
Lesson 52

Forsaken by the Father

The Scripture Lesson

John 19:25-27; Matthew 27:45, 46

In our last lesson we heard the first two of the seven cross words. In our lesson for this week we will learn about the rest of those words. The third was spoken to His mother and to His beloved disciple John, who, in great sorrow of heart, were standing near the cross of Jesus. Jesus meant more to them than life itself, and now they must watch Him die on that terrible cross.

Jesus looked at them and said first to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then He turned to John and said, "Behold thy mother!"

Do you know what Jesus was telling them? Two things. First of all, He was taking care of His dear mother. Mary's husband, Joseph, had already died, you see, and she needed someone to take care of her in her old age. Jesus was going away, so *He* could no longer, as her son, care for her. Jesus therefore said to John, "*You* love her, and take care of her as if she were your own mother."

But Jesus was also telling them something else. You noticed, didn't you, that He called His mother, "Woman." That was to teach her that she must no longer think of Jesus as being her *son*. Now that Jesus was about to die, He would never again be any man's son, or brother, or friend, in the same way that He was during His life on earth.

OUR GUIDE is published by the Protestant Reformed
Sunday School Association.

He would rise again, but He would have a glorified body and He would go to heaven, where He would sit at the right hand of God and be given all power in heaven and on earth. Mary and John must therefore begin to think of Jesus, not as *son*, and as a special *friend*, but as their *Savior*.

For more than three hours, Jesus did not speak again on the cross. Till about noon on that Friday, the enemies of Jesus imagined that they had Jesus in their power, to do with Him as they pleased. But then something happened that must have put terror in their hearts. A thick darkness began to settle over the country till it completely shut out the light of the sun. For three whole hours it was pitch dark at Calvary. And the people knew that darkness was the sign of judgment, and of the wrath of God. They knew therefore that *God* was there at the place of the crucifixion in His *anger*. And for three hours it was very quiet around the cross of Jesus.

Do you know why it was dark there? The darkness, we believe, was truly a sign of God's wrath. God was pouring out all His wrath on His people because of their sins. *We* are God's people; and we are *sinners*. Under that wrath of God we should have perished everlastingly. But we didn't. Why not? Because all of God's wrath against us was being poured out on *Jesus*, God's Son, our Savior. For three hours, during the time

of that darkness, Jesus suffered all of the agonies that we would otherwise have had to suffer forever in hell. So great was His suffering that at last He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

That was the fourth cross word. Soon after that, Jesus’ suffering was finished. He had taken on Himself *all* of God’s wrath that we deserved. There was no more punishment for Him to bear. And, notice this, there was no more punishment for *us*. Jesus had suffered it *all*. The darkness over Calvary therefore disappeared. The light of the sun returned. We are saved everlastingly!

The Death of Jesus

Matthew 27:47-50

At last, at 3:00 in the afternoon, after the darkness disappeared, the suffering of Jesus’ *soul* was past. Then He must have begun to notice how much His *body* hurt. And He noticed how very thirsty He was. He spoke, therefore, the fifth word from the cross, “I thirst.”

Someone right away ran and took a sponge, dipped it into a bowl of wine, put the sponge on the stalk of a hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips, so that He could suck out of it some of the wine. And as soon as Jesus had done that, His strength revived, so He was able to cry out with a loud voice, “It is finished!” That was the sixth cross word. It was a shout of triumph. Jesus had finished what He had to do in order to save His people from their sins. He had finished all His suffering.

Yes, it was a cry of victory. And the people around the cross could tell that. His enemies had before called Him a liar. They said He was a blasphemer who deserved to die. They put Him on the cross and then mocked Him by saying that if He really were the Son of God He should be able to save Himself by coming down. They said really that He was the worst of criminals, who deserved to be rejected by men and by God. But no longer do they say that. The darkness frightened them. They were glad to see the sun return, but what happened in the next few minutes was enough to convince them that Jesus was not the criminal they said He was. There was first the

cry, “It is finished!” They knew that those were the words, not of a man who was *defeated*, but of one who was a *victor*. And then, shortly after, Jesus uttered the final cross word, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” They could tell very well that, in His death, He was not *rejected* of God, but received by Him in His *favor*.

And they noticed too how Jesus died. For immediately after Jesus had cried with a loud, strong voice, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. They could tell that Jesus actually had control over the moment of His death. When His work was finished, He commanded death to come and take Him. It should have reminded them of Jesus’ word long before, that no man could take His life, for He will lay it down of Himself.

Yes, Jesus died. His body hung there lifeless on the cross and it would soon be put into a grave. But His spirit was in the hands of His Father. Already, you see, Jesus was in heaven. How Jesus must have looked forward to this — to the time when all of His terrible suffering would be past, and He would enter the glorious kingdom of His Father! And how He must have been received with joy by the saints who were already in glory! Around Jesus there must have been great joy and rejoicing, for He had finished the work by which His people are saved!

Jesus was home at last. And because of that, we can die without fear. For at the moment of our death, we too can commit our spirits into the hands of the Father. We will go to be with Jesus, who suffered everything in order that we might be redeemed!

Memory Work

Group A

Matthew 27:46 “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Group B

Matthew 27:46b “Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

- _____ 1. Sometime before the three hours of darkness, John and Jesus' mother stood alone at the cross.
- _____ 2. Jesus then spoke the second cross word, "Woman, behold thy son."
- _____ 3. Jesus called His mother "woman" to teach her that the earthly relationship between her and Himself, as mother and son, was coming to an end.
- _____ 4. Jesus then told John to care for Mary as if she were his own mother.
- _____ 5. John therefore brought Mary to her house and gave her whatever money she needed to live.
- _____ 6. At noon a darkness settled over the land and shut out the light of the sun.
- _____ 7. Because they did not believe that the darkness was a sign of the wrath and judgment of God, the Jews kept right on mocking Jesus.
- _____ 8. God was indeed present in His wrath at Calvary, but He poured out His wrath, not on sinful men, but on His sinless Son.
- _____ 9. Near the end of those terrible three hours Jesus cried out, "My Father, My Father, why hast thou forsaken Me?"
- _____ 10. As soon as Jesus had finished bearing all the wrath of God that we deserved, the sun began to break through the darkness.
- _____ 11. The fifth cross word was simply, "I thirst."
- _____ 12. Someone then immediately gave Jesus to drink by reaching to His lips a wine-filled sponge on the end of a stick.

_____ 13. The wine apparently gave Jesus the strength He needed to cry out with a loud voice, "It is finished."

_____ 14. After the seventh cross word, Jesus immediately bowed His head and died.

_____ 15. The manner of His death thus showed to all at the cross that He died a victor, confident of God's favor.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. To what two people did Jesus speak in the third cross word?
2. What did Jesus call His mother? Do you know why He did that?
3. In heaven there will no longer be a mother and son relationship between Mary and Jesus. Is that true only of Mary and Jesus, or is it true of *all* earthly relationships? In other words, will *you* still call *your* mother "Mom" in heaven?
4. What happened at noon in the land of Canaan? Why would the Jews at Calvary have been frightened by that? What do you think — was Jesus also terrified of the darkness?
5. What was the fourth cross word? What was Jesus suffering at that time?
6. How long did the darkness last? Why is it important to *us* that the sunshine returned to Calvary?
7. What was the fifth cross word?
8. Hanging as He was on the cross, Jesus was unable Himself to take a drink. How was a drink given to Him?
9. After the three hours of darkness, Jesus was very near death. The wine seems to have revived some of His strength. What was He able then to do?
10. There was a sound of triumph in the loud cry, "It is finished!" It was obvious, therefore, that Jesus had not ended up the *loser* because of the cross, but rather the *winner*. What was the victory that He had won?

11. During the first three hours that Jesus was on the cross, His enemies mocked Him by saying that, since God did not save Him from the cross, God did not approve of Him. How did the last cross word show that they were wrong — that even in His death on the cross Jesus *was* approved by God?

12. What happened immediately after the last cross word, so that the people there could see that

Jesus actually had control over the moment of His own death?

13. Why would there have been great joy in heaven when Jesus' spirit entered glory?

14. The Bible records for us seven times that Jesus spoke while He was on the cross. You have now learned about all seven of them. Can you quote them, in their right order?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. Perhaps it was when the jeering of the mob subsided somewhat that John and Mary and two other women (Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary _____) came and stood before Jesus. Those four were here stricken with terrible grief, for the One whom they had learned to love more than life itself hung before them dying the awful death of crucifixion. Especially would that have been true of Jesus' mother. And Jesus, though He was Himself suffering inexpressible anguish of soul and body, nevertheless was concerned about the welfare of His mother. When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the _____ standing by whom He _____, He saith to His mother, _____, behold thy _____! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy _____! Thus did Jesus put off the earthly relationships that had held for 33 years while He lived among men. And thus did Mary begin to learn that the old mother/son relationship must be broken, only to be replaced by a more blessed bond, one by which she, with the saints of all ages, would be united to Jesus as her Savior. At the same time, Jesus was providing for the earthly needs of His mother, for we read that, from that _____, that disciple took her unto his own _____ (John 19:25-27).

2. From 9:00 till noon the Jews had imagined themselves to be masters of the situation. Jesus, they thought, was in their power, and they railed on Him at will. At 12:00, however, a terrifying thing happened, which shut the mouths of the mockers. Luke tells us that it was the _____ hour, and there was _____

over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the _____ was _____ (Luke 23:44, 45). Matthew says that there was darkness over the whole _____ (Matt. 27:45). Apparently there was a cloud of darkness which could be seen descending over the land of Canaan, and this darkness was so impenetrable that it blocked the light of the sun.

3. The people knew from the Scriptures that darkness signified judgment, and the wrath of God. What they did not understand was the connection between the crucifixion of Jesus and the presence of God in His wrath at this place. They did not understand that, during those three hours of darkness, the vials of God's wrath against sinners were being poured out on Him who hung there on that central cross. Think of it: All the terrors and agonies of hell that all the people of God would otherwise have had to endure to all eternity were compressed into the agonies Christ endured during those three hours of darkness. Nothing can be more terrible than to experience the wrath of God. And the concentration of so much wrath in so short a span of time would be so indescribably awful that no man could possibly have borne it but the Son of God incarnate. It was at the very depths of those hellish agonies that Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, _____ hast thou _____ me?" Or, as it is in the language that Jesus spoke, "Eli, _____, lama _____?" (Matt. 27:46).

4. This was the fourth cross word, uttered by Jesus at about the _____ hour. Matthew records also that the darkness lasted from the sixth hour unto the _____ hour (Matt. 27:45, 46). Because the obedient servant of

Jehovah had borne all the wrath of God that there was to be borne, there was no longer any reason for the darkness to hide the light of the sun. The judgment was past. There is no more condemnation — no more condemnation for Jesus to bear, and no more condemnation “to them which are _____ Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

5. So terrible had been the bearing of God’s wrath during those three hours of darkness, that Jesus was probably not even conscious of the physical suffering that He was enduring at the same time. Now that the soul suffering is past, however, He becomes acutely aware of the fact that His body was also wracked with awful pain. One of the excruciating agonies of dying by crucifixion was thirst. Jesus, too, was ever so thirsty. Six hours earlier He had been thirsty, but He refused to drink the wine He was offered, because it was mixed with a narcotic that would dull the senses of those being crucified. After the darkness was ended, however, Jesus knew that all things were now _____, that the _____ might be fulfilled. That is, Jesus knew that the penalty for sin had been paid, that the purpose of His coming into the world, according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, was accomplished. No reason was there anymore, therefore, not to drink that wine. Hence the fifth utterance of the cross: “I _____” (John 19:28).

6. Apparently there was an immediate attempt to grant Jesus’ wish, for we read that _____ one of them _____ and took a _____ and filled it with vinegar and put it on a _____, in order to raise it to Jesus’ parched lips, that He might suck from it some of the wine. Many, however, were still pondering the words of that terrible cry in the darkness, Eli, Eli...! “This man called for _____,” they said. So awed by the darkness were the Jews at Calvary, that they were afraid that Elijah might yet personally appear, and the day of judgment symbolized by the darkness might begin for Israel right here on Golgotha. They therefore said, “Let be, let us see whether

_____ will come and _____ him” (Matt. 27:47-49).

7. When Jesus had received the _____, He said, It is _____ (John 13:30). The idea seems to be that the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross, especially during the three hours of darkness, so drained His strength that He could feel Himself slipping into unconsciousness. Jesus willed, however, not to be overtaken by death, but to give Himself actively to death. He needed the refreshment of that drink, therefore, in order to recover the physical and mental strength to enable Him consciously to lay down His life for His people.

8. There was surely a ring of triumph in the cry, “It is finished!” That it was a cry of victory could not have been missed by the people gathered on Calvary. It was not the barely audible whisper of a man succumbing to the power of death. Luke tells us that Jesus cried with a _____ voice, and that this strong cry was followed immediately by the seventh cross word, “_____ into thy hands I _____ my _____.” Further, this last cross word was not followed by a slow, painful struggle after which Jesus finally breathed His last. Luke writes, “and having said _____, he gave up the _____” (Luke 23:46). John says, that He _____ His head and gave up the ghost (John 19:30). Those at the cross therefore could hardly have failed to notice the voluntary nature of His death. It is true that Jesus died *as a result* of that which He suffered on Calvary. It is true too that God *took away* Jesus’ life, executing upon Him the sentence of physical death, which belongs to the wages of sin. But at the same time, it is obvious that Jesus did not simply succumb to death when He was no longer physically able to hold onto life. He was fully conscious at the time of His loud cry. He had control over the moment of His death. When His work was finished, He announced it, and, as it were, ordered death to take Him. “No man _____ it from me,” Jesus had said of His life, “but I _____ it down of _____” (John 10:18).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Because a mother's love for her children is so strong, we can probably say that the grief of Mary, the mother of Jesus, was greater than that of any other of His close acquaintances gathered at the cross. Is that still true today? That is, has Mary's love for Jesus continued to be stronger than other people's because she was His natural mother? If it has changed, when and how, do you suppose, did that happen?

2. When Jesus lived among men He had a close personal relationship with a rather small group of people—His mother, His disciples, Mary Magdalene, etc. What do you think, when we are in heaven with thousands upon thousands of fellow saints, are we going to have a relationship with Jesus that is *more* personal, *more* intimate than that which His disciples had enjoyed when He was on earth, or *less* so?

3. What evidence do you see in this chapter that Jesus' father, Joseph, had died before Jesus was crucified?

4. The Jews must have been terrified by the darkness on Calvary, because they correctly understood the darkness to be a sign of an angry God. However, because they did not understand what was happening on Calvary, they really missed the significance of this darkness. Can you explain why it became dark on Calvary, and, closely related to that, why it remained dark for three hours?

5. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "O my Father...." At 9:00 on Friday morning He prayed, "Father, forgive...." Out of the darkness He cried, "My God, my God...." Can you think of a reason for the change of address from "Father" to "God"? Why would you expect Jesus to return, as He did, to the use of "Father" in the final cross word?

6. Why, do you suppose, did Jesus ask, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" when He knew, and had known for a good long time, not only *what* would happen at this Passover but exactly *why*?

7. Jesus was indeed, in the fullest sense of the word, "forsaken" of God. Hardly does that mean that God simply *went away* from Jesus. Can you explain what it *does* mean?

8. The "Apostles' Creed" teaches that Jesus, in

connection with His suffering and death, "descended into hell." Do you see a connection between the three hours of darkness and the "descent" into hell?

9. Six hours earlier Jesus had *refused* a drink. Now, at the ninth hour, He *asks* for one. Why was there this change?

10. Some of the Jews apparently thought that Jesus, by His cry, "Eli, Eli....," was calling for Elias. This came out of a common misconception that the prophet Elijah would come personally to identify the Messiah (see Mark 9:11). What do you think, when these people said, "Let us see whether Elias will come to save him" (Matt. 27:49), were they mocking Jesus for thinking that He was the Messiah, or were they afraid that Elijah might actually come to save Him?

11. John 19:30 says that "when Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished." Do you see a possible relationship between Jesus' receiving the vinegar and His uttering that sixth cross word?

12. What circumstances leading up to Jesus' death should have persuaded the Jews who witnessed it that Jesus was the Master even of that situation?

13. When Jesus earlier declared concerning His life that "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18), He was surely affirming that His death would be *voluntary*. But is that all there is to it? Or is there a sense also in which His death was *involuntary*? Think about this. Peter later said to the Jews that they had "*killed* the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14). Was that true only as to their *intent*, or did they *really kill Him*?

14. The words of the fourth and seventh cross words can be found in Psalm 22:1 and Psalm 31:5 respectively. Jesus did not, however, utter them simply in order to fulfill Scripture. Rather, He was expressing the real response of His own soul at that time to existing circumstances. How ought we to understand the relationship between the Messianic prophecies and Jesus' fulfillment of them?

15. Where did Jesus go at the moment of His death? What, then, happened on Ascension Day?