

Truth For The Final Generation

Chapter 6

Michael The Son of God Died

Scripture Reading: Matt. 27:20-54 (NLT)

²⁰ “... the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. ²¹ So the governor asked again, “Which of these two do you want me to release to you?” The crowd shouted back, “Barabbas!” ²² Pilate responded, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” ²³ “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?” But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!” ²⁴ Pilate saw that he wasn’t getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours!” ²⁵ And all the people yelled back, “We will take responsibility for his death—we and our children!” ²⁶ So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. ²⁷ Some of the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. ²⁹ They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a sceptre. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” ³⁰ And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. ³¹ When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified. ³² Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. ³³ And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means “Place of the Skull”). ³⁴ The soldiers gave him wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵ After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice. ³⁶ Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. ³⁷ A sign was fastened above Jesus’ head, announcing the charge against him. It read: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” ³⁸ Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

³⁹ The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. ⁴⁰ “Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!” ⁴¹ The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. ⁴² “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him!” ⁴³ He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ⁴⁴ Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way. ⁴⁵ At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. ⁴⁶ At about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” ⁴⁷ Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. ⁴⁹ But the rest said, “Wait! Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.” ⁵⁰ Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, ⁵² and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. ⁵³ They left the cemetery after Jesus’ resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴ The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

This passage brings to remembrance the exclamation of those significant words of Nathanael which he uttered at the start of Christ’s ministry, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!” like Nathanael these Pagan Roman soldiers confessed that Messiah was the Son of God, on the other hand, the Jews, the people of God scorned Him as a revolutionary. What a contrast! What was it that these pagan soldiers saw in the Messiah that caused them to confess that, “this man truly was the Son of God,” and on the other hand what was it that caused those who “have Abraham” as

“father,” to reject the Messiah as the Son of God? I want to submit to you that the answer to both of these questions is openness to conviction. But let us proceed a little further and we will see this more clearly.

So it was actually the Son of God whom the Pagans recognized that was crucified, but not the people of God. This seems to be the way your own people treat you, for John tell us in John 1:11, “He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.” Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 53:7-9, “He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. ⁸ Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. ⁹ He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave.” What a sobering portion of scripture. But note that this same scripture had an effect on someone of high rank several years afterwards, and led him like the Pagan Roman soldiers, to confess the same thing. **Acts 8:27-37** says, ... “behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, ²⁸ Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet ... ³² The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: ³³ In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. ³⁴ And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. ³⁶ And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Notice the openness of the Ethiopian eunuch to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. On learning whom the prophet spoke of he immediately acknowledge that Messiah:

1. Died, and
2. Was the Son of God

But what does it really mean to you that the Son of God died?

After preaching “unto him Jesus,” and not merely about Jesus, the eunuch enquired of Philip, “what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Notice the response of Philip, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” What is it that Philip meant when he said in response to the eunuch request for baptism “if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest?” The Apostle Paul in **Romans 10:1-4, 8-11** (NLT) gives us the answer to our inquiry where he says, “Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. ² I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. ³ For they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. ⁴ For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God ... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Here Paul answers our question as to why the Roman soldiers and the Ethiopian eunuch recognized the Messiah to be the “Son of God” and the Jews did not. The Jews in their self-righteousness could not “understand God’s way of making people right with Himself,” also in Heb. 3:10 (last part) “... They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.” The Roman soldiers and the Ethiopian eunuch recognized that it was the Son of God that died, and further, the Ethiopian eunuch understood that He had to die to affect our salvation and our redemption. The death of God’s Son therefore means everything to humanity.

As we celebrate the death of the Son of God today, remember it is His death that reconciles us to God, let us consider what that death means to humanity, and to us individually. At the outset let me say that the death of Christ was vicarious. That which is done for another is vicarious; and as Christ died for us, His death was vicarious or substitutionary. **5 BC p.1103** says, “The sword of justice was unsheathed, and the wrath of God against iniquity rested upon man’s substitute, Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ suffered in man’s stead, and the human nature of the Son of God staggered under the terrible horror of the guilt of sin, until from His pale and quivering lips was forced the

agonizing cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" but if there is no other way by which the salvation of fallen man may be accomplished, then "not as I will, but as thou wilt." Human nature would then and there have died under the horror of the sense of sin, had not an angel from heaven strengthened Him to bear the agony.

The power that inflicted retributive justice upon man's substitute and surety, was the power that sustained and upheld the suffering One under the tremendous weight of wrath that would have fallen upon a sinful world. Christ was suffering the death that was pronounced upon the transgressors of God's law."

Let us look at a few Biblical evidences of vicariousness/substitution before proceeding further.

1. **Romans 5:8** (KJV), "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
2. **1 Cor. 15:3** (KJV), "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;"
3. **Matt. 20:23**, (KJV), "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here we are told of a ransom, i.e. to set (a person) free by paying a ransom; a price (of Jesus Christ) to free (a person) from sin.
4. **1 Peter 1:18-19** (KJV), "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
5. **Rev. 5:9** (KJV), "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"

In giving His life for us as our substitute justice has been served, the demand of the broken Law for the life of the transgressor has been met, but if this was all to it humanity would still be lost. Satisfying the law (which is justice) does not bring life, but rather death, it is by the mercy of our substitute who consented to stand in our stead that we are saved, given a stay of

execution. It is nothing but mercy, pardon, free gift to the sinner, in every part of the transaction. Notice though, that mercy and justice must unite in order for both the broken Law to be honoured/satisfied and the sinner to be justified. **E. G. White in 6 BC p. 1099** says it this way, "Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon." The Gospel of Jesus Christ show this blend of justice and mercy, for Paul tell us in **Rom. 3:24-26**, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

He is just in satisfying the law as it demanded death for its transgression, thus maintaining the dignity and honour of the law even at the expense of the life of His own Son; and

1. The Justifier in showing mercy to us, by justifying us, making us right through the blood/death of His Son. But Christ was not a sinner, so how then could God be just in the death of His Son? The answer is only because He was our substitute/representative and died to meet the just rewards of our sin in our stead. 1 Cor. 5:21 (NLT first part), "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin." As the Lamb of God He was our offering-substitute, our vicariousness.

Closing thought

Desire of Ages Chapter 78 Calvary (741-755)

"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him." "That He might sanctify the people with His own blood," Christ "suffered without the gate." Hebrews 13:12. For transgression of the law of God, Adam and Eve were banished from Eden. Christ, our substitute, was to suffer without the boundaries of Jerusalem. He died outside the gate, where felons and murderers were executed. Full of significance are the words, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Galatians 3:13.

...Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid

the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.

... The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee.

... When the loud cry, "It is finished," came from the lips of Christ, the priests were officiating in the temple. It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain. Clothed in his significant and beautiful dress, the priest

stood with lifted knife, as did Abraham when he was about to slay his son. With intense interest the people were looking on. But the earth trembles and quakes; for the Lord Himself draws near. With a rending noise the inner veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand ... But lo, this veil is rent in twain. The most holy place of the earthly sanctuary is no longer sacred.

All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to slay the victim; but the knife drops from his nerveless hand, and the lamb escapes. Type has met antitype in the death of God's Son. The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens. It was as if a living voice had spoken to the worshipers: There is now an end to all sacrifices and offerings for sin. The Son of God is come according to His word, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God." "By His own blood" He entereth "in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." **Hebrews 10:7; 9:12.**

Yours in the true Gospel of the Messiah

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