



*4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. (Psalm 22:4-5)*

Perplexed and troubled, the Roman Governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, sat down in the seat of judgment to adjudicate the claims against One who would one day be his own Judge. Pilate was not very happy about being aroused out of bed past midnight to see to the petty complaints of the religious rulers of the Jews. It seemed that nothing could satisfy these constant religious fanatics of a system of laws which had been corrupted at their own hand ages earlier. He was also put ill at ease by a strange message delivered to him at that very moment from his wife: “When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” (Matt 27:19) It is true that the world might be in a better state of affairs if more men would heed the wisdom of their wives.

Pontius Pilate was a man the world would call ‘reasonable.’ He knew that the Emperor of Rome claimed divinity, but no one really believed that. But since it was professed by all around, it was reasonable for him to profess the same. It made life so much less complicated than publicly stating the obvious, that “The Emperor has no clothes!” Even on the judgment seat, he tried to use reason and justice in rendering the law; but there were times when it might be more convenient and politically correct to make exceptions. Twice, the Roman Prelate pronounced Christ innocent – and never once intimated that He was guilty: *3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. (Luke 23:2-4)* And again, after even Herod had found no guilt in Christ, Pilate again proclaimed His innocence: *13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him. (Luke 23:13-16)*

So the governor, who in our day might be considered for appointment to the US Supreme Court, was willing, like all men are, to compromise on truth!

Why do we discuss this detail on the events of the Passion of Christ when studying the implications of Psalm 22? It is because these events establish the background for the Psalm. Jesus was totally innocent – the only man of total innocence

ever to live, and was so adjudged by both the governor of Rome and the ruler of the Jews (Herod).

There was, in the custody of the Roman authorities, a brutal murderer and seditious culprit named, Barabbas. He was a man that all of society would loathe. It was customary for the Roman governor to release a convicted felon to the people, regardless of the severity of his crimes, each year at the Feast of Passover; so the political mind of Pilate latched on to Jesus as the man that he would release. Do you desire to know the last name of Barabbas? Well, it was Ogles, and Arnold, and Hoffman, and Pangsiw, and Jacob, and Legumana, and Djurcik, – or, if you add your own name, you will have the gist of it. We are perfectly personified in the person of Barabbas for Christ died in our stead just as He would do for Barabbas – the just for the unjust!

*16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. (Luke 23:16-25)*

Poor Pilate! He almost measured up, but not quite. ‘NOT QUITE’ is the status of the great majority of professing Christendom. Better to be Barabbas than Pontius Pilate. He attempted, with plain water, to wash the blood of Christ from his hands, but it was the blood of Christ and the Water of Life that would only have sufficed.

*4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.* Jesus is yet teaching us from the nails of the cross. He fully realizes the Sovereignty and unchangeable character of the Father. But He is teaching us a great lesson in these two lines. Moses and the Children of Israel trusted in God to hold at bay the mighty army of Pharaoh. They trusted in God to hold the overflowing waters of the Red Sea in abatement as they crossed on dry land. They trusted God for their provision in the wilderness – and He never once failed them. Yet, herein is the irony: God had done for His people Israel that which He was not able to do for His own Beloved Son! Though Jesus, too, is not confounded in knowing His Father’s will, He also knows the futility of seeking a release from the torments of soul which His divine nature suffered (more than His physical being) on the cross at Calvary. Neither God the Father, nor God the Son, is capable of change. All that they declare and do is fixed in the divine Councils of Heaven. Christ knows this. His cry is for us – for us to understand the terrors of sin and its sentence being carried out in reality!

Had Christ commanded it, legions of angels would have at once descended and removed Him from the cross. But Jesus never commanded it, nor would He even have considered it. Love was that which compelled Him to satisfy the atonement necessary for us. He KNEW us then, just as He knows us now. Regardless the excruciating pain, He would not relent. The matter had been settled ere the world was made.

You may wonder at the term, excruciating? What does it mean, and what is its etymology? The term combines two Latin derivatives – *crux*, or *crucis*, meaning ‘cross;’ and *ex-*, meaning without or FROM. So, excruciating means severe pain as that of the cross.

As pointed out earlier, Christ is abandoned by every friend and fellow; and now He is literally without direct fellowship with the Father. God could not look upon the sin represented on the cross and taken upon Himself by Christ. God the Father could not, either, behold the unprecedented ordeal of His only Begotten Son dying such a death. Jesus had foretold precisely the means of His death to His disciples, but they did not 'get it' because they could not have imagined such a fate for their Lord. *Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.* (Matt 26:2) He had saved others, why could He not save Himself? The answer to that lies in the question itself. Without the sacrifice of Christ there could be salvation for none of us.

God the Father observed the events of the day in great torment of soul. It may be the only case that such pain could ever be felt in Heaven. Remember the Parable of the Vineyard which Jesus told to His disciples? It told precisely the story of what would happen at last. *33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?* (Matt 21:33-40) Please note that the Pharisees KNEW who Jesus was!

In this parable, God the Father is represented by the Householder; the husbandmen are workers in the church of God; the servants are the prophets of God whom He sent to impart His word and Will; and I need not reveal to knowing ears who that Son represented.

I hasten to add that God was not surprised by the crucifixion of His Son. He knew of it before the everlasting hills were made, or even before Adam breathed his first breath. God is never taken by surprise at any event, for He is the Omniscient King that rules over a Kingdom whose plan and construction is of His own doing.

Our next devotion will begin with verse 6 of this beautiful Psalm.... beautiful? How so? Because it relates not only to the sorrowful crucifixion of our Lord, but also, in that sorrowful sacrifice, the redemption of you and me, and all who are the elect of God. Have you ever considered the nature of a 'worm' being a Type of Christ? For the answer to that question, see tomorrow's devotion.

## PSALM 22

*To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.*

- 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*
- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
- 3 But thou *art* holy, O *thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

- 6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*
- 8 He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- 9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.
- 11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.
- 12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
- 13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.
- 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
- 17 I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.
- 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
- 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.
- 29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.
- 30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.