

## But Jesus Was Saying ... (4)

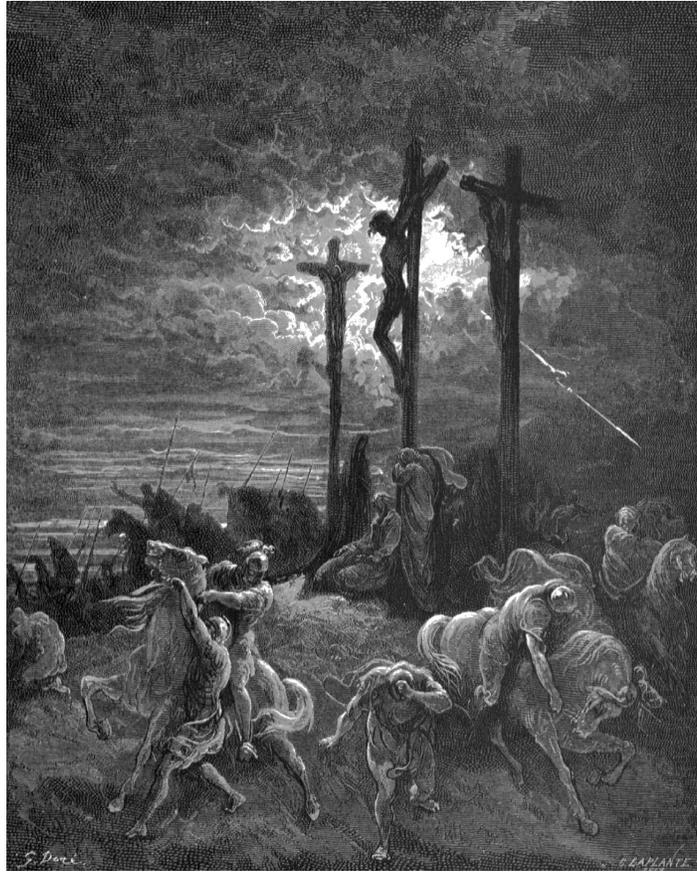
For the fourth time in this series, visit once again Jesus on the cross and the words He spoke, and reflect once again on the mind of our Lord. Also, once again, let us examine our own hearts and minds to discern our own attitudes and actions. Jesus—“God is salvation”—the One prophesied whose name was proclaimed Immanuel, “with us is God” (**Isaiah 7:14**), gave Himself for you and me. Not only did He give Himself willingly to die in my place, He did it with a most amazing attitude, with a most excellent example, and most worthy words. He *“emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a*

*cross”* (**Philippians 2:7-8**). This is the attitude we must have (**Philippians 2:5**). We must turn our eyes from all else and fix *“our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”* (**Hebrews 12:2-3**). This is the example we must follow. *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps”* (**1 Peter 2:21**). We are often reminded of His attitude and example at the cross, but how often do we reflect on the powerful messages of His words in His hours of suffering? Jesus’ mind is reflected in His words. In situations not so harsh, our words might tend to be different, “But Jesus was saying ...”

**“ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?”** (**Mark 15:34**).

### The Statement

These words of Jesus, at first glance, might seem strange to us. They certainly are rendered for us in a strange language. Some of the people who were there and overheard the statement, also were somewhat confused at the statement, not because the language was strange to them—it wasn’t—but because they were not ready to understand the content of the words. The language of the statement is Aramaic. This is understandable since the *lingua franca* of the people assembled at the cross. Scripture translates for us: *“which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU*



*FORSAKEN ME?*” Why then, in our English Bibles, is the phrase simply not translated for us instead of giving it to us in English characters and then telling us what the translation is? It is to help us see the scene with some understanding. “*When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, ‘Behold, He is calling for Elijah’*” (**Mark 15:35**). Seeing the Aramaic words in English letters helps us to see the relationship of the sounds of the opening words to the sound of the name of the prophet, Elijah.

Perhaps not as readily apparent to us, is the reason that the name of Elijah comes up at all. To see that, we have to pay more attention to the context than is often done. It also takes a little thought beyond the immediate response. **Who** are these bystanders that respond to the words of Jesus? **How** do they respond, besides verbally? **Why** do they respond in the way they do? We must recognize that these bystanders were not the Roman soldiers. They would have had little knowledge, if any at all, concerning an Israelite prophet. If they recognize the name through contact with Jews, they would have had no care for it. These bystanders were Jews who had familiarity with the name and the man. We also need to recognize that they didn’t mis-hear Jesus, as some might suppose. Their response indicates their continued mockery of Jesus. Notice what they did: “*Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink*” (**Mark 15:36**). Jesus is on the cross dehydrating from exhaustion and loss of blood—why give Him something sour to drink? They are continuing to scorn and tease Jesus. It is if they are saying, “Give Him something to soothe His mouth; His mouth is so dry that He can’t even speak properly.” They continued with derision by saying, “*Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down*” (**Mark 15:36**). In actuality, Jesus, rather than as they indicate in their ridicule, is not calling in Elijah’s name, but is quoting Scripture with which any knowledgeable Jew of the day would have known. They had complete disregard for God.

## The Scripture

The Scripture which Jesus quotes is known to us the **22nd Psalm**. Jesus certainly knew, as did any Jew who cared to look at God’s word, that the Psalm was one dealing with the Messiah. Some ask why the Messiah would be questioning God in regard to being forsaken. After all, they reason, wouldn’t Jesus know why He was forsaken. There are others who deny that Jesus was forsaken at the cross, declaring that God never would abandon Him. Still others say that Jesus was in the pangs of death—how could He even realize what He was saying? None of these approaches appreciates the meaning of the Psalm. None recognize the determination nor teaching of Jesus.

It is not only the first few words of this Psalm that apply to Jesus. This Psalm also speaks of: being despised by the people (**Matthew 27:20-23**); people hurling abuse and wagging their heads (**Mark 15:29**); God delivering Him (**Matthew 27:42-43**); Him growing in God from His mother’s womb (**Luke 2:40**); Him being surrounded by strong bulls [chief priests and elders] (**Matthew 27:1**); the effects of crucifixion (**John 19:28**); being surrounded by dogs [Romans] (**Mark 15:16-20**); His pierced hands and feet (**John 19:37**); the dividing of His garments (**Mark 15:24**). Jesus did not speak or quote randomly. He full well knew and was willing to fulfill the plan for mankind.

## The Solution

Jesus knew that He was the solution to the needs of mankind because of sin. He knew that sin separated man from God (**Isaiah 59:2**). God is too pure for sin: “*Your eyes are too pure to approve*

*evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor” (Habakkuk 1:13). Then, was Jesus forsaken by the Father? That is precisely what Scripture says. Jesus knew He was taking for us the result of our sins—separation from God. It would look to others as if there was no hope in Jesus as the redeemer. “For my enemies have spoken against me; And those who watch for my life have consulted together, Saying, ‘God has forsaken him; Pursue and seize him, for there is no one to deliver” (Psalm 71:10-11). Jesus knew exactly what Paul would later describe for us: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Corinthians 5:21). Jesus doesn’t quote the opening lines of the Psalm to ask a question, but to express the agony of the consequence of sin—ours, not His own. Because He had no sin, He is our Solution—our Savior.*

The remainder of **Psalm 22** speaks to the very fact that God is trusted to provide deliverance. It tells of a Messiah who proclaim God’s name among His brothers (**Hebrews 2:11-12**). It reminds us that people from all nations will be able to turn to the Lord (**Romans 16:25-27**). The solution is for all people of all time. *“They will come and will declare His righteousness To a people who will be born, that He has performed it” (Psalm 22:31).*

—S. Scott Richardson Sr.