

# The Real Easter Story

## *The 7 'Last Sayings' of Jesus on the Cross*

### **First: Luke 23:33-34**

*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

His first saying was a plea for mercy on behalf of His tormentors. As soon as His blood began to flow, Jesus (our great High Priest), began to intercede. See *Isaiah 53:12* also. This phrase in Luke does not suggest that His tormentors were unaware of what they were doing, but that they were unaware of the enormity of their sin. Most of us think of these last sayings as something nice; but God does answer prayer. How was Jesus' prayer answered here? The first answer came with the conversion of one of the thieves on the cross next to Jesus (*Luke 23:40-43*). Another followed with the conversion of the Roman centurion (*Luke 23:47*). In the weeks and months that followed, thousands came to faith in Christ, especially at Pentecost. No doubt many of the people that had shouted for Him to be crucified came to faith in Him. In *Acts 6:7*, we're told that a lot of temple priests later confessed Him as Lord. Our prayers are never just 'nice' things to God...

### **Second: Luke 23:43**

*"...and Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'"*

There came a point where this thief's mocking turned to silence, and his silence turned to repentance, and his heart was utterly changed. This thief, who had earlier mocked Jesus, was received immediately and unconditionally into the Savior's kingdom. This man had no time to do any works to merit salvation. He had no time to earn Christ's favor. His good deeds definitely did not outweigh his bad deeds. His request was a final, desperate, end-of-his-rope plea for a mercy that he knew he did not deserve. Also see *Luke 18:13*. Jesus' words to him conveyed an unqualified promise of full forgiveness, covering every evil deed – every sin – he had ever done. Jesus didn't promise him purgatory or a half-way house; He promised him Paradise THAT DAY!

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### Third: 3<sup>rd</sup> John 19:26-27

*"Woman, behold your son."*

His third saying on the cross reflects the tender love of a Son for His Mother. In spite of all His pain, He was making provision for the care of His mother Mary in the years to come... years He would not be around to directly care for her. Although He was occupied with the most important event in history, He remembered to make provision for the needs of one woman, His mother.

### Fourth: Matthew 27:45-46

*"My God, My God – why have you forsaken Me?"*

God was punishing His Own Son as if He had committed every wicked deed done by every person who would ever believe. The physical pains of crucifixion – dreadful though they were – were nothing compared to the wrath of the Father against sin. The anticipation of this is what caused Christ to sweat blood in the garden. That is why He looked ahead to the cross with such horror. We cannot realize all that was involved in paying the price for our sin. It's sufficient to understand that all of our worst fears about the horrors of hell were realized by Him as He received the due penalty for others' wrongdoing. While there was no interruption in the Father's love for Him as a Son, God did turn away from Him as our substitute for sin. This cry of His was no mere recitation of *Psalms 22*; this was the outcry of His soul and *Psalms 22* was merely predicting it. Read *Psalms 22*, especially verses **1, 6-8, 14-18** and **27-31**. It is a 'Messianic' psalm. While the Roman guards thought he was just complaining, the Jewish leaders knew that he was quoting a 'Messianic' psalm...

### Fifth: John 19:28

*"After this, Jesus – knowing that all things were accomplished – that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst.'"*

As the end neared, Christ uttered a final plea for physical relief. In His thirst, we see the true humanity of Christ. Again, this fulfilled *Psalms 69:21*.

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### **Sixth: John 19:30**

*"It is finished."*

In Roman times, when you had served your prison sentence for a crime, you would receive a piece of paper with your crime written out on it and this phrase ('It is finished') stamped on it. Today's phrase would be 'paid in full'. If ever someone tried to convict you of that crime again, all you had to do was to produce this piece of paper. When the magistrate saw the 'paid in full' sign on it, you were not punished for it again. When Jesus was on the cross, your list of crimes (sins) were on a paper that was nailed to His hands. Having paid the penalty for your crimes, you have been set free. When the devil or someone else tries to enslave you again, just show them your paper with the 'paid in full' stamp on it...

### **Seventh: Luke 23:46**

*"Father, into Your hands, I commit My Spirit." 'Having said this, He breathed His last.'"*

This was the greatest moment of victory in man's history! It would be made gloriously clear when He would triumphantly rise from the dead in just three days...

Please remember that all of these sayings were made under the excruciating pain of crucifixion. It is utterly amazing how someone could think of anyone else under these circumstances! Yet, to the last, Jesus was thinking of you and me...

# Lesson 3

# The Real Easter Story

## *The Resurrection of Jesus*

### The Pre-Resurrection scene:

#### 1. Some very interesting physical things happened after His crucifixion

***Matthew 27:51-53***

A. The Jewish Temple veil was torn... by no one. Only the high priest was allowed near it and one person certainly couldn't do this. The temple veil being torn was God's way of saying that there was no more sacrificial system for the Jews anymore. God's final sacrifice – Jesus – had done it perfectly, so no more lamb sacrifices were necessary. The Temple Veil was 4"thick, 60' high and 30' wide. It was torn from top to bottom. Jesus was the real Temple Veil in addition to being our High Priest; see ***Hebrews 10:19-23***.

B. There was an earthquake

C. Many dead people were resurrected and walked around for a while.

#### 2. The Romans were convinced that Jesus was dead (and Roman soldiers certainly knew what death was like). ***John 19:28-37*** – this is what would be called an 'expert' opinion.

#### 3. Burial preparation ***John 19:38-42***

A. Even if there had been any life in Jesus, the pungent nature and weight of 75 pounds of Myrrh and Aloes, with their smell, their bitterness, and then the linens being wrapped around His body by a roller, and over His head and face (cutting off His oxygen supply) would have snuffed out any life. Also, putting Him in an enclosed room with no fresh oxygen but the strong aromatics of the Myrrh and Aloes, and then laying His body on a cold stone table is not the way to revive someone! Lay on the ground in the summer and see how quickly you get cold...

B. The stone used to seal the grave was meant for protection against men and beasts. It required several men to roll it into place. Jesus' stone was probably even bigger because the Jews were afraid that someone would steal His body. The stone would go down into a groove, so pushing it out of the way would be even harder.

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## *The Resurrection of Jesus*

### The Pre-Resurrection scene (continued):

#### 4. The Roman Guard *Matthew 27:62-66*

A. This was about 4-16 soldiers. The Roman Seal affixed over Jesus tomb was far more important to them than some backwoods preacher. Soldiers cold-blooded enough to gamble over a dying victim's cloak are not the kind of men to be hoodwinked by timid Galileans or to jeopardize their Roman necks by falling asleep on their posts. The Roman penalty for falling asleep at their posts was death. One soldier always acted as a sentinel while the others enjoyed a certain degree of repose, ready, however, to start up at a moment's notice. However, in this case, there may have been more because of the Jews being afraid of someone stealing His body and claiming a 'resurrection'.

B. In his right hand, the Roman soldier would carry the famous Roman pike, over 6 feet in length, consisting of a sharp iron head fixed in a wooden shaft. He could either charge with it like a bayonet or throw it like a javelin. In his left arm is a huge shield, some 4.5 feet in length and about 2.5 feet in width. He also had a 3-foot sword and a dagger in his belt. And, remember, he is a professional soldier; not exactly someone to mess with – especially if you're just a fisherman.

#### 5. The Roman Seal *Matthew 27:66*

A. A cord stretched across the stone and fastened to the rock at either end by sealing it with clay. If you broke this seal, you incurred the wrath of the Roman CIA. That seal represented all of the authority of Rome itself.

B. But why was it done in this case with a dead backwoods Jew? As further protection against anyone stealing Jesus' body and claiming that their King had arisen.

6. **The Disciples** – Not a particularly courageous bunch. Only one of them showed up at Jesus' crucifixion... and none of them came forward to help bury the body. How could this bunch have gone up against professional Roman killing machines? Also, they really believed Him to be dead – in fact – they had to be convinced that He really did rise from the dead (*Luke 24:9-12*).