

THE AGONY OF THE CRUCIFIXION

At His last Passover meal with the apostles, Jesus said, “Behold, even *now* the hand of him who is betraying Me *is* with Me at the table” (Luke 22:21). Although Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, He washed Judas’ feet along with the other apostles’ (John 13:2-5, 11). Then Judas left. As Jesus administered the symbols of His body and His blood to the eleven apostles who were with Him, He knew that the time of His betrayal was near. When He departed with the apostles to the Mount of Olives, walking into the darkness of that dread night, Jesus began to feel the melancholy oppressiveness of the sins of the whole world weighing on Him, and His mind was filled with thoughts of the suffering and agony that lay ahead. Though His apostles were with Him, an overwhelming feeling of isolation penetrated every cell of His being. He could not share His sorrow with them because they did not understand what the rest of that Passover night and day would bring. He had spoken to them in the days leading up to the Passover, forewarning them of His betrayal and death, but they did not grasp the meaning of His words. They did not know that His life was about to end with a gruesome death on the cross as the TRUE PASSOVER SACRIFICE OF GOD—THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE WORLD.

The time had come! His rendezvous with destiny drew closer and closer to its ultimate climax! The Lord God of the Old Testament, Who had come to earth in the flesh, was about to die the agonizing death that He and the prophets had foretold. This was the reason He had come into the world. He had come in the flesh in order to die—to give His body to be beaten, scourged and crucified, and to offer His blood for the sins of mankind. But no human being desires to die a slow death in great pain and agony. As Jesus anticipated His suffering, His flesh cried out to be spared. Only the love of God, which had sustained Him and brought Him to this day, could give Him the strength to endure the suffering that was appointed to Him.

He had manifested the love of God during His days in the flesh, setting a perfect example for His disciples. Now the love of God would be manifested by His death. As they were walking to the Mount of Olives, He charged His apostles, “LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.” He spoke from the depths of His innermost being, desiring to indelibly etch His words into their minds: “If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.

“These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. **This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you.** No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:10-13).

Jesus was about to manifest the greatest love of all by laying down His life for them, as well as for the whole world. But the apostles did not know this yet, nor did they know that some of them would also lose their lives for His name’s sake in the days ahead. Jesus warned the disciples that the world would hate them and persecute them, just as the world had hated and persecuted Him: “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this. Remember the word that I spoke to you: a servant is not greater

than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they kept My word, they will keep your *word* also. But they will do all these things to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him Who sent Me.

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have nothing to cover their sin. **The one who hates Me hates My Father also.** If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this has happened so that the saying might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’ But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one shall bear witness of Me. Then you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from *the* beginning. I have spoken these things to you so that you will not be offended” (John 15:18-16:1).

Jesus continued to warn them, telling them that they, too, would be killed for preaching the truth of God: “They shall cast you out of the synagogues; furthermore, **the time is coming that everyone who kills you will think that he is rendering service to God.** And they shall do these things to you because they do not know the Father, nor Me. But **I have told you these things so that when the time comes, you may remember** that I said *them* to you. However, I did not say these things to you at *the* beginning because I was with you....These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world**” (John 16:2-4; 33).

When they arrived at the Mount of Olives, Jesus told His apostles, “My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me” (Matt. 26:38). Then, taking Peter, James and John, He went into the Garden of Gethsemane. “And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray *that you* do not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw; and falling to *His* knees, He prayed, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing to take away this cup from Me—; NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE’ ” (Luke 22:40-42).

Jesus Knew That He Could Not Escape Death

Even as He prayed to the Father, Jesus knew that the prophecies of His suffering and death must be fulfilled. As the Lord God of the Old Testament, He had given the first prophecy of His suffering to Adam and Eve in the presence of Satan, who would instigate His death (Gen. 3:15).

Jesus knew that He was the Lamb of God “slain from *the* foundation of *the* world” (Rev. 13:8). He knew from the beginning that He was destined to die on this Passover day—Nisan 14, April 5, 30 AD. As the Lord God of the Old Testament, He had entered into covenant with Abraham by passing between the parts of the sacrificial animals to represent His own death (Gen. 15:5-18). At the beginning of the 14th, during the dark hours of the night, He had delivered the promises of the covenant, foreshadowing the time when, as Jesus Christ, He would deliver the promises of the New Covenant. On the day portion of the 14th, the animals for the covenant sacrifice were slaughtered and their bodies were split asunder, allowing their blood to spill on the ground. During those same hours, the body of Jesus Christ would be beaten and broken open, and His blood would be poured out unto death. In the late afternoon of the 14th, the slaughtered animals lay

still on the ground, and Abraham watched and waited. In like manner, Jesus' body would remain on the cross as the end of the 14th drew near, while his followers watched and waited (Luke 23:49). Although Jesus died at the "ninth hour," or approximately 3 PM, His body was not placed in the tomb until the 14th was ready to end at sunset.

At the exact time that Jesus would be buried, nearly 2000 years before, Abraham experienced a foretype of His death and burial: "And it came to pass, as the sun was going down, that **a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him**" (Gen. 15:12). Abraham remained in this symbolic burial after the sun had gone down. When the darkness of night had come, the Lord God passed between the parts of the sacrifice: "And it came to pass—when the sun went down and it was dark—behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces" (verse 17).

By this maledictory oath, God Himself confirmed that He would fulfill the covenant through His own death and burial. This event, which took place during "the horror of great darkness," also had a fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The only sign that Jesus gave of His Messiahship was the length of time that He would be "in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). As He lay in the darkness of the tomb for three days and three nights, He was confirming that He was the Messiah Who would fulfill the promises of the New Covenant.

Jesus Knew That the Words of the Prophets Would All Be Fulfilled

As the covenant sacrifice had foreshadowed and the prophets had foretold, the suffering and death that were appointed to Jesus would surely come to pass. Every detail would be fulfilled, exactly as recorded in Scripture. When Judas left His presence on that Passover night, Jesus knew that Judas was on his way to the authorities to betray Him, as it was written: "Even a man, my friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psa. 41:9). Jesus also knew that the elders and the chief priests would pay Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray Him: "And I said to them, 'If *it is* good, give me my price; and if not, let it go.' So **they weighed my price—thirty pieces of silver**" (Zech. 11:12). Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a dead slave (Ex. 21:32).

Jesus also remembered the prophecy of Isaiah that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter: "**He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**"

But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.... He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.... Yet the LORD willed to crush Him and He has put Him to grief: You shall make His life an offering for sin.... He shall see of the travail of His soul. He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; and He shall bear their iniquities.... because He has poured out His soul to death; and He was

counted among the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for transgressors” (Isa. 53:3-12).

Jesus was fully aware that He would be mocked, beaten and spit upon, and would suffer a terrible scourging. The whip that would inflict His scourging would have tips of nails and glass and would literally rip the flesh off His body. After forty lashes, He would be near death. He knew that this torturous ordeal would leave Him so horribly disfigured that He would be almost unrecognizable. Isaiah prophesied all of these things: **“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting...Many were astonished at Him—for *His body was so disfigured—even His form beyond that of the sons of men*”** (Isa. 50:6; 52:14).

Jesus knew that the prophecy of David in Psalm 22 was about to be fulfilled. He would cry out these very words while He was hanging on the cross: **“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me**, and *why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not answer; and in the night season, and am not silent...But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised by the people*. All who see Me mock Me; they shoot out the lip; they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted on the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, since He delights in Him’ ” (Psa. 22:1-2, 6-8).

Even during the mocking and jeering of the people, priests and Pharisees, He would trust God the Father, as He had from His earliest days in the flesh: “For You are He who took Me out of the womb, causing Me to trust while on My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; You are My God from My mother’s womb. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls have encircled around Me; strong bulls of Bashan have surrounded Me. They opened wide their mouths at Me, like a ravening and a roaring lion” (verses 9-13).

The next prophecies of David reveal the excruciating agony that He would suffer during His crucifixion as His physical life drained away: “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint [from the jolt of the cross falling into its hole]; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels [from loss of blood]. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws;

“Dogs [the soldiers] have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers [the priests and Pharisees] have encircled me; **they have pierced My hands and My feet** [nailing Him to the cross]; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. **I can count all My bones** [because the flesh had been ripped open]; they look and gloat over Me [in astonishment because He was so disfigured]. **They divide My garments among them and cast lots upon My vesture**” (verses 14-18).

In the midst of this agonizing ordeal, Jesus would pray to God the Father for strength to endure: “But You, O LORD, be not far from Me; **O My strength, hasten to help Me!** Deliver My soul from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth; yea, and from the wild ox’s horns. **You have answered Me...**For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted [Jesus Christ]; **and He has not hidden His face from him, but when he cried to Him, He heard**” (verses 19-24). These prophetic words of David show that God the Father would not

truly forsake His Son at any time during His suffering and crucifixion but would be with Him as He bore the sins of all mankind.

In Psalm 69, God inspired David to write more of the thoughts that Jesus would have while on the cross. Although He had done no wrong, He would be hated and condemned to die by crucifixion, which was the lot of criminals. His death would bring great disrepute upon His disciples, and He would be rejected by His own physical brothers and sisters: “**Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head**; those who would cut me off are mighty being wrongfully my enemies...Do not let those who wait on You, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; **let not the ones who seek You be ashamed for my sake**, O God of Israel **Because for Your sake I have borne reproach, shame has covered my face**. I have become a stranger to My brothers and a alien to My mother’s children” (Psa. 69:4-8).

Jesus would suffer all the shame and agony of the crucifixion because of His profound love and zeal for God the Father: “**For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up, and the reproaches of those who reproached You have fallen upon Me**...Hear me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; answer me speedily. Draw near unto my soul and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies. **You have known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor** [being executed like a criminal]; my enemies are all before You. **Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none**. They also gave Me gall for My food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink” (verses 9, 16-21).

Jesus knew that He would have to bear this shameful and agonizing ordeal to the end. He knew that His suffering would become so unbearable that He would feel as if the Father had abandoned Him. He knew that a spear would be thrust into the side of His body, as the prophet Zechariah was inspired to write: “...And **they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced**, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only *son*, and shall be in bitterness over Him, as the bitterness over the firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

Knowing that every one of these prophecies must be fulfilled, Jesus was in great anguish as He prayed to the Father. The thought of suffering such a hideous and merciless death was nearly overwhelming. Luke records, “Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. **And being in AGONY** [in His mind and spirit, knowing that all eternity hinged on this day], **He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground**” (Luke 22:43-44).

Jesus Looked Forward to the Kingdom of God

Throughout His suffering, Jesus would keep His mind on His coming resurrection and the Kingdom of God. He knew that He would be raised from the dead by the power of God the Father and would give praise and glory to Him at the future resurrection of the saints, when His kingdom would be established over all the earth: “From You comes my praise in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before those who fear Him [the resurrected saints]. The meek shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD shall praise Him; may your heart live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD [because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin]; and all the families of the nations shall worship before You [at His return], for the kingdom is

the LORD'S and He rules over the nations.

“All the rich of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him; even he who cannot keep his own soul alive. A seed shall serve Him; it shall be told of the LORD to the coming generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall yet be born, that He has done this [through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ]” (Psa. 22:25-31).

In the final words of His prayer, Jesus asked God the Father to restore Him to the glory that He had with the Father before the world existed. He also prayed for His disciples and for those who would become His disciples through the preaching of the gospel, that they all might be one with Him and the Father: “Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, ‘Father, **the hour has come**; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send. **I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do.**

“And now, **Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.** I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things that You have given Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave to Me; and they have received *them* and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me.

“I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and I have been glorified in them. **And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as We *are* one.** When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

“But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them. **I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them** because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would **keep them from the evil one.** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them in Your truth; Your Word is the truth.**

“Even as You did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. **And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they also may be sanctified in Your truth.** I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word; that **they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us,** in order that the world may believe that You did send Me.

“And I have given them the glory that You gave *to* Me, in order that they may be

one, in the same way *that* We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am, so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because **You did love Me before *the* foundation of *the* world.** Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. **And I have made known Your name to them, and will make *it* known** [through His death and resurrection]; **so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them**” (John 17:1-26).

When Jesus finished this prayer, He arose and returned to His disciples. “After saying these things, Jesus went out with His disciples *to a place* beyond the winter stream of Kidron, where *there* was a garden into which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who was betraying Him, also knew of the place because Jesus had often gathered there with His disciples” (John 18:1-2).

The time had come for Jesus to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and to give His life for their sins and for the sins of the world. It was the death of God manifested in the flesh—THE CREATOR GOD! **His death and only His death could pay for the sins of all mankind.** Because of God’s profound love for mankind, He personally and willingly took upon Himself the penalty for sin, which is death. Though He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:2-3), He never sinned. Thus He could offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

He would experience a cruel death not only at the hands of wicked and treacherous men, **but at the hands of Satan the devil, the author of sin and the enemy of God and man!** Could God manifested in the flesh conquer sin and overcome Satan by enduring the suffering and shame of the cross?

In fact, there was no question about whether He would be able to endure the pain and agony of the beating, scourging and crucifixion. Why? What was Jesus’ mindset? In the book of Hebrews, the apostle Paul wrote of Jesus’ attitude: “... **Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame,** and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

The very fact that Jesus was to die in this manner was the ultimate purpose of His coming in the flesh. He was to taste death for every person because He alone was the Savior of mankind: “But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor **on account of suffering the death, in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone;** because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; in *the* midst of *the* church I will sing praise to You.’ And again, ‘I will be trusting in Him.’ And again, ‘Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me’ ” (Heb. 2:9-13).

This is what Jesus must have been thinking as He finished His prayer. Now the moment had arrived! The time of His betrayal was at hand. Judas was coming. Jesus was ready.

The Ordeal Begins

His fervent prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane had brought Jesus strength from the Father (Luke 22:43). Determined to do His Father's will, Jesus said to His apostles, "Behold, the hour has drawn near, and the Son of man is betrayed into *the* hands of sinners. Arise! Let us be going. Look, the one who is betraying Me is approaching" (Matt. 26:45-46).

Then Jesus stepped forward to meet Judas, who was now possessed of Satan. The prophecy of His arrest was being fulfilled: "And immediately, while He was speaking, Judas, being one of the twelve, came up with a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the one who was betraying Him had given them a sign, saying, '**Whomever I shall kiss, He is *the one*. Arrest Him and take Him securely away.**' And as soon as he came up to Him, he said, 'Master, Master,' and kissed Him earnestly. Then they laid their hands on Him and arrested Him" (Mark 14:43-46).

Jesus was arrested like a common criminal, exactly as the Scriptures had prophesied: "At that point Jesus said to the crowd, 'Have you come out to take Me with swords and clubs, as against a robber? I sat day after day with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not arrest Me. **But all this has happened so that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.**' Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled [fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7]" (Matt. 26:55-56).

As the chain of agonizing events unfolded—the false accusations and unjust trials, the cruel beatings, the humiliating mocking and spitting, the brutal scourging and a slow death by crucifixion—Jesus Christ remained steadfast in His love and loyalty to God the Father. But the disciples and women who looked upon Jesus' mutilated and bloodied body did not understand what they were witnessing. They stood afar off, watching His crucifixion in stunned bewilderment and disbelief that this could be happening to Jesus Christ, Whom they believed to be the Son of God. How could the promised Savior be nailed to the cross in naked shame, dying before their very eyes? They had hoped that He would save them from the Roman oppression and establish the Kingdom of God. Now there would be no salvation, not at that time or ever, so they thought, as they witnessed Jesus drawing His last breath on the cross. They did not realize until after the resurrection that **the outpouring of Jesus' blood was the beginning of the salvation of the world.**

The Son of God had died to atone for the sins of the world! As the God Who had created man, His death paid the penalty for the sins of every human being, opening the way for all mankind to receive the gift of eternal life. This was the beginning of the New Covenant, sealed with the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, which would bring salvation to all the world.