



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 15: The Humiliation of Christ

LORD'S DAY 15

Q.37. WHAT DOST THOU UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS, "HE SUFFERED"?

ANSWER: THAT HE, ALL THE TIME THAT HE LIVED ON EARTH, BUT ESPECIALLY AT THE END OF HIS LIFE, SUSTAINED IN BODY AND SOUL THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST THE SINS OF ALL MANKIND (A); THAT SO BY HIS PASSION, AS THE ONLY PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE (B), HE MIGHT REDEEM OUR BODY AND SOUL FROM EVERLASTING DAMNATION (C), AND OBTAIN FOR US THE FAVOUR OF GOD, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETERNAL LIFE (D).

(A) ISAIAH 53:4; I PETER 2:24, 3:18; I TIMOTHY 2:6 (B) ISAIAH 53:10; EPHESIANS 5:2; I CORINTHIANS 5:7; I JOHN 2:2; ROMANS 3:25; HEBREWS 9:28, 10:14;

(C) GALATIANS 3:13; COLOSSIANS 1:13; HEBREWS 9:12; I PETER 1:18-19;

(D) ROMANS 3:25; II CORINTHIANS 5:21; JOHN 3:16, 6:51; HEBREWS 9:15, 10:19

Body and soul

Immediately after Jesus' birth, the Apostle's Creed turns to His sufferings. All His life He suffered in body and soul. For instance, when He was tempted in the desert by the devil and when He was reviled and mocked by people. Christ came to suffer and to die. He had to suffer in soul and body because we have sinned with soul and body. The heaviest part of His sufferings was on the cross, for there He bore the wrath of God against the sin of all mankind. He cried, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" (*Matthew 27:46*).

The wrath of God

Although Christ bore the wrath of God which was against all mankind, nevertheless He suffered only in the place of His elect. It is only they that are saved from this wrath. The wrath of God remains on all others.

Christ said of Himself, "*I am the good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*" (*John 10:11*).

All-sufficiency

But if Christ had suffered and given satisfaction for all men, He would not have to suffer *more*. There is power in His sacrifice and an all-sufficiency to save the entire world.

Christ had to bear the full wrath of God. This has respect to the scope of the wrath against the entire human race, to which the elect belong. Isaiah was granted to see and prophesy, *“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:4).

Christ brought an offering of atonement, for it was His sufferings that were the sacrifice which brought reconciliation with God.

What purpose did His sufferings accomplish? In the first place, Christ saves us from the wrath of God, for it was because of sin that we deserved eternal damnation. In the second place, He merited God’s grace, righteousness, and life eternal. God’s grace is God’s favour. Through His obedience and atonement, Christ obtained righteousness, which He bestows upon His church. It was the eternal life which God had promised upon the keeping of the law.

Q.38. WHY DID HE SUFFER UNDER PONTIUS PILATE AS JUDGE?

ANSWER: THAT HE, BEING INNOCENT, AND YET CONDEMNED BY A TEMPORAL JUDGE (A), MIGHT THEREBY FREE US FROM THE SEVERE JUDGEMENT OF GOD TO WHICH WE WERE EXPOSED (B).

(A)JOHN 18:38; MATTHEW 27:24; LUKE 23:14-15; JOHN 19:4; (B)PSALM 69:4; ISAIAH 53:4-5; II CORINTHIANS 5:21; GALATIANS 3:13

Pontius Pilate

Christ was sentenced by Pilate. That sentence was a sentence by a judge who represented God’s authority here on earth. In Pilate, Christ was condemned by a legal authority. That judgement, although unjust, was binding. It was a sentence of God, because God willed that He should surely die. Through this all those who believe in Him are freed from God’s judgement. For Christ was condemned, so that we should be acquitted.

Paul said, *“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”* (II Corinthians 5:21).

God and His Church

Behind Pilate we must see God the Father, who condemned Christ. Christ bore the guilt of His people. Behind Christ we must see His elected Church, which He saves in this way. God the Father pronounced the Son guilty, in order that He could acquit the elect.

Q.39. IS THERE ANYTHING MORE IN HIS BEING *CRUCIFIED*, THAN IF HE HAD DIED SOME OTHER DEATH?

ANSWER: YES, THERE IS; FOR THEREBY I AM ASSURED, THAT HE TOOK ON HIM THE CURSE WHICH LAY UPON ME (A); FOR THE DEATH OF THE CROSS WAS ACCURSED OF GOD (B).

(A)GALATIANS 3:3; (B)DEUTERONOMY 21:23

A cursed death

Paul said “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*” (Galatians 3:13).

Paul here reminds us of the pronouncement of God made in the Old Testament: “*For he that is hanged is accursed of God*” (Deuteronomy 21:23).

The crucifixion was very shameful and dishonorable. The crucified one was undressed, publicly exposed on the cross to everyone’s scorn, as one cast out from the earth and also not to be received by heaven. Only slaves who had committed terrible crimes were allowed to be crucified by the Romans. The punishment was also very painful, for it was a lingering torture until death came. In the catechism, it is emphasized that the crucifixion was a cursed death which was carried out under God’s direction. It was an anathema, a being cast out by God.

The curse deserved

Christ is our Mediator and Surety. We have deserved nothing but the curse by our transgression of the law. For Paul wrote, “*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*” (Galatians 3:10).

When Christ indeed wanted to be our Saviour, He had to endure this curse. And that is what He did. He was crucified, and therefore was cursed in order to redeem us from the curse.

That curse rests upon us because we have not kept God’ law. It is a well-deserved curse. However, on Calvary Christ was nailed to the cross. He was willing to become a curse.

Questions:

1. *For whom did the Lord Jesus suffer?*

2. *What did the judge Pontius Pilate do?*

3. *Why was it that the Lord Jesus had to die by crucifixion?*

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: Christ's Divinity

The wounds of Christ were the greatest outlets of His glory that ever were. The divine glory shone more out of His wounds than out of all His life before. The veil was then rent in twain, and the full heart of God allowed to stream through. It was a human body that writhed, pale and racked, upon the accursed tree; they were human hands that were pierced so rudely by the nails; it was human flesh that bore that deadly gash upon the side; it was human blood that streamed from hands, and feet, and side; the eye that meekly turned to His Father was a human eye; the soul that yearned over His mother was a human soul. But oh, there was divine glory streaming through all; every wound was a mouth to speak of the grace and love of God. Divine holiness shone through. What infinite hatred of sin was there when He thus offered Himself a Sacrifice without spot unto God? Divine wisdom shone through. All created intelligences could not have devised a plan whereby God would have been just, and yet the Justifier. Divine love: every drop of blood that fell came as a messenger of love from His heart to tell the love of the Fountain. This was the love of God. He that hath seen a crucified Christ hath seen the Father.

Taken from "Gems of Robert Murray McCheyne"