

Powerful Passover Lessons From Jesus' Last Sermon on Earth

As Jesus hung on the cross, struggling painfully for each breath, He uttered seven short, powerful statements showing who He was and what was happening, and encouraging those who would follow Him. It was His last sermon.

1. "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus is not only practicing the forgiveness He preached (Matt. 5:44), He is asserting His divinity as God who forgives sin (Ps. 103:3). Beyond that, however, He is announcing the beginning of the New Covenant under which our sins will be forgiven (Jer. 31:33, 34).

2. "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Jesus' promise of life to the criminal on the cross tells us He has authority over heaven (Ps. 115:16), He will conquer death (Ps. 16:10) and through Him we also will live (John 14:19). He is the priest of the New Covenant because of His indestructible life (Heb. 7:16, 17).

3. "'Woman, here is your Son' ... 'Here is your mother'" (John 19:26-27)

Jesus took time to entrust His mother into the care of the beloved disciple John, fulfilling the Scripture at Psalm 69:8 that He was estranged from His brothers and showing us that God expects us to honor our family (Mark 7:10-13). We are also reminded that Jesus was the "seed of woman," the Savior born to a virgin promised in Genesis 3:15.

4. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

Many of those who heard Jesus, and many commentators since, have failed to understand that Jesus is quoting the Hebrew title of the 22nd Psalm. Jesus sends us to Psalm 22 to show us that 1000 years earlier, it was prophesied that Jesus would be mocked (Ps. 22:6-8) and even prophesying the very words of His mockers (Matthew 27:41-43). In one sense, He was mocking His mockers. The crucifixion is also described, as His hands and feet were pierced (Ps. 22:16), His clothes were divided by casting lots (Ps. 22:14) and it was difficult to speak (Ps. 22:15).

Yet Psalm 22 is not a picture of forsakenness or despair, but is instead a declaration of victory. God did not despise the suffering of Jesus (Psalm 22:24). Rather, God used it to purchase eternal life (Ps. 22:26) and promised that all nations will come to Jesus (Ps. 22: 27- 28). Jesus is telling us that He knew the price and gladly paid it.

5. "I am thirsty" (John 19:28)

This is another fulfillment of prophecy (Ps. 69:28), when the suffering Savior is given vinegar for His thirst. Yet in the midst of His pain and distress, Jesus used Psalm 69 to tell us that those who seek God will live (Ps. 69:32), and the God does not despise the suffering of His people (Ps. 69:33). There is also the promise that His people will rebuild Judah (Ps. 69:35, 36), an apparent reference to His promise to return.

6. "It is finished" (John 19:30)

To fully understand this statement, we believe we need to look to the prophet Daniel. He foretold the coming of the Anointed One who would come 483 years (69×7) after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (458 B.C. or A.D. 26) and then be "cut off" (Daniel 9:25-26). Jesus is telling us that He has fulfilled Daniel's prophecy to finish transgression, put an end to sin,

atone for wickedness, bring eternal righteousness, seal up prophecy and anoint the Holy One (Dan. 9:24). This is the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

7. "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The last words of Jesus on the cross are taken from Psalm 31. He is telling us that we can take refuge in God (Ps. 31:1-4) and that we can trust God with our life (Ps. 31:15). Our times are in His hands (Psalm 31:19-22) and He preserves the faithful (Psalm 31:23, 24).

With His last sermon, Jesus told us what he was doing even as He was doing it.

Can you join Him in saying "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit?" {eo}

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