

language, "space was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies'."\* Legend tells us that when storms sweep Mount Pilatus in Switzerland, Pilate's ghost still washes its hands in the rain, crying, "It won't come off, it won't come off."

Nor by such efforts will the guilt for Jesus' death come off your soul. Although Jesus died almost two thousands years ago, yet you are just as guilty as those who crucified Him—and more so. For when you reject Him it is in the face of evidence which they did not have—namely, the resurrection and the work of Jesus in history. So yours is the greater sin. Hell is filled with those who have rejected Him, and soon you may be added to the list if you continue to refuse Him. You still have Jesus on your hands!

What will you do then with Jesus?

\*The Christ of the Gospels, Eerdmans, 1947, p. 592.

What can you do with Him? You have seen that you cannot ignore Him. No one else can decide the issue for you. Mere admiration will not suffice. You can make no substitute for Him. You cannot shift your guilt to another. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

#### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

What will you do with Jesus? He stands before you this very moment. Not Jesus, but YOU are on trial. Today He stands with pleading hands as your Saviour. Tomorrow He will sit on His throne as your judge. What will you do then with Jesus? If you refuse Him you will be lost—now and forever. If you accept Him as your Saviour, you will be saved—both here and hereafter. I beg of you—as the choir sings our invitation—trust in Jesus that my Saviour may be your Saviour too!

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## THE SHADOW OF CALVARY

March 15, 1959

Scripture: John 19:17-22

"And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha"—John 19:17

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when Jesus arrived at Calvary. From that time until three in the afternoon the Son of God struggled in valiant conflict with all the powers of Hell. Upon its outcome depended the eternal welfare of every immortal soul.

In so short a time allotted to us for this message we can hardly do justice to so tremendous a theme. Fortunately, the crucifixion of Jesus is one of the most familiar of all events in history. Assuming, therefore, that you are no stranger to the event, we shall simply endeavor to point out the heart of its message. In no place, other than Calvary, do we find the full meaning of the words, "God was in Christ, reconciling

the world unto himself . . ." (II Cor. 5:19), as "Christ was once (once-for-all) offered to bear the sins of many . . ." (Heb. 9:28). Thus we look at the shadow of Calvary. In so doing we ask you to consider the place of the crucifixion, the persons of the crucifixion, and the purpose of the crucifixion.

#### PLACE OF A SKULL

The place of the crucifixion was "the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha" (Jn. 19:17) and in the Latin "Calvary." The exact location is uncertain. But the evidence seems to favor a small knoll just north of the old city of Jerusalem known today as Gordon's Calvary. Even today one may see it as a rugged hill in whose side are two caves, giving it the appearance of a skull. Jewish archaeologists affirm it to be the place where the Jews executed criminals by stoning. When the Romans came they

continued to use it, substituting crucifixion for stoning.

Death on the cross, the most painful known to man, was abhorred by the Jews. Said they, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:23). The Romans despised it also. Cicero wrote, "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears." It was punishment reserved for slaves, foreigners, and criminals of the lowest class.

According to custom when Jesus arrived at Calvary the upright piece of the cross was placed in a hole in the ground, while the cross bar lay flat on the ground. Upon the latter Jesus was made to lie stark naked with arms outstretched. First His arms and legs probably were jerked out of joint to render Him helpless. Then His hands were nailed to the cross bar. Raising Him to the upright pole, His feet were nailed to a little shelf used to support the weight of the body. There He hung for six hours!

The lingering suffering of death on a cross was intense, especially in hot climates. Inflammation coupled with slow bleeding produced a fever which was aggravated by the heat of the sun, the strained discomfort of the body, and an insatiable thirst. The swollen wounds and torn tendons resulted in excruciating pain. The head ached beyond description, and the mind became confused as the victim died a thousand deaths. Add to this the pure and sensitive nature of Jesus, and the worst agony is multiplied to infinity.

#### SUFFERING AND SHAME

We dealt with the gruesome details of the death of Jesus that you might understand the suffering and shame endured by our Lord for your sins. Only then can you grasp even in part the meaning of Paul's words in Philippians 1:8, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross . . ."

But the greatest suffering of Jesus was not physical but spiritual. On the cross He became sin that in Him God might

punish evil in its entirety. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). In your sin you forsake God. The final issue of your sin is to be forsaken of God. As a living sinner you are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). At death the result of unforgiven sin according to Revelation 20:14-15 is for you to be cast into the lake of fire, or Hell, which is the second death. This is to be forsaken of God forever. Herein is the meaning of Jesus' cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46). It is impossible for you to probe the depth of the mystery of this cry. Suffice to say that in this moment the Heavenly Father turned His face from the Son that, according to Isaiah 63:3, Jesus might tread the winepress of the wrath of God alone. It was for only a moment that Jesus was alone, but in this moment He suffered the agonies of Hell for you.

Usually the lingering death of crucifixion lasted for hours, even days. But Jesus died within six hours. At the end of that time a soldier thrust a spear into his side whereupon blood and water flowed forth mingled together (Jn. 19:33ff). Competent physicians have said that the cause of Jesus' death was a broken heart, broken for you and me.

#### THE PERSONS

Which leads us to consider the persons of the crucifixion. Time does not allow us to look at those about the cross. If you will look carefully I am sure that you will find yourself among them. But John 19:18 says, "Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." These two were robbers, probably companions in crime of Barabbas. Jesus then was crucified as a substitute for Barabbas.

But His substitution included far more. According to Roman law when a man was crucified the nature of his crime was written out and nailed to the cross over his head. Of Jesus Pilate wrote "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Jn. 19:19). It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin that all might read it. However, there is a far greater implication in these languages. Hebrew was the language of religion; Greek that of culture; and Latin that of government. The three great streams

of life in Jesus' day were Jewish, Greek, and Roman. All of these contributed to the crucifixion of Jesus. Rebellious religion condemned Him, pagan culture ignored Him, and evil power killed Him.

The point is that these three elements are present in every age, and as such involve every one of us. The prophet Isaiah looked not only seven hundred years into the future but to the end of time—and into every heart—when he said, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (53:5).

### THE TWO THIEVES

But turning back to Golgotha, focus your attention upon the two thieves. For in them you get a closer look at yourselves. Note that at the outset of the crucifixion both thieves reproached Jesus (Matt. 27:44). But one thief ceased to blame Jesus and began to pray (Lk. 23:40-42). He confessed his sin. To the other then he said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then turning to Jesus he prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The Greek word says that he kept on saying, "Remember me! Remember me!" Jesus stopped dying long enough to say to him, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Note that both thieves prayed. One prayed for spiritual salvation. The other prayed only for physical deliverance from the cross (Matt. 27:42-44). One entered heaven with a prayer on his lips. The other crossed the portals of Hell as he prayed—but for the wrong thing. The only prayer that a lost man can pray with Biblical assurance that it will be granted is "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk. 18:13).

Do you not see yourself in this picture? First, we see two lost sinners reproaching Jesus. Then we see one a praying and redeemed sinner; the other a blaspheming (Lk. 23:29 *railed* is blasphemed) lost sinner. Note that John says that all this occurred with "Jesus

in the midst" (19:18). Jesus is always in the midst. He is in the midst of your sin, for it is against Him. He is in the midst of your prayers, for they are prayed to Him and in His name. He is in the midst of your soul's destiny, for either you are saved through Him or judged by Him.

In this scene we see the equation of life. Note at the close Jesus is in the midst with a lost man on one side and a saved man on the other. The lost man represents what you are. The saved man suggests what you may become. The difference is Jesus. The equation of eternal life is **YOU AS YOU ARE PLUS CHRIST EQUALS WHAT YOU CAN BE.**

### IN JESUS' NAME

You say that you are a praying person. Then be sure that you are on praying ground. Until you are saved you cannot possibly be, for you must pray in Jesus' name. Therefore, in Jesus' name, or on the basis of what He has done for you, pray, "God be merciful unto me a sinner," "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The moment you do so you will be saved. He will say "To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

This is possible because of the purpose of the crucifixion. John 19:30 tells us that just before His death Jesus cried, "It is finished." This is a word meaning to bring something to its intended end. It is a perfect tense expressing a completed work. Thus Jesus cried that the redemptive work of the Saviour was completed. All that God gave to Him to do had been brought to its intended end—that of providing salvation for all men. There remains now only the resurrection, a work of God, which He will soon accomplish.

In Matthew's account of Jesus' death (27:50) he used a word meaning to grant permission. Literally he said that Jesus "dismissed his spirit." In other words when He had finished His redemptive work He said to His spirit, "You can go now!"

### "IT IS FINISHED"

The import of this entire matter is that in His FINISHED work God has done

all that He can do for your salvation. The rest is up to you. Either you trust in Jesus and be saved, or else you reject Him and be lost. If like the Jewish religionists you insist on choosing your own way to be saved; if like the Greek culturists you ignore Jesus; if like the Roman power you rebel against Him—then there is no other way for you to be saved! A sovereign God offers you salvation on His terms, not yours. His offer as stated in I Peter 1:18-19 is that you are to be redeemed not “with cor-

ruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

I offer you that salvation right now, without money and without price. No matter how good you are you must be saved. No matter how sinful you may be you can be saved. All must be saved the same way—through faith in the Christ who died that you might live. Will you trust Him right now? Write and tell me that you have.

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## WHEN SHADOWS FLEE

March 22, 1959

Scripture: John 20

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” — John 20:1

Before daybreak on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene and other women (Lk. 24:1f) left their homes to go to the tomb of Jesus, but when they arrived shortly after sunrise they found it empty. Immediately, Mary Magdalene ran to Peter and John with what to her was distressing news, but which was in reality the most glorious word ever spoken. Thus we are introduced to the climatic theme of the gospel, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

No critic has ever been able to explain away the empty tomb of Jesus. Speaking many years ago, Lord Lyndhurst, one of the greatest legal minds in British history, declared, “I know pretty well what evidence is; and, I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet.” With that avowal we turn from the fact of the resurrection to consider something of its meaning for you and me. Note therefore the meaning of the empty tomb, the response of Jesus to love, and His revelation to doubt.

When Mary Magdalene announced the fact of the empty tomb, Peter and John immediately had a foot race to ascertain the fact. John, the younger of the two,

was the first to reach the tomb. Being a timid soul he did not enter, but merely peeped in to see the empty grave clothes. Upon arrival, Peter rushed in to see the same. Then John followed. John 20:6-8 dramatically relates the incident. “Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple . . . and he saw, and believed.” Peter saw the evidence, but went away wondering (Lk. 24:12). John saw the orderly arrangement of the grave clothes as proof that it was not a grave robbery, and believed.

### BELIEVING ATTITUDES

The same thing says different things to different people. Like Peter, many of you see the empty tomb, and go away wondering. What really happened to the body of Jesus? That it is not in the tomb is quite evident. But what is its significance? All of the doubts of skeptical minds still perplex you.

But others of you, like John, see and believe. You look behind the phenomenon to its phenomenal meaning. What did John believe? He believed that Jesus was alive — somehow He had overcome death. He saw the authentication of His deity which Jesus had promised to the doubting Pharisees (Matt. 12:39ff.). He was “de-