

Devotion on Holy Week (Third Day - Tuesday before Easter) - 15 April 2014, Anno Domini (Proclaiming the Acceptable Year of the Lord)



The Crimson Worm

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?** which is, being interpreted, **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** (Mark 15:34)

This phrase is among the seven last 'words' (exclamations) from the cross. They reveal an amazing endurance of our Lord for physical pain in His human manliness. The pain of the cross is so intense that it cannot be imagined – only experienced. It is an unrelenting severe pain. In fact, it even increases as it continues. It might be designated as an **excruciating** pain. Such pain is beyond the common endurance of the human body, yet Jesus retained His mental faculties throughout the process of crucifixion. It is interesting to note that the word, excruciating, comes from the Latin (ex: from, and cruci: cross) meaning pain as from the cross.

Partially blinded by the blood streaming down His face from the crown of thorns, Jesus looked through the haze at the multitudes of jeering hecklers for whom He was presently suffering. He could bear, somehow, the intense physical pain of the cross, but what of that of His immeasurable and unrequited Love with which He loved the very ones who had crucified Him mercilessly. It was a sacrifice that HAD to be made. It was decided in the Counsel of Heaven in Eternity Past, and our Lord entered into our scale of time to endure that sacrifice of redemption for those whom He would receive.

Amazing how prophets of old often uttered prophecies of which they had no understanding but, yet, were led by the Holy Ghost to record the words. One such blazing example is given by King David in the 22nd Psalm (known as one of many Messianic Psalms). This Psalm describes in great detail the suffering of Christ on the cross – how his tongue clave to the roof of His mouth for thirst, His blood coagulated in this thoracic cavity due to pooling, and His arms being jolted out of socket due to the abrupt drop of the cross into its appointed pit. He describes those who ridicule Him – His nakedness and shame. He also uses a term that seems out of place to describe Himself there on the cross: ***“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*** (Psalms 22:6)

This verse addresses an obscure and little known Type of Christ given in the 22nd

Psalm – a Messianic Psalm. A Messianic Psalm is one that relates to Jesus Christ. *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* (Luke 24:44) This Psalm is of particular note for it quotes the very words of Christ from the Cross in its first verse: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Psalms 22:1) The first half of this Psalm 22:1-21 reveals the suffering of Christ on the Cross. The second half (vv 22-31) describes His resurrection joy! The specific reference of the Type to which I refer is that of the Crimson Worm. I first wrote of this in a devotion in the late 90's. It is an amazing Type whose image is near perfect with that of Christ on the Cross.

Before advancing further, let us examine the word used in Psalm 22:6 for 'worm.' In the Hebrew language, this word is 'tola' ath' which means crimson, or scarlet, worm. How could Jesus possibly be compared to a Scarlet, or Crimson, Worm? Well, in many points as we shall see. While living in Iran (old Persia), I happened to observe, often, large bloody spots on the white oak trees lining the boulevards of Esfahan. On inquiry, I was told that these red blood spots were caused by the crimson worm. This particular species, *coccus ilicis*, has an interesting life cycle that commends itself to comparison to Christ on the cross. The dye from these worms was used to color garments red in Jesus' day. Of course, red was the color favored by the wealthy and was very expensive to produce. The color of red, or scarlet, is used in the Bible to describe how revealing are our sins: *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* (Isaiah 1:18)

The female of this species will seek out a certain kind of tree when she is ready to produce young. She climbs the tree, just as Christ mounted the Cross, at her own volition. If the Crimson Worm does not climb the tree, her young family cannot be realized. If Christ had not, at His own volition, allowed Himself to be crucified, His family – the Church – would not have been possible, nor would the coming of the Holy Ghost: *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* (John 16:7)

When the Crimson Worm has reached a certain position on the tree (usually a point beneath the first branches of the tree), she attaches her body to the tree in such a manner that it cannot be removed without tearing it apart. How like the nails in the hands and feet of our Lord! She then lays her eggs which are deposited just beneath her stomach. When her young are hatched, they feed upon her living body. Do we not, likewise, feed upon that Bread of Heaven which Christ is to us? *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. I am the bread which came down from heaven.* (John 6:35, 41)

When the young grubs can survive without the mother, she begins to die and, as she dies, she exudes a crimson gel that covers her babies. From this point on, they shall be like her – CRIMSON! The dye also covers an area about six inches in diameter on the tree and is indelible in its nature. All who in future years pass the tree will see the blood spot where this Crimson Worm died. All who come to Christ for the saving of their souls must first see the blood of Calvary.

Now in death, the Crimson Worm curls into a small knot and, after three days, turns snow white: *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*

Amazing that the life and work of Christ on earth was sealed on the third day at His resurrection when He sealed that work with newness of life. He rose that we might rise. The Crimson Worm, now white, dries to a powder and falls to the ground.

WHY did Christ suffer and die for you and me? Because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22), and that sacrifice must be one without blemish or guilt. Jesus Christ is the one and only substitute who could qualify to be the atoning Lamb whose blood could redeem us. The ONLY one in all of time and eternity. And He was willing to make the uttermost sacrifice for sinful man.

Remember that first Passover in Old Egypt when God gave a meaningful foreshadowing of Christ to the people of Israel in bondage? *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.* (Ex 12:3-7) Is your soul sealed under that blood of an innocent and unblemished lamb? *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.* (Ex 12:12-14)

When the Angel of the Lord broods over the expanse of your years, shall He see the Blood and Passover you, dear Reader?

Do we not observe that same Passover in the Church today by means of the Lord's Supper?

Friends, are you covered with that Blood shed on Calvary's Cross? Are you now and forever like Him in your will to obey the Father? Do you feed on the living Body of Christ daily by devouring His Word? Do you see the beauty of that wonderful Personage (Jesus Christ) symbolized in the Crimson Worm?

May it be so in your faith and living.