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JESUS CRUCIFIED.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. 53: 6.

EXPLANATORY.

I. FROM PILATE'S PALACE TO CALVARY. All the preparations having been made at Pilate's palace, probably Castle Antonia, the sad procession moved out of the castle. In advance was a soldier carrying a white wooden board on which was written the nature of the crime. Next came four soldiers under a centurion, with the hammer and the nails, guarding Jesus who bore, as always in such cases, the cross on which He was to suffer (John 19: 17, Rev. Ver.). Then came two robbers, each bearing his cross and guarded by four soldiers. As they went forth into the street they were followed by a great multitude,—many with eager curiosity; priests, exulting over their enemy; Mary, with other women, weeping (ver. 27). On the way Jesus spoke to the women who were bewailing His fate, showing them that those who were crucifying Him had far greater need of sorrow (vers. 28-32). Jesus becoming unable to endure the burden of His cross, a stranger, Simon of Cyrene in Africa, was compelled to aid Him. *They were come to the place which is called Calvary.* Greek, Kranion, a skull. Calvary is the Latin, and Golgotha is the Hebrew word with the same meaning. The place was doubtless so named because it was a small knoll in the shape of a skull. As Dr. Broadus says, "It is common among us to call a rounded mountain-top or hill-top a head, as 'Cæsar's Head' in the Blue Ridge." The exact site is unknown. But we know that it was (3) apparently a well known spot; (2) outside the gate (compare Heb. 13: 12); but (3) near the city (John 19: 20); (4) on a thoroughfare leading into the country (Luke 23: 26); and (5) contained a "garden" or "orchard" (John 19: 41).

II. JESUS CRUCIFIED ON CALVARY. 33. *There they crucified Him.* Before He was nailed to the cross He was offered some of the common sour wine, such as the soldiers used, which was mingled with a powerful narcotic drug, as an anæsthetic to stupify and dull the sense of pain (Matt. 27: 34). This was usually furnished by some of the benevolent ladies of Jerusalem. But Jesus refused to drink it, "because He would drink to the very dregs the cup of suffering which God gave Him, for so only could He make full atonement for the sins of the world." *And the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* Apparently to number him with criminals. He was placed between the others to stigmatize Him as the worst of the three. Unconsciously, His persecutors fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 53: 9), and set up an object lesson for the world. Jesus on the cross was lifted up as the Saviour of sinners, among sinners, and yet without sin.

FIRST OF THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS. Probably spoken in the height of the agony, when the cross with the victim upon it was dropped, with a sudden wrench, into its place in the ground. But it was even then a word for others, not for Himself. Sublime self-forgetfulness! 34. *Father.* How much loving confidence does that word express, used in the first and in the last words from the cross. Even though God permitted Jesus to suffer so much, yet He was His own Father, infinite in love. *Forgive them.* He had bidden His disciples pray for their enemies, and He now sets them the example under the most difficult circumstances. *They know not what they do.* They did not realize that they were murdering their Messiah, the One who loved them with an infinite love, the Son of God. They were blinded by self interest and prejudice.

And they parted His raiment. Persons were crucified naked. It was an ancient belief and tradition that a linen cloth was bound about his loins. From John 19: 23, 24, it appears that the four soldiers who were engaged in the crucifixion *divided* some of the garments among themselves, but cast lot for His coat, or tunic, being an inner garment without a seam and woven throughout.

III. THE FRIENDLY WATCHERS BY THE CROSS. Jesus was not wholly deserted in this sad hour. The women were "last at the cross and first at the grave." The three Marys were there: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the wife of Cleopas; and Mary Magdalene; and His mother's sister, probably Salome, the mother of John; and many other women from Galilee. John was there; and the other disciples were probably not far away. What power of purifying love must have flowed into their souls as they watched His long agony for them.

IV. THE MOCKING CROWD. Calvary was not far from a public road, and many people went out of the city, and *stood beholding*, and many may have stopped as they were passing by. 35. *He saved others; let Him save Himself.* The words were an unconscious prophecy, in part also an admission of the work that He had done, as in the case of Lazarus, in rescuing others from the power of death. These words implied that His saving others, His saving men from sickness, His raising them from the dead, His promises of forgiveness and eternal life, were a cheat, a false claim, unless He worked a miracle for Himself by coming down from the cross. *If He be the Christ.* The *he* was ironically emphatic. If Jesus were the Messiah, the great king who should overthrow the Romans, and all the enemies of the Jews, surely He could deliver Himself from the Roman cross. Their argument seems invincible, till we see that in truth, if He had used His power and come down, it would have proved Him not to be the Son of God. He did not come down, *because He was* the Son of God.

36. *And the soldiers also.* It was about the time of the midday meal of the soldiers, and they in mockery offered Him their *posca*, or sour wine, to drink with them. The soldiers pretend to treat Jesus as a king, to whom the festive cup is presented.

37. *If Thou be the King of the Jews.* It seemed absurd to them that this man should claim to be a king. And yet He never had been more kingly, nor had done more for the founding of His kingdom than He was then doing. He was planting the seed of the tree of life whose branches were to shelter all nations.

THE SUPERSCRIPTION. 38. *And a superscription also was written over Him.* The white tablet nailed upon the cross above the head of the victim, to declare the crime for which He was crucified. This title was written in the three languages then in common use, so that all could read. In Greek, for the foreigners and visitors, Greek being the learned language of all nations; in Latin, for the Romans; in Hebrew, for the Jews. The words are somewhat different in the different Gospels, probably because the title was not in the same words in each language, and some of the writers copied from one, and others from another of the languages.

V. THE ROBBER'S CONVERSION. 39. *And one of the malefactors.* Those whom the Romans called "robbers," were oftentimes wild and stormy zealots, maintaining in arms a hopeless protest against that yoke which God had imposed on His people for their sins. For good or for evil they knew something about the Christ; the taunt uttered by the one expresses this, no less than the prayer of the other. *Railed on Him.* All were now mocking; the soldiers, the rulers, the mob; and the evil-minded thief, perhaps out of bravado before the crowd, puts in his scoff also. This fourfold mocking is a fearful revelation of the extent and power of sin.

40. *Dost thou not fear God?* whatever the reckless bystanders may do, who feel safe. *Thou*, so near to death and the judgment seat.

41. *And we indeed justly.* A true penitent, he confesses that he is a sinner. *But this man hath done nothing amiss.* He may have heard and seen much of Jesus at the trial. It is more than likely that at various times he may have joined a crowd where Jesus was speaking, and have known of His miracles.

42. *Lord.* The very use of the word implies faith. *Remember me* (in mercy, to save) *when Thou comest into* (in) *Thy kingdom*: that is, in the glory of Thy established kingdom. The malefactor knew that Jesus was taunted and crucified for His kingly pretension, and his new-born faith recognized Him as real King. When the "coming" would be he could could have but a dim idea; but the Spirit taught him that the crucified one was yet to come in glory, but he was prepared to welcome Him.

THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS. 43. *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. To day* has the place of emphasis. The sum of the promise is, "I will remember thee then; and, as the earnest of it, thou shalt at once be with Me in the region of the blessed dead." It implied too that his earthly sufferings should be short, and not lingering. "O mighty, ineffable grace! Where sin abounded there grace did much more abound. He found the sheep that was lost." *In Paradise.* A Persian word signifying a pleasure ground, or beautiful park, and hence employed to designate the place of the happy dead. "This brigand would then have understood Christ's promise as one of immediate entrance into a state of conscious peace and joy."

VI. THE THIRD WORD FROM THE CROSS was spoken probably toward noon, to His mother, standing near the cross, with John, the beloved disciple: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19: 26). Jesus on the cross made provision for His mother. Even during these horrible sufferings He was thinking of others.

VII. DARKNESS OVER THE LAND. 44. *And it was about the sixth hour: i. e.* noon, 12 o'clock. *There was a darkness over all the earth*: rather *the land* of Judea or Palestine. This was a miraculous occurrence designed to exhibit the amazement of nature and of the God of nature at the wickedness of the crucifixion of Him who is the light of the world and the sun of righteousness. During this time Jesus remained silent till almost the last; and a hush came over the mockeries of the crowd.

THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS.—*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* These words, from (Mark 15: 34), are given in the Aramaic, or Syro-Chaldaic, a language allied to the Hebrew, and used by Christ and the people in their ordinary intercourse. It is a translation of the Hebrew (given in Matthew) of Psalms 22: 1. They mean "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me."

THE FIFTH WORD FROM THE CROSS.—*I thirst* (John 19: 28). The sole expression of bodily suffering.

THE RENDING OF THE TEMPLE VEIL. 45. *And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.* The great veil of the temple that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these veils were so heavy that in the exaggerated language of the time it needed 300 priests to manipulate each. The rending of the veil typified that the veil that shut out the vision of holiness from the hearts of the people had been taken away (2 Cor. 3: 14-16), and the way into the Holy Place, the state of holiness, and the place of holiness, was now opened.

THE SIXTH WORD FROM THE CROSS.—*It is finished* (John 19: 30). What was finished? His life on earth, His life's work, the cup of suffering, the atonement for the sins of the world, the old era and dispensation, the prophecies of Scripture. 46. *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice*: as it were the triumphant note of a conqueror. What He said is recorded in John and Luke, the sixth and seventh words of the cross.

THE SEVENTH WORD FROM THE CROSS.—*Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.* The word *Father* shows that His soul has recovered full serenity. Not long ago he was struggling with the divine sovereignty and holiness (*my God, my God!*). Now the darkness is gone; He has recovered His light, His Father's face. It is the first effect of the completion of redemption, the glorious prelude of the resurrection.

THE EARTHQUAKE. Matt. 27: 51-53. As Jesus spoke the above words *He gave up the ghost*, His spirit. At the same time, there was an earthquake of such power as to rend the rocks and open the tombs; showing how nature, the handiwork of the Son of God, sympathized with the mighty struggle that was going on. Certain graves were opened, and after the resurrection of Christ, many bodies of saints that slept came forth, as if to accompany the victorious Christ, and prefigure the resurrection of the dead and the moral resurrection of the world.

THE EFFECT ON THE BYSTANDERS. 47. *The Centurion* (who had charge of the crucifixion; probably a heathen) *glorified God.* According to Matthew, he confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. He praised God for such a life as that now ended. He acknowledged that God Himself was expressing His approval of Jesus by the signs shown at His death. *This was a righteous man*, and not guilty of the charges laid against Him. The action and words of Jesus Himself on the cross and during the trial, and the manifestations from God, convinced the Centurion.

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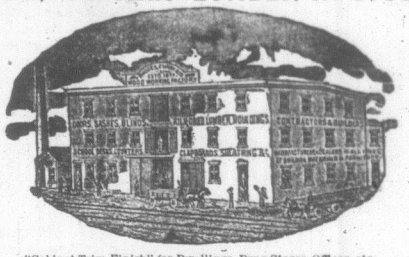

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