

THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY

Lots of people live for Friday, toughing out the week as they await its end. Jesus lived for Good Friday. It's called good because though we mourn the death of Jesus Christ that day, we rejoice because His death means the death of sin, and His resurrection means the death of death.

This was central to His purpose in coming as the Christ, Messiah, the promised deliverer of God's people. And it's reflected in Jesus' final words spoken from the cross. Let's look at the final four of "the seven sayings of Christ from the cross" as part of our Easter week reflections.

MY GOD, MY GOD - Jesus was on the cross for about six hours, the final three in complete darkness. God veiled the final agony of His dying Son, who was bearing the sins of the world in His own body. At the ninth hour, Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 record that Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*"

Jesus was quoting Psalm 22:1, not in words of bewilderment but as a testimony to the reality of what was occurring between God and Christ. Forsaken by God was the antithesis of Christ's daily experience, both in His preincarnate and incarnate state. But God cannot look upon sin, as Habakkuk 1:13 and Isaiah 59:2 make clear, "*your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, your sins have hidden His face from you.*" Christ was bearing all sin within Him.

Jesus' words were fulfilling the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 making atonement for sin, as a propitiation, paying the penalty with His own body and blood, "*bearing sin in His own body on the tree*" (1Peter 2:22-24). Christ "*redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*" (Galatians 3:13), as "*Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation*" satisfactory payment for sin.

I AM THIRSTY - John 19:28 says that when Jesus knew that all was now finished, that is, all the Scriptures regarding His life and ministry had been fulfilled in Him, He said, "*I thirst.*" This fulfilled prophecies of Psalm 42:2 and 63:1. The sour wine He was given in response fulfilled Psalm 69:2. This was everyday sour wine, not the wine mixed with drugs that He refused at the beginning of His crucifixion. He consciously remained in lucid control and authority over His life.

John says they gave Him a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to His mouth. This connects Jesus to the passover of Exodus 12, as God said to use hyssop to apply the blood of the lamb to the doorposts, so that the Lord would pass over those who believed and obeyed God's Word. The blood of Christ cleanses all who believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

IT IS FINISHED - John 19:30 records that when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said "*It is finished*" and bowed His head and gave up His spirit. He was not killed, He died by His own will: "*I lay down My life, no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord*" (John 10:17).

"*Jesus cried out with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit*" (Matthew 27:50) and "*breathed His last*" (Mark 15:34). "*It is finished*" cried Jesus. That's the Greek "tetelestai" meaning "paid in full." The cup of wrath had been taken by Christ. He drank it all. He paid the debt of sin with the perfect sacrifice of His own sinless life, giving His body and blood to quench the wrath of God against sin.

Hallelujah! God's ancient promises are fulfilled, as the obedient Christ finished His work "*to do the will of the Father*" (John 4:34, 9:4) and "*to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45) as "*He bore the sins of many and makes intercession for the transgressors*" (Isaiah 53:12).

INTO YOUR HANDS - All this fulfills Psalm 22 which closes, "*the Lord has done it.*" Luke 23:46 records that Jesus called out with a loud voice. "*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!*" And having said this He breathed His last. Jesus quoted Psalm 31:5 word for word. This also echoes Ecclesiastes 12:7 "*the spirit returns to God who gave it*" and 1Peter 4:19 "*entrusting His soul to the Creator,*" as Stephen called out in Acts 7:59, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*"

These passages underscore what the believer does in death: trusting Christ. The reality of human life is an eternal spirit housed in a temporary body of flesh for earthly existence. At death, the believer's spirit goes to be with God, the unbeliever's spirit is separated from God, both awaiting resurrection of the body when Christ returns. Because "*Christ was obedient unto death, even death on a cross, therefore God has highly exalted Him*" in resurrection and ascension to heavenly glory (Philippians 2:7-11, 1Corinthians 15:4, 19-28, 50-57). Because Jesus lives today, all who hope in Him have the promise of eternal life with Him forever. Trust Christ and live! □