



The Reminder

Westside church of Christ
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Understanding the Bible - 10

Did The Father Abandon Jesus On The Cross?

By Maurice Barnett

A long-time theological position of denominations, and even some brethren, is that God had to withdraw from Jesus while He was on the Cross, or some variation of that idea.

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46.

First, such a theory makes Jesus ignorant of what is happening to Him and He has to cry out WHY. But, doesn't He know why? He said at the time He was taken by the mob the night before—

"Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye?" John 18:4.

Saying, "Whom seek ye?", was for their benefit as He already knew. He knew ALL things. We can add to that passage, John 12:27 and John 13:3. He knew all that was going to happen to Him and why it would happen.

Second, why did Jesus quote the first verse of Psalm 22? By doing that, regardless of the position one takes on the statement itself, He was obviously calling attention to the entire twenty-second Psalm, which gave specific details of what was going on at the moment.

Third, the Bible says that he cried out. The verb here means He "shouted." The Holy Spirit then adds the fact that it was with "a loud voice." So, He shouted with a loud voice. If this were only a question directed to the Father, there was no need for him to do that. There was only one other thing Jesus shouted out on the cross, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke 24:46. This shouted statement, almost immediately, followed the other. These facts were very important for the great multitude to know or He wouldn't have made the effort of shouting them so all could hear. But why would it be so very important that

they know that God had forsaken Him? His second shouted statement clearly indicated that the Father was with him, which negated any abandonment by the Father. Both were shouted loudly for a purpose.

Fourth, why would He make such a loud display of telling everyone present that God had forsaken Him when it only confirmed to His enemies what they thought all along, that God was not with Him because He was an imposter? That gave great comfort to His enemies. But, it was directly counter to what He said in John 8:28-29 would happen at the crucifixion. This we will see below. The evidence is clear on this point.

Fifth, would not abandonment require that Jesus either be guilty of personal sins that would alienate Him from the Father, or the Calvinists are right that all of the sins of the world were transferred to Him and, as a result, He became so blackened with sin that the Father could not stand to look upon Him. Or, the Father just arbitrarily accounted Him to be a sinner so He could turn his back on Jesus with no reason for doing so, etc. However, the emphasis of scripture, Old and New Testaments, is that He was a sinless, perfect sacrifice unto God on our behalf. So, we will explore this as follows.

John 8:28

"Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father aught me, I speak these things."

"Lifted Up." This phrase is from a single Greek word, *hupsoo*. This could not refer to His ascension or exaltation because the Jews had nothing to do with either. The Father did it all—Acts 2:33, 5:31, Philippians 2:9.

Elders

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Times of Meeting

Sunday - 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday - 7:30 p.m.

Ladies Class - Monday 9:30 am (September)

"When...then." The word "when," *hotan/hoti*, in John 8:28, means "*a point of time which is roughly simultaneous to or overlap with another point of time*," *Louw & Nida Lexicon*, 67.30. The other point in time is the "then shall ye know" phrase. Here are other verses in John to illustrate this same fact—

"From henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." John 13:19.

Notice that the time of "ye may believe that I am he" takes place *at the same time of* "when (*hotan*) it is come to pass. So, here again is John 8:28—

"Jesus therefore said, When (*hotan*) ye have lifted up the Son of man, then (*tote*) shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things."

"Then," in this verse, *tote*, means "at that time," "*Tote*" is found nine times in the book of John other than 8:28 and *in each instance* it means "at that time," referring to a specific event designated by a stated point in time, an event which is specifically identified.

"Ye shall know that I Am." Notice that in John 13:19 and 14:29, that it would be the fulfillment of prophecy that would be the evidence to convince the disciples. The thought is the same regarding the Jews in John 8:28. Note—

John 13:19, "when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he."

John 14:29, When it is come to pass, ye may believe."

John 8:28, when ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He."

It would be the fulfillment of promise and prophecy, at the cross, that would convince any Jew who was present, at least those who respected the scriptures, that Jesus was who He claimed to be. There were those present who would not believe even after the burial, resurrection and the preaching of the gospel; their hearts were hardened. But, there were many others, some of whom Jesus spoke to in John 8, who would make the connection at the crucifixion.

But, where is the record of Jews, at the crucifixion, coming to know who Jesus was? Where do we find these individuals identified in the Bible? Well, in the first place, if Jesus, or any inspired man, said that something would come to pass it would come to pass and we don't have to have a description of its fulfillment to understand that it happened. However, we do have the record of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy. Notice that *right after* Jesus died, Luke 23:48 says—

"And all the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts." Luke 23:48.

This was a very large number of people, indicated by the word, "all," and the plural noun, *multitudes*. Not just a multitude but *multitudes*, plural, which emphasizes the great number. They had come there "to this sight." The word, *sight, theoria*, is a noun that means "the spec-

tacle." That word is found only here in the New Testament but in other Greek texts means a *theatrical performance*. They were there to see "a show," but left with an entirely different attitude. The word, "beheld" is from *theoreo*, a verb, that means, "to come to understand as the result of perception," *Louw & Nida Lexicon*, 32.11. The people understood what was done from what they saw happening, putting those things together with other facts to reach a conclusion. This great crowd left the scene "smiling their breasts," a sign of distress and dismay, Isaiah 32:12, Nahum 2:7 NASV. Their reaction was a fulfillment of prophecy, Zechariah 12:10-11—

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: 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. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."

It wasn't the earthquake or darkness that caused this reaction, though these were impressive. Such phenomena could be explained as natural happenings. It wasn't the tearing of the veil in the temple for they could not see nor know of that at the time, it was removed from their possible vision because of the confines of the temple where they were forbidden access. It wasn't the resurrection of saints who appeared to many because that did not occur until after the resurrection of Jesus, Matthew 27:52. It wasn't the two thieves crucified at the same time as Jesus because the focus was on Jesus and not the thieves. And, it wasn't the cruelty of a crucifixion that would affect the huge crowd in the manner described. Crucifixion was the most common, official, death penalty for criminals in the Roman Empire at the time, both before and after that of Jesus. It was a regular public occurrence.

Something in what they saw and heard at the time of crucifixion brought the reaction. Notice that the verse says the reaction came "*when they beheld the things that were done*." What made this so different that it would affect so many people in the way it did? It could only be because they realized who it was on that cross. And, they could only realize that by an awakening to His true identity. And, they could only know that by revelation and that was by putting Psalm 22 together with what they saw happening. They could see in this spectacle the fulfillment of prophecy *just as Jesus said it would happen in John 8:28*.

But what about the Roman Centurion who exclaimed, "this was the Son of God" after being impressed with the darkness and earthquake? A mistranslation has produced the misunderstanding. Neither the word for "God" nor "son" in the verse has a definite article before them. The pagan Centurion concluded that Jesus was "a son of a god." Luke 23:47 records this as "certainly this was a righteous man." He knew nothing of scripture or prophecy fulfillment nor the Messiah. He was only impressed

by the out-of-the-ordinary happenings and that Jesus was not guilty of anything that would call for His death on the cross. The effect on the large body of Jews present at the crucifixion was far different from, and more intense than, that of the Centurion.

The prophecy of Jesus in John 8:28 came to pass as He said it would. But what was the evidence in “the things that were done” that would convince so many Jews that Jesus was “I Am?” Well, it is illustrated in the loud shout of Jesus, “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me.”

The purpose of this was to direct their attention to the *entire* Psalm, a Psalm familiar to all the Jews. That Psalm gives specific details of the things which the multitude could see being done that were a fulfillment of prophecy that could not be denied. It proved Jesus was who He claimed to be, just as He said would happen. Let’s explore this further.

First, in that the shout of Jesus was quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, was David quoting Jesus in that Psalm, or was Jesus quoting David? The latter should be obvious that Jesus was quoting David.

Second, did Jesus really *cry out to God for help day and night*, Psalm 22:1-5? This was certainly true of David. He was on the run from his enemies and we have here, as in other places, a reflection of exactly how he felt under those circumstances. But did this describe Jesus on the cross?

Third, was Jesus a *Worm*? Was He *a nothng*, Psalm 22:6? Of course not, but David thought of himself that way. The first six verses of Psalm 22, including verse 1, reflect David’s feelings about himself. Secondly, they also reflect the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus as they thought that He was someone of no account and that God had forsaken Him. This is seen by comparing verses in Psalm 22:7ff with Matthew 27.

Here are statements in Psalm 22 of things that appear, specifically, at the cross that people could see happening — They laughed Him to scorn, shot out the lip, shook their heads, mocked and challenged Him, gaped on Him with their mouths, looked and stared, parted His garments and cast lot for them, pierced His hands and feet, etc. There were other things from other prophecies that they could also see, such as giving Him vinegar to drink. In addition, there were effects on the body of Jesus that are stated. All the people had to do to see what was really unfolding before their eyes was to recall that it was prophesied in Psalm 22. To this, Jesus drew their attention by loudly shouting the first verse of the Psalm.

Fourth. Actually, David says that God does not forsake his people. Psalm 22:24 says—

“For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.”

God heard Him when He cried because God had never left Him to begin with. In Deuteronomy 31:6, Moses told the people that God will “not fail thee nor forsake thee.”

That is echoed in Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5. In Psalm 37:25, David said that he was old but had “never seen the righteous forsaken.” Predicated on one’s continued faithfulness, God would never forsake anyone. Jesus said that the Father would always be with Him because He ALWAYS did what was pleasing to the Father. Jesus was *always* righteous. That would include His time on the cross. We have assurance there was never any abandonment. But, there is perhaps more easily understood and pointed evidence.

The shout of Jesus from the Cross was not a statement that the Father had forsaken Him, but rather a shout *to get the attention of the great multitude to recall the prophecies unfolding before them*. They were so stricken with “the things that were done” that they left in mourning, beating their breasts. This is just what Jesus said would happen - “WHEN ye have lifted up the Son of Man, THEN shall ye know that I Am.” Here is a quotation from Oliver Buswell in his *Systematic Theology*, page 68. At least on this point, which is strange for a theologian, he is correct—

“On the affirmative side we can definitely point out that in New Testament times for one to cite the opening words of an Old Testament passage, such as Psalm 22, was equivalent to citing the entire passage. We can be sure that these words of Jesus would have been understood by His disciples as equivalent to His saying, ‘Remember the 22nd Psalm.’ Christ’s enemies had just quoted another saying from this Psalm in taunting Him, ‘He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matthew 27:43; quoting from Psalm 22:8).

An added note to emphasize this. Jewish leaders thought the following about Him, likewise a fulfillment of prophecy—

“And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests mocking him with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he desireth him; for he said, I am the Son of God.”

Question: Seeing that these Jews already thought God had abandoned Jesus, why would He loudly confirm that they were right about it all along by crying out “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And, doing this while He had said in John 8:28 that His being lifted up on the cross would confirm who He claimed to be? Given the circumstance, to make His cry indicate God had actually forsaken Him is a ridiculous contradiction.

But, there is more Bible evidence that denies any abandonment of Jesus before, during or after crucifixion.

John 8:29

Immediately following His statement in verse 28, Jesus said—

“And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him.”

"Is with me." The term, "with" (*meta*) means "a marker of an associative relation, usually with the implications of being in the company of..." *Louw & Nida Lexicon*, 89.108. That is simple and understandable enough. The word, "is" (*eimi*), is a present, active, indicative verb. This means *continuous action* in present time; i.e., from the present and following. "He that sent me is with me: states the continual association between Jesus and the Father. He follows this with the negative of the same statement, "*He has not left me alone.*" The verb, *aphiemi*, "left," is an *aorist, active* verb. It indicates action over the past time. It means that the Father never one time departed from Jesus, past, present or future. Thus both positively and negatively, Jesus declares that the Father has always been with Him and will be with him from that moment on. This is emphasized by His saying, "For I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." This would include the entire time of the crucifixion. Verse 29 is thus related to verse 28 in a statement about what would happen when He would be lifted up.

John 16:32

"Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

It is clear that He speaks of the time of His capture and crucifixion. There is no other time in the New Testament record where it could apply. Notice, He says, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea is come." This was all said on the night He was taken captive to be crucified the next day. The disciples scattered, as Jesus said they would, *that very night*. He was alone as far as His disciples and others were concerned. The word, "leave," is the same *aphiemi* as in 8:29 where He says that the Father "has not left (*aphiemi*) me alone." "Alone" is also the same word as in 8:29. "Is with me" is also the same phrase as in 8:29. It is present tense, continuous action. All the while the disciples would be parted from him during His crucifixion, it would be no different from the way it had always been; the Father would never depart from Him but would always be with Him. Jesus said it both ways to emphasize the fact. Others would leave Him alone, but the Father would not. Thus, Jesus specifically denies beforehand that there would be no abandonment by the Father while He was on the cross.

II Corinthians 5:21

"Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

This verse is terribly perverted, even by some brethren who, unwittingly, take the Calvinist position on it. Note the following to see the position on this—

"Because He was 'made sin,' impregnated with sin, and became the very essence of sin, on the cross He was banished from God's presence as a loathsome thing. He and sin were made synonymous." Paul Billheimer, *Destined For The Throne*, page 83.

"God made im sin: that is to say that God the Father made His innocent incarnate Son the object of His wrath and judgment, for our sakes, with he result that in Christ on the cross the sin of the world is judged and taken away. . . Our sin is transferred to Him and His righteousness is transferred to us." P.E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, pages 213-214.

To say Jesus literally became sin, a sinner, is blasphemous. What is the truth?

It is a figure of speech known as *Synecdoche*, a part given for the whole or one word stands for a larger thought. Just the Hebrew word for "sin" is translated in the Old Testament as "sin offering" some 50 times, for example, Leviticus 6:25. The word "offering" is not in that text at all.

The same understanding concerns trespass and trespass offering, *asham*. For example, in Isaiah 53:10, the phrase "offering for sin," is from the single word, *asham*. The single word, *trespass*, is understood as *trespass offering*.

In Hebrews 10:6--8, quoting from Psalm 40:6, the single word for sin, *hamartia*, as in II Corinthians 5:21, is translated as *sacrifice for sin*. The word, *sacrifice*, is not in the original text. See also Romans 8:2-3 and the footnote in the ASV.

Another fact that must be considered is that Jesus was the perfect offering for sin. That meant He had to be without blemish. Peter said—

"...knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the blood of Christ." I Peter 1:18-19.

Jesus could not have been the perfect sacrifice if He was, as Martin Luther said, "*the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world.*"

TODAY

PRAYERS

Joe Davis
Terry Jackson
Bobby Banks

SONG LEADER

Steve Johnson

LORD'S TABLE

Gordon Myers
Matt Allen
Mike Franklin
Jerry Acosta

SCRIPTURE READING

Doug Seyk

SERMON

Maurice Barnett

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bobby Banks

WEDNESDAY

PRAYERS

Jeremy Banks
Matt Allen

SONG LEADER

Michael Banks

TEACHER

Skeet Franklin

NEXT WEEK

PRAYERS

Jeremy Banks
Michael Banks
Maurice Barnett

SONG LEADER

Jim Williams

LORD'S TABLE

Jerry Acosta
Alex Durazo
Christian Wilson
Michael Baker

SCRIPTURE READING

Jordan Myers

SERMON

Tom Baker

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Maurice Barnett