [not as in our A. V., 'were done'] that the Scripture should be fulfilled,' or, to put it otherwise, by which the Scripture was fulfilled. These things were two, to which a third phenomenon, not less remarkable, must be added. For, first, when, in the *crucifragium*, the soldiers had broken the bones of two malefactors, and then came to the Cross of Jesus, they found that He was dead already, and so 'a bone of Him' was 'not broken.' Had it been otherwise, the Scripture concerning the Paschal Lamb, [a Ex. xii. 46; Numb. ix. 12] as well that concerning the Righteous Suffering Servant of Jehovah, [b Ps. xxxiv. 20] would have been broken. In Christ alone these two ideas of the Paschal Lamb and the Righteous Suffering Servant of Jehovah are combined into a unity and fulfilled in their highest meaning. And when, by a strange concurrence of circumstances, it 'came to pass' that, contrary to what might have been expected, 'a bone of Him' was 'not broken' this outward fact served as the finger to point to the predictions which were fulfilled of Him.

Jesus On The Cross

Page 16

The application of this to Christ is the more striking, that even the Talmud refers the prophecy to the Messiah. [d Sukk. 52 a] And as these two things really applied to Christ, alike in His rejection and in His future return, [e Rev. i. 7] so did the strange historical occurrence at His Crucifixion once more point to it as the fulfillment of Scripture prophecy. For, although the soldiers, on finding Jesus dead, broke not one of His Bones, yet, as it was necessary to make sure of His Death, one of them, with a lance, 'pierced His Side, with a wound so deep, that Thomas might afterwards have thrust his hand into His Side. [f St. John xx. 27]

And with these two, as fulfilling Holy Scripture, yet a third phenomenon was associated, symbolic of both. As the soldier pierced the side of the Dead Christ, 'forthwith came there out Blood and Water.' It has been thought by some, [1 So, with various modifications, which need not here be detailed, first, Dr. Gruner (*Comment. Antiq. Med. de Jesu Christ Morte*, Hal. 1805), who, however, regarded Jesus as not quite dead when the lance pierced the heart, and, of late, Dr. Stroud (*The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, 1871), and many interpreters (see Nebe, u.s. pp. 400, 401).] that there was physical cause for this, that Christ had literally died of a broken heart, and that, when the lance pierced first the lung filled with blood and then the pericardium filled with serous fluid, [2 But certainly not through a separation of the serum and the cruor, which is the mark of beginning putrefaction.] there flowed from the wound this double stream. [3 The fullest and most satisfactory physical explanation is that given by the Rev. S. Haughton, M.D., and reprinted in the Speaker's Commentary on 1 John, pp. 349, 350.

It demonstrates, that this phenomenon would take place, but only if a person who was also being crucified died of rupture of the heart.] In such cases, the lesson would be that reproach had literally broken His Heart. [a Ps. ixix. 20.] But we can scarcely believe that St. John could have wished to convey this without clearly setting it forth, thus assuming on the part of his readers knowledge of an obscure, and, it must be added, a scientifically doubtful phenomenon. Accordingly, we rather believe that to St. John, as to most of us, the significance of the fact lay in this, that out of the Body of One dead had flowed Blood and Water, that corruption had not fastened on Him. Then, there would be the symbolic meaning conveyed by the Water (from the pericardium) and the Blood (from the heart), a symbolism most true, if corruption had no power nor hold on Him, if in Death He was not dead, if He vanquished Death and Corruption, and in this respect also fulfilled the prophetic ideal of not seeing corruption. [b Ps. xvi. 10.]

To this symbolic bearing of the flowing of Water and Blood from His pierced side, on which the Evangelist dwells in his Epistle, [c 1 John v. 6.] and to its external expression in the symbolism of the two Sacraments, we can only point the thoughtful Christian. For, the two Sacraments mean that Christ had come; that over Him, Who was crucified for us and loved us unto death with His broken heart, Death and Corruption had no power; and that He liveth for us with the pardoning and cleansing power of His offered Sacrifice.

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