

**"AND WHEN THEY WERE COME TO THE PLACE, WHICH IS CALLED CALVARY,
THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM" (LUKE 23:33)**

The death of the Lord Jesus is a fact of history. Its meaning is entirely a matter of divine revelation. There is no other means of interpreting our Lord's death but "according to the scriptures" that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4). His death was a most cruel and ignominious death. Crucifixion was a Roman and Gentile form of death. The Jews stoned to death their own condemned criminals. In crying for and demanding that the Lord Jesus be crucified, the Jews therefore were not only inflicting upon our Lord a most inhuman form of suffering, but were showing their contempt of Him, by assigning Him a Roman death, as though He was unworthy to be identified with national Israel even in death.

The Jews who did this infamous act were part of the Hebrew race, whom God took up in ancient times for sovereign and divine purposes. The nation itself was a representative part of our total humanity. As such they were given privileges, which no other people were given, and elevated to be the chiefest of the nations, being specially educated in the knowledge of God. Paul says of them in Rom. 9:4-5, "...to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory... the service of God, and the promises... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came... God blessed for ever".

Jesus lived among them, and did the most stupendous miracles, performing by a touch, or a word, often without a word, and sometimes at a great distance. They were all-benevolent in their nature and brought the greatest blessings to the people of that nation. Yet "they crucified him". If Jewry did this, what shall we say, would any other part of the human race have done?

In the act of crucifying our Lord, there were gathered around the cross every type of our humanity. The corrupt humanity of the whole of mankind was expressed in this, even by the most educated, civilized and religious part of it. "And they crucified him"- that points the finger to all mankind.

The hatred of the rulers and priests of Jewry, with their cunning and craft, enmity and cruelty, exposed their heart of unbelief, though under a religious guise or garment. Pilate is representative of the Gentiles and the Gentile dominion, the fourth great world -power of Rome, which had subdued the Jews and usurped the rule of their land. He was the Roman Governor, an able man of his day. Because of his detestation for the Jews, he might have taken sides with Jesus. He sought to proclaim the innocence of Jesus, "Behold... I find no fault in him" (John 19:4, 5). Pilate recognized something of the superior quality of life in Christ, when he cried to the Jews, "Behold the man!", as though he was acknowledging, "Here is an ideal man, a kind of man that all men should have been."

Now all this high praise of Pilate's, suddenly came crashing down when the Jews cried, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). That cry created anew issue; Christ or self interest-Christ or position-Christ or reputation. And Pilate loved self more than he loved God, if he ever thought of God at all. This is the real malignity of sin. It esteems self to be of more value than the Son of God. So it was that Pilate, to save his own skin, delivered up Jesus to be crucified. Pilate either had to deny self or deny Christ; crucify the flesh or crucify Christ. He did what all Gentiles do- and did as the representative of all Gentiles.

If the cross thus reveals the true character and extent of man's iniquity and unbelief, it reveals as nowhere else the true character and extent of God's love for man. Here and only by this means, man's redemption is secured and here and in no other place, can sinful man fall into the loving arms of His God and be forgiven. It is the love of God in action; love which many waters cannot quench nor floods drown. It is love from which comes all our salvation. The cross is God's witness that He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

There is only one other kind of people to be found in the Scripture. It is a company of people who have come forth from both these groups - Jew and Gentile, because they have been seen by the Spirit of God, the evil of their natural heart and the immensity of unbelief, which lurks in every corner of that heart. They have knelt at the Savior's feet. They have received Him, Whom both the Jew and Gentile had rejected. They are neither Jew nor Gentile now, but a new creation people through faith in Him, Who in being crucified by men, wrought out God's plan for their salvation. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (Gentile): for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:12:13).

Dear reader, if you have not experienced this salvation, through faith in the crucified, risen One, "... call ye upon him while he is near;" and be forgiven -saved from the wrath to come (Isaiah. 55:6,7).

K.P.