

The Great Sayings in the Gospels
168 - The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus Christ
“Into Thy Hands”
Luke 23:44-47

Luke 23:44-47

- 44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
- 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.
- 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.
- 47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. KJV

Introduction:

We come now to the very last moment of Jesus’ life on this earth in a normal human body. I say it that way because He continued to be with the disciples for 40 days after the resurrection but that was in the glorified body which we shall all possess after the resurrection. He would not be subject to the same limitations and requirements of the body that He possessed for 33 years prior to this last breath of human life.

It is interesting to look at the ways that the other gospel writers handled this event.

Matt 27:50-54

- 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
- 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;
- 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
- 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
- 54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Mark 15:37-39

- 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.
- 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.
- 39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

John 19:30

- 30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Although they record different details and some of the details in different ways, each of the four was very careful to word the phrase, “He gave up the ghost.” But they said it in three different ways. Mark and Luke use a single word which means, in essence, ‘He breathed out.’ Matthew

used a different construction which translates as, “He sent forth His Spirit,” and John used words that mean, “He gave over (handed over, delivered up) His Spirit.” Each of those things means the same thing and shows that the final act of Jesus was conscious and deliberate, while He was still in possession of sufficient energy to cry out in a loud voice. We have discussed the fact that crucifixion was often a death from suffocation. As the one on the cross became weaker and weaker, the weight of his body against his outstretched arms slowly cut off his ability to breathe. But Jesus had enough strength to rise up and shout out His last prayer. Certainly it was not because the Father is hard of hearing but because men are. He wanted everyone there to know some things. He did not succumb to His sufferings and die because of His wounds, but willingly sent His Spirit away from the body and into the hands of His Father. This is important because it shows Him to be in full control of all of the events right up to and including the moment of His death.

One might ask, “why does that matter?” Jesus had made it matter because He had told His disciples that this would be the manner of His death.

John 10:15-18

- 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.
- 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
- 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

It is important for every true disciple of the Lord Jesus to know assuredly that He is firmly in control of the entire issue of death, having proved it openly both in His death and in His Resurrection. We will all one day come to that door... and we will probably not be able to peek beyond it. Our step through will be, in a sense, blind. The Lord knows all of that and left us with this affirmation that He has all of it firmly in hand and that our passing will be into His Presence.

Archeologists recently discovered a part of a skull that they think belongs to Buddha. The Muslims know where Mohammed is buried. I am pretty sure that neither of those guys is in charge of death's door. I am convinced, however, that Jesus controls it from both sides. He opens it to whom He wills and when He wills. One day He is going to open it from the other side and we are going to be resurrected with glorified bodies. His death, and the manner of it, is one more testimony that this is true.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus borrowed these words “into thy hands I commit my spirit,” from David.

Ps 31:1-5

- 1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy

- righteousness.
- 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
 - 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
 - 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.
 - 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

However, we also notice that Jesus edited David a bit. Whereas David used the ancient and Holy Name to address God, Jesus simply called Him 'Father.' We also note that Jesus left off the last part of v.5 because He was the One doing the redeeming, not the one being redeemed. Since this piece of a phrase in Ps 31:5, however, was obviously a prophecy concerning Him, this, too had to be fulfilled and that perfectly.

Matthew, Mark and Luke record that at the moment of Jesus' death the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. There are a couple of things that we should recognize here. First of all, the veil was too tall for any man to reach the top. Secondly, it was made of woven camel hair and was several inches thick. The point is that for this to have been done, God Himself would need to do it. But, why would God do this? There is only one acceptable reason so far as I can tell. The system of worship which had centered around this special place was ended so far as God was concerned.

This relatively small room within the temple was in a very special sense the earthly home of the Glory of God, that bright and shining light that Moses saw and that had indwelt this place since the original construction of the tabernacle. Very specific business was done there once a year on the Great Day of Atonement when the High Priest would bring the blood of a goat to sprinkle over the Mercy Seat.

The writer of Hebrews made a very definite connection between this veil and the body of Jesus.

Heb 10:16-22

- 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;
- 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
- 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.
- 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
- 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;
- 21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
- 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. KJV

The book of Hebrews makes it very clear that the 'way into the holiest' is no longer with the blood of animals but has been secured for the believer once and for all by the blood of Christ, that through the tearing of His body, as the veil was torn by God at His death. The effect of this,

as you well know, was that the gospel message was going to be proclaimed to the world and the Glory of God, His Holy Spirit, was now promised to all that God would call.

Acts 2:37-39

- 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
- 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. KJV

There is no doubt but that we are directed to believe that the Holy Spirit Who is given to us through Christ is that very Shekinah which appeared annually above the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. That which was hidden in the Old Covenant is openly proclaimed in the New.

The earthquake:

Matt 27:50-56

2. The earth did quake; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the whole land, and the adjacent countries. **This earthquake signified two things.**

(1.) The horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocency of him that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth quaked, as if it feared to open its mouth to receive the blood of Christ, so much more precious than that of Abel, which it had received, and was cursed for it (Gen 4:11-12); and as if it fain would open its mouth, to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, Shall not the land tremble for this? Amos 8:8.

(2.) The glorious achievements of Christ's cross. This earthquake signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So vigorous was the assault Christ now made upon the infernal powers, that (as of old, when he went out of Seir, when he marched through the field of Edom) the earth trembled, Judg 5:4; Ps 68:7-8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a yet once more, which perhaps refers to this shaking, Hag 2:6,21.

3. The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cease to cry Hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will

shortly be glad to find a hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the ragged rocks, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. See Rev 6:16; Isa 2:21. But when God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him, Nah 1:6. Jesus Christ is the Rock; and the rending of these rocks, signified the rending of that rock,

(1.) That in the clefts of it was may be hid, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may behold the glory of the Lord, as he did, Ex 33:22. Christ's dove is said to be hid in the clefts of the rock (Song 2:14), that is, as some make the allusion, sheltered in the wounds of our Lord Jesus, the Rock rent.

(2.) That from the cleft of it rivers of living water may flow, and follow us in this wilderness, as from the rock which Moses smote (Ex 17:6), and which God clave (Ps 78:15); and that rock was Christ, 1 Cor 10:4. When we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts must be rent - the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

The resurrected saints:

4. The graves were opened. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, that same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. Death to the saints is but the sleep of the body, and the grave the bed it sleeps in; they awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (v. 53) came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now here,

(1.) We may raise many enquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve: as,

[1.] Who these saints were, that did arise. Some think, the ancient patriarchs, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs (Matt 22:32), and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, these that arose were modern saints, such as had been Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zecharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fitter to be witnesses to them in an apparition after. What if we should suppose that they were the martyrs, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus dignified and distinguished? Christ particularly points at them as his forerunners, Matt 23:35. And we find (Rev 20:4-5), that those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, arose before the rest of the dead. Sufferers with Christ shall first reign with him.

[2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose to life, now at the death of Christ, and disposed of themselves elsewhere, but did not go into the city till after his resurrection; or whether (as others think), though their sepulchres (which the

Pharisees had built and varnished, Matt 23:29), and so made remarkable, were shattered now by the earthquake (so little did God regard that hypocritical respect), yet they did not revive and rise till after the resurrection; only, for brevity-sake, it is mentioned here, upon the mention of the opening of the graves, which seems more probable.

[3.] Some think that they arose only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, and, having finished their testimony, retired to their graves again. But it is more agreeable, both to Christ's honour and theirs, to suppose, though we cannot prove, that they arose as Christ did, to die no more, and therefore ascended with him to glory. Surely on them who did partake of his first resurrection, a second death had no power.

[4.] To whom they appeared (not to all the people it is certain, but to many), whether enemies or friends, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they said and did, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us; we must not covet to be wise above what is written. The relating of this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation to us, that we must not look that way for a confirmation of our faith; we have a more sure word of prophecy. See Luke 16:31.

(2.) Yet we may learn many good lessons from it.

[1.] That even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; for he was the same yesterday that he is to-day, and will be for ever, Heb 13:8.

[2.] That Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled, death. These saints that arose, were the present trophies of the victory of Christ's cross over the powers of death, which he thus made a show of openly. Having by death destroyed him that had the power of death, he thus led captivity captive, and gloried in these re-taken prizes, in them fulfilling that scripture, I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

[3.] That, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, rise again. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And perhaps Jerusalem is therefore called here the holy city, because the saints, at the general resurrection, shall enter into the new Jerusalem; which will be indeed what the other was in name and type only, the holy city, Rev 21:2.

[4.] That all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. They are raised up with him to a divine and spiritual life; they go into the holy city, become citizens of it, have their conversation in it, and appear to many, as persons not of this world.

Some further thoughts.

The words of Jesus provide a contrast that is by design

For more than 12 hours Jesus had been in the hands of men as He had told His disciples He would be,

Matt 17:22-23

22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Then, He had reminded them as the moments approached in the Garden,

Matt 26:44-45

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The angels will remind at least the women of these words at the empty tomb.

Luke 24:3-8

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

Even though Jesus could easily have avoided being taken by the Jews and their soldiers, He had allowed them to take Him. He delivered Himself into the hands of sinners and they now, “with wicked hands” have cruelly treated and crucified Him.

But their hands could not hold Him since they had no real power over Him, as He had told Pilate, except for that which He Himself had given them. Now, here at the end of His Work, Jesus took Himself out of the hands of wicked men and placed Himself into the hands of His Father.

“Never again will He be at the mercy of the wicked. Never again will He suffer shame. Into the hands of the Father He commits Himself, and the Father will now look after His interests... Three days later the Father raised Him from the dead. Forty days after that the Father exalted Him high

above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and set Him at His Own right hand in the Heavens. And there He now sits on the Father's throne." (Pink. The Seven Sayings)

Rev 3:21

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

"The Father will send back the One Whom the world cast out - send Him back in power and glory, send Him back to rule and reign over the whole earth with a rod of iron. There shall the situation be reversed. When He was here before, man dared to arraign Him, but then shall He sit and judge them. Once He was in *their* hands, but then they shall be in *His*. Once they cried "away with *him*," then shall He say, "depart from *me*." And in the meantime, He is in the Father's hands, seated on His throne, awaiting His pleasure!" (Pink, The Seven Sayings)

The contrast of who is in *whose* hands is too sweet to be missed.

These words are a continuing affirmation of Jesus' perfect yieldedness to the Father

He had been sent originally by the Father,

He had lived by every Word of God, perfectly obeying all that was written,

He had continually submitted to the Will of the Father, even to the awful cup that He had just drunk completely down,

"In all things He submitted Himself to the Father. See Him in the morning, 'rising up a great while before day' (Mk 1:35), in order that He might be in the presence of the Father. See Him anticipating every great crisis and preparing Himself for it by pouring out His heart in supplication. See Him spending the very last hour before His arrest on His face before God... And as He had lived, so He died, yielding Himself into the hands of the Father." (Pink, The Seven Sayings)

In this He left us a perfect example both of how to live and how to die, yielded completely to the will of the Father.

Finally, these words of Jesus give clear evidence that the individual's essence does not die and pass out of existence. It leaves the body and passes into another realm.

There is a world, in fact there are two worlds, existing alongside our reality and just out of the reach of our senses. They are just as 'real' as this world is real, but are composed of different materials. In one of those worlds lives all of the blessed spirits that God has created and God Himself. In the other dwells the devil, his angels, and all of the doomed and condemned spirits that have left this planet since creation.

In death one's spirit, the conscious, thinking, reasoning part of him, slips out of this world and into one of the others. It is not a great distance, in fact, it is barely any distance at all. It is almost as if one merely walks into the next room, except that the 'room' is not a place that those

around him can see or follow. For the saint, it is as if one dozed off for a moment and awoke in a brand new place inhabited by light, love, and all things wonderful. For the unbeliever, however, the awaking is to unmitigated suffering and horror, unending grief and misery.

Jesus showed us here that the passageway of the believing is nothing at all to fear, merely a letting go from here to be caught there by the hand of God Himself never to suffer, fear, hurt or weep any more. ***Into thy hands I commit my spirit***, could be the statement of every child of God at the moment of release from this life.

The blessedness for those who trust in Christ is that ***there is another side***. We do not spin off into an unknown universe without direction and without expectation of safety. We yield ourselves ***into the hand of God***, or as the writer put it,

2 Cor 5:1-8

- 1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
- 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
- 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.
- 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.
- 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:
- 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)
- 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

So, how is it with you? If suddenly you were to come face to face with the reality of death, knowing that you had but a few moments of consciousness left, could you in all honesty say, ***Father into your hands I commit my spirit?*** Or would you be terrified, suddenly away that you have no confidence at all to pass out of this life and into the next?

The death that Jesus died was to make it possible for you to live and die without fear, if you will trust Him, learn from Him, and take His words to heart, “***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***”

“For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

How is it with you?