

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
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Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 40

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

The last moment of a person's life is always significant, none more so than that of the Son of God and Son of Man. This week's lesson describe the last few hours of our Lord before He died. The climax of our salvation is about to be completed by our Lord

Jesus Christ while He hung on the cross.

We need to realize that we are treading on holy ground as we study the suffering and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. We studied earlier how our Lord Jesus subjected Himself to the wickedness of men. At the same time, there were His disciples and a group of women who loved and cared for Him. Some even risked their lives to make up for what they should have done earlier but did not. This week's lesson should move us to increase our knowledge of, faith in and love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Jesus Bearing the Cross Via Dolorosa

Via Dolorosa (Latin, literally means 'the sorrowful way') is the name given to the route taken by the Lord Jesus Christ on His way to Golgotha, which is called Calvary (Latin, translated from the Greek *kranion*), where He was to be crucified between two robbers. The purple robe, which symbolized royalty and which was mockingly put on Him, was taken off. He was given His own garments to wear for the walk to Calvary. The criminals to be crucified had to carry their own cross, Jesus likewise. By now, He must have been bodily weak because of the physical torture, the long trial sessions, and the lack of rest and sleep. As the Roman soldiers led Jesus away, they could see that He was weak so they compelled Simon, a man from Cyrene (a major city of northern Africa, today known as Tripoli), to carry the cross on His behalf. Simon was probably a *diaspora* Jew, who lived outside Jerusalem. He must have come to participate in the Passover feast. One could imagine that he would have

resented carrying the cross of a criminal. Mark identified him as the father of Alexander and Rufus. If this Rufus was the same person mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Romans (16:13), it means that Simon was probably converted later. After his death, his wife and Rufus were particularly kind to Paul. What a privilege it was to Simon for he was chosen to carry the cross of our Lord. Today we have our Lord helping us to carry our cross.

A great company of people followed Jesus. There were women publicly crying, mourning and beating their breasts in grief. But the Lord Jesus told them not to weep for Him but to weep for themselves and their children. Jesus foretold that “the days” were coming when they would say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.” This is a reversal of what was the general thinking in those days. Barrenness in a woman was a curse but in the days that Jesus foretold, it would be the reverse. The sufferings would be so great that they would desire to be killed by mountains falling on them. Jesus continued, “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Luke 23:30). This was a common proverb in those days. A young green tree suggests the innocent, whereas a dry tree, which is easily burnt, suggests the guilty. Jesus was saying that if the Romans did these things to Him, an innocent party, they would do much more to the nation Israel when it rebelled. Jesus was referring to the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, some forty years later!

They reached the place of crucifixion. It was called Golgotha in the Hebrew tongue, which means “the skull” suggesting the shape of the

place. “Calvary” is the Latin name for the same location given by Luke. Crucifixion was a terrible way to die, so terrible that the Romans did not allow Roman citizens to be crucified. The following is a description of how the crucifixion was done: “According to Roman custom, the upright piece of the cross was laid flat on the ground. Jesus was stripped naked. He was made to lie on the ground with His arms out-stretched along the cross piece. To render Him helpless His arms and legs were jerked out of joint. Then His hands were nailed to the cross piece. His body was raised until the beam was fastened to the upright pole. His feet, which were crossed, rested on a little shelf about two feet above the ground. A spike was driven through them into the upright pole. He was then left hanging throughout the ordeal. His body was so extended that His ribs could be counted. Every muscle and nerve was drawn so tight that the agony and pain was excruciating. The bleeding, perspiration and the loss of body fluid resulted in tremendous thirst. His entire body was fevered, His lips were parched, His tongue was swollen and His throat was dry. His inflamed vocal cords produced only a rasping sound. It is impossible to describe the pain that accompanies crucifixion. It is no wonder that the victims would struggle, curse and scream as they were being nailed to the cross. But it was not so with Jesus” (Hobbs, *Luke*, 334). When the concoction of wine mixed with myrrh, a drug used to numb the victim’s pain, was offered to Jesus, He refused it and chose instead to suffer the pain to its fullest sense.

Jesus Was Crucified Between Two Malefactors

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ between two thieves was a fulfillment

of the Scriptures as prophesied by Isaiah about seven hundred years before the event.¹ Jesus' garments (Greek, *himation*) which the soldiers stripped from Him were torn into four pieces. This garment was a square-shaped piece of cloth. It had openings for the arms and was draped over one or both shoulders. The "coat" (Greek, *chiton*) was the inner or under garment which was worn next to the skin. Its length fell to the knees or more often, to the ankles (Baker's *Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, volume 1, 775). The Roman soldiers did not tear the "coat" but rather cast lots for it. This detail of the incident is another fulfilment of prophecy (Psalm 22:18).²

The first word of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was a prayer to His Father in Heaven. He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The love and mercy of God is manifested in these words. It shows the attitude of God towards sinful men. King David was right when he declared that God has not dealt with us after our sins. God is ever forgiving. He could have destroyed all the people who reviled Him, the chief priests and the Roman soldiers who mocked Him and even the thief who railed at Him. But that does not mean that all sinners are cleansed from their sins and that all are delivered from eternal damnation in the lake of fire. In the same measure of love that He has for sinners, His holiness and righteousness demand the atonement for sins. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ's death on the cross

demonstrates equally the love and the holiness of God.

The Roman law required that the nature of the crime for which the man was crucified be placed on the cross over the victim's head. In the case of Jesus, the sign was, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." It was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. These three tongues represented all the people then. The religious Hebrews *rejected* the Lord Jesus Christ; the Greeks *ignored* Him; and the Romans *crucified* Him. In a way it is symbolic of all people in every age—the religious, the intelligent and the powerful. Are they not all guilty of rejecting, ignoring and crucifying Jesus Christ the Son of God?

One of the malefactors rebuked the LORD Jesus Christ while he hung on the cross for his crimes and sins. But the other rebuked him saying, "Dost not thou fear God, and seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." This second thief turned to the Lord Jesus and addressed Him as "Lord" meaning God. By what reason, it is not revealed. However, what is important is that he recognized Jesus Christ as Lord and pleaded that Jesus remember him when He went into His kingdom. This thief must have heard the preaching and teaching of Jesus either personally before his imprisonment or from others while in captivity. He must have been moved by his observation of the Lord Jesus on the way to Calvary and by His prayer. The thief asked only to be remembered but Jesus did more than that -- He promised to save him and take him into heaven's glory, "Verily, I say unto thee, (emphatic first person) Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." What wonderful comfort and

¹ Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

² Psalm 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

hope for even the worst sinner at the eleventh hour.

Standing by the cross were Mary (Jesus' mother), her sister Salome, Mary (wife of Cleophas) and Mary Magdalene (from whom the Lord Jesus cast out seven devils (Mark 16:9)). The sister of Jesus' mother, Salome, was the mother of James and John.³ This means that James and John were the cousins of Jesus. This might explain why their mother asked that her two sons be given places of preference in Jesus' kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21; Mark 10:35-37)

The Lord Jesus looked down from the cross and saw this group of women and John. He looked at his mother and said, "Woman, behold thy son" and then He said to John, "Behold, thy mother!" In His dying hours, these were the two people He addressed. To His mother, He completed the fifth commandment and provided her physical needs by commending her to His beloved disciple, His half cousin and her nephew, who would take His place in caring for her and supplying all her needs, as a son. To John, Jesus showed absolute trust and gave to him a mission of love. At this time, Mary's own children who were Jesus' step-brothers were not believers yet. This blindness to the truth of Christ perhaps is the reason why they were not there with their mother in her time of sorrow.

³ Comparing the following two accounts of the same incident, it indicates that Salome was the mother of the sons of Zebedee, namely, James and John. And compare these with John's account, the sister of Jesus' mother was Salome.

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

Matthew 27:56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

All Things Fulfilled, Jesus Commended His Spirit to the Father

The Lord Jesus was crucified at the third hour. The sun was darkened and darkness enveloped the whole land for three hours. At the sixth hour, Jesus cried out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (My God, My God, why have Thou forsaken me). Jesus was quoting Psalm 22:1 which describes the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. It is impossible to fathom the depths of Jesus' suffering at that moment. The word "forsaken" (Greek, *egkataleipo*) means to desert and to abandon. At that moment, Jesus was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*). God the Father, who is holy and righteous, could not look with favour upon sin. At that moment, the Lord Jesus was left alone, abandoned as He endured the wrath of God against sin. Someone has remarked: "The beginning of sin is to forsake God; the end of sin is to be forsaken by God." The Lord Jesus endured the agonies of the condemnation of lost sinners. Thus did Isaiah predict His suffering (Isaiah 53:4-5): "*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 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.*"

Those standing by thought Jesus was calling for Elijah. The Jews thought of Elijah as a deliverer in time of trouble. Because of His painful suffering and agony, Jesus cried out, "I thirst." Again this detail is a fulfilment of Psalm 22:14-15. Someone ran to fill a sponge with vinegar and he fixed it at the end of a reed and put it to Jesus'

mouth. Jesus took the drink of vinegar because it was not drugged. It was for a purpose -- now He was ready to give His cry of victory which must be loud and clear as a trumpet call, "It is finished." And immediately after that cry of victory, the Lord Jesus said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The verb "to commend" has the meaning of placing something on deposit for safe keeping, and to be used for the purpose for which it is intended. The LORD placed in God's hand the resurrection of His body. After that, He bowed His head and "gave up the ghost" (literally, He expired). He voluntarily laid down His life. No man took His life from Him.

Immediately After His Death, the Temple Veil Rent in Two

Immediately after His death, the veil of the Temple was torn into two in the middle from top to bottom and there was an earthquake. The veil was large, measuring sixty feet long by thirty feet wide. It separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy place which was the court of the priests. The fact that it was torn from top to bottom indicated that it was not an act of man. It was an act of God. The writer of the Hebrews interpreted this to mean that this veil no longer shuts man from access to God. In the Lord Jesus Christ, believers can "come boldly to the Throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). Man no longer needs an earthly mediator or priest to approach God. There is now one and only one Mediator between God and man. And He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God—not the priest, nor the Pope, nor Mary the earthly mother of Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5, 6)!

Matthew recorded that "graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves *after His resurrection,*

and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (27:52, 53). Since the Lord Jesus is the "firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23), the resurrection of these saints who died before the death of Christ must have taken place after His resurrection which was on the third day. The tombs were opened as a result of the earthquake, but the bodies did not rise up until after Jesus' resurrection. It is God who raised the dead.

A centurion was standing guard over the place together with others. When he saw the earthquake and witnessed all the things that were done there, he and the others were very afraid. They testified that the Lord Jesus who hung on the cross, the King of the Jews, was truly the Son of God. The centurion glorified God and testified that the Lord Jesus was a righteous man. All the people that were with him who witnessed the things that were done to Jesus "smote their breasts, and returned." They included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleophas who was the mother of James and Joses, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus Was Buried in a New Garden Tomb

The day that Jesus died was the "preparation" or Friday. The bodies cannot remain on the cross on the Sabbath which was a "high day" (a great day) -- the Sabbath that synchronized with the Passover. For this reason, the Jewish leaders requested Pilate that the legs of those who were crucified be broken to hasten their death. Pilate gave the green light. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead. Then one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus' body with a spear, and blood and water came out

of His body. Once again, the prophetic Scriptures were fulfilled. In killing the Passover lamb, not one bone of the lamb should be broken (Exodus 12:46). None of Jesus' bones was broken. The prophet Zechariah prophesied (Zechariah 12:10), "*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.***" [emphasis added]

When evening fell, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea, was bold enough to beg Pilate for the body of the Lord Jesus for burial. Joseph was a secret disciple of the Lord Jesus for he feared the Jews. He was a good and just man and a member of the Sanhedrin. He did not agree with the counsel of the Jewish leaders to put Jesus to death. He was a believer and was also looking for the promised kingdom of God. When Pilate was told by his centurion that Jesus was already dead, he gave Joseph the permission to take Jesus' body and bury it. The act by Joseph was commendable indeed. By this act he believed in the Lord Jesus publicly. Though at first he was afraid, he now picked up the courage to take down the body of Jesus, prepare it and bury it. He showed his love for Jesus by giving Him a proper burial. It must be understood that he did this at great personal risk and danger. The Jewish leaders were very much against Jesus at that time. He might be discredited by his fellow rulers and lose everything. Interestingly, he was joined by Nicodemus -- the one who came to Jesus by night to ask Him about eternal life. He too was a member of the Sanhedrin but did not

agree with them in condemning Jesus to death. He did speak up once on behalf of Jesus in the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51). He too now came boldly to contribute towards giving Jesus a proper burial by bringing a hundred pounds of a mixture of spices, myrrh and aloes for the embalming. He was a wealthy man for the spices which he gave were expensive. These "spices" were sprinkled over the body of Jesus after which it was wrapped in folds of white linen. They placed the body in a new tomb which was in a garden. It belonged to Joseph of Arimathaea (Matthew 27:60). The tomb was hewn out of rock making a man-made cave. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Cleophas, the mother of James and Joses, followed Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus to the place of burial. They saw where the tomb was. They also saw how the body of Jesus was laid. The entrance was then sealed with a circular stone rolled against it. This foursome showed their love for Jesus in the hour of His death. Indeed, wherever and whenever the gospel is preached, what they did will always be fondly remembered.

The next day was the Sabbath, a holy day to the Jews. The Jewish leaders remembered that Jesus had said that after three days, He would be alive again. They came to Pilate and referring to Jesus as a "deceiver," requested Pilate to put a watch over the tomb. They thought that Jesus' disciples might come by night to steal His body away and then say to the people that "He is risen from the dead." Pilate must have been weary of these Jewish leaders. He dismissed them by consenting to their request and sarcastically suggested that they made it doubly sure themselves. And so they did.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Jesus accepted the will of God and was not afraid to suffer in order to accomplish God's purpose and plan of redemption and salvation. We too must follow the example of our Lord Jesus in doing the will of God even if it means that we have to endure hardship and suffering.

He gave His life for us enduring the pain and shame. We should be grateful and love Him who first loved us. We should honour and glorify Him. We should serve Him willingly and cheerfully. We should never grumble when we face trials and tribulations for His name's sake. Let us love Him more and more, keep His commandments and serve Him wholeheartedly. Let us be like Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus who risk their social standing and their lives by giving the Lord Jesus a proper burial.

Filial piety is rare nowadays. We ought to remember our parents who bring us up with labour, perseverance and love. The last filial act of the Lord Jesus Christ taught us how we should care for our parents.

There is hope for the hopeless even at the eleventh hour. The dying thief was saved at the last moment when he acknowledged his sin, looked to Jesus as his Lord and put his trust in Him. Jesus promised him eternal blessings. The same applies to anyone who thinks that he has no more hope. Nothing is impossible with God. AMEN

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 40

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Luke 23-33, Matthew 27:31-34, Mark 15:20-23, John 19:16-17.

TUESDAY: Matthew 27:35-44, Mark 15:24-32, Luke 23:33-43, John 19:18-27.

WEDNESDAY: Mark 15:33-37, Matthew 27:45-50, Luke 23:44-46, John 19:28-30.

THURSDAY: Matthew 27:51-56, Mark 15:38-41, Luke 23:45, 47-49.

FRIDAY: John 19:31-42, Matthew 27:57-66, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Was the prayer of Christ on the cross answered by God? Explain your answer.**

- 2. Should forgiveness not be preceded by repentance first? If so, why then did the Lord simply pray for God's forgiveness**

before there was repentance? Is there reconciliation?

3. What was the chief priests' reason that God did not intervene to save Jesus? Is the chief priests' reason acceptable? If not, why not?

4. Have you been obeying the 5th Commandment?

5. What does it mean for God the father to forsake His only begotten Son? Does it mean that Jesus died spiritually?

6. What is the spiritual significance of the rending of the veil in the Temple? Is it wrong to ask another Christian to pray for us?

7. What risks did Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take by asking for Jesus' body and burying it? Have you taken such risks before? Explain.
