

BaptistWay Bible Series for March 28: Crucifiedâ€”for us

March 16, 2010

The Bible records Jesus making seven statements while on the cross. You will not find all seven in any one Gospel account, but only when reviewing all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Imagine a timeline in your mind. Jesus agonized on the cross for six hours—from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on that Friday. We know this precise timing from a reading of Mark 15:25: “It was the third hour when they crucified him.” According to the Jewish method of keeping time, the day began at sunrise or 6 a.m., thus the third hour of the day would be 9 a.m. They took the Lord down from the cross at the ninth hour of the day, which would be 3 p.m. (Mark 15:34-37). In addition, Scripture divides this time into two equal periods: the first from 9 a.m. until noon (the sixth hour, Luke 23:44) and from noon until 3 p.m.

I suggest Jesus spoke three of these statements during the first time period, leaving four from noon until 3 p.m. Of course, this is a matter of interpretation and to be dogmatic about the ordering of the statements is both futile and arrogant.

The fact Jesus was able to speak at all is amazing. Studies of the physical affects of crucifixion lead one to believe that one had to expend great strength, putting one’s back against the cross so that air could be taken in. This had to be done in order to breathe, much less vocalize. Most victims died of suffocation as a result.

Sometime after 9 a.m., Jesus looked around and noticed his mother, Mary and John standing nearby. He said: “Here is your son” (John 19:26). Could this have been Jesus’ way of saying “I am no longer the son you raised, but

now I am the crucified Christ”? He entrusted the care of his mother to those who would look out after her best interests.

No doubt, Jesus prayed during those hours he spent on the cross. Perhaps around midmorning, one of his prayers was spoken aloud, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). The mixed crowd of bystanders, soldiers, spectators and followers all needed forgiveness. So do we.

Scripture says two criminals were crucified as well that day. One was on one side of the Lord and one was on the other. Their conversation looked past Jesus, arguing and cursing one another. Then one taunted Jesus demanding Jesus prove himself by saving them all. The other criminal took responsibility for his actions, stating he and the other criminal were receiving justice.

But he asserted that Jesus had done nothing wrong. He asked Jesus to remember him and in response Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). So long as we live and breathe, it is never too late to ask for and receive forgiveness.

At noon, something changed. The sky turned black. Jesus no longer spoke, but he began to agonize and suffer. This continued until just prior to 3 p.m. Three hours of darkness and despair.

The last four statements occurred in rapid succession. Shortly before 3 p.m., Jesus cried out and said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). These words echo the ones found in Psalm 22:1, a familiar passage describing the long-awaited Messiah. They separate Jesus from any other person who has ever suffered and died, for God as Father turned his back on his son as he died for the sins of the world.

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty’” (John 19:28). The Gospel

writers saw the words of Psalm 69:21 as a fulfillment of the suffering of the Messiah. In order to even speak, Jesus needed nourishing liquid.

I believe he cried out for something to drink in order to say the sixth statement, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Some think these were Jesus' last words, but I believe this is not a cry of death, but a pronouncement of victory. The term translated "finished" was often used in business and banking. It meant-paid in full. Jesus paid the price for our sins and announced the victory that the price for our salvation was "paid in full."

Then Jesus spoke his final statement, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). And with that said, he died.

However you arrange these seven sayings, one thing is clear: Jesus went to the cross willingly. He spoke often concerning "his hour of glory." The cross was that hour.

Empty religious ritual will not save a person. Animal sacrifices will not wipe away the consequences of sin. Moral purity is not enough. If the cross tells us anything, it tells us Christianity is a relationship with the living Son of God. He lived. He died. He rose from the grave. He is Lord of all.