

# The Fourth Nail

*Easter Sunday*

April 11, 2004

## MY GOD, MY GOD

*The Passion* is now the 7<sup>th</sup> highest grossing domestic film of all time. Americans & Canadians have seen it about 40 million times. One of the greatest moments of fulfilled prophecy takes place in the scene where Jesus cries from the cross:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? – Mark 15:34 NIV

I've heard teachers attempt to explain why God had to turn his back and hide His face from Christ while he took on our sin.

Q: But is this what Jesus was communicating to His audience?

1500 years before Jesus was born, 800 years before the Romans began practicing crucifixions, King David wrote Psalm 22.

- We call it Psalm 22, but Jesus' contemporaries didn't.
- Bible chapters and verses were added 1000 years later.
- They referred to each Psalm by the Psalm's first line.

For instance, they wouldn't have known "The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm" by that name. They would've known it as: "The Lord Is My Shepherd". And Psalm 22 would've been well known by its (first line) name:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? – Psalm 22:1 NIV

Think about this: If I cried out "Our Father, who art in Heaven!" ... you probably (mentally) continue reciting it.

If those at the cross continued reciting Psalm 22, they must've received the shock of a life-time. They were unwittingly playing out - virtually line-by-line - a Davidic messianic prophecy.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? ... All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. ... From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. ... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ... They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. – Psalm 22:1-18 NIV

Scripture was always quoted in Hebrew, yet the gospels tell us that Jesus uttered this phrase in Aramaic – His native tongue.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” – which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” – Mark 15:34 NIV

It’s as if Jesus was letting them know that he wasn’t simply quoting the scripture – He was becoming the scripture.

- How shocking for His detractors.
- How electrifying for His disciples.

Because as confused as they were at that point, they would’ve looked around and realized that scripture was being fulfilled.

And as they recited (perhaps out loud) they would’ve come to the conclusion of David’s Psalm: “It only *appears* He has forsaken.”

For [God] has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. ... All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. - Psalm 22:24-28 NIV

Q: Are you aware that we are fulfilling this prophecy at this very moment? Look at how Psalm twenty-two ends:

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn – for he has done it. – Psalm 22:30-31 NIV

Jesus wasn’t a victim of the Romans or the Jewish leaders – He was a victor of the cross; absolute power under absolute control.

- In order to overpower the things that overpower us.
- Three nails pierced Him - but they didn’t hold Him

It was obedience to God and love for us that held Him in place.

## **NAILS OF INTCHTUTHIL**

The type of Roman nail used on Jesus wasn’t known for centuries; until a discovery in Scotland.

- At the Roman fort known as Inchtuthil.

Julius Agricola built the fort in 78 A.D. (45 years after the crucifixion), dismantled it in 84 A.D. and moved it to Germany.

- The Romans didn’t want the Caledonians to fashion weapons out of the old nails; so they hid them 12’ deep in the ground.

In 1961 archeologists at Inchtuthil discovered the spot: over three-quarters of a million Roman all-purpose nails.

- These nails can be accurately dated to the time of Jesus.
- And they're identical to the type used to crucify Christ.

## A SIGN FROM GOD

And yet, those three nails are meaningless without the message of the fourth ... the uncelebrated nail; the one that held the sign.

Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. – Matthew 27:37 NIV

By nailing this sign above Jesus, Pilate involuntarily becomes the first to proclaim the incredible message of the cross.

Jesus is the Savior-King promised to God's people throughout the Old Testament and authenticated by hundred's of prophecies.

- He had it written three ways: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.
- The language of commoners, commanders, and the cultured.
- This Messiah has come for the residents of every nation!

When Jesus Himself saw that sign, it would've brought the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm to His mind; the one He knew as: I have installed my King.

I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. – Psalm 2:6-8 NIV

This sign, which was meant to mock, must have been an incredible encouragement - in the midst of Jesus' suffering - from a God who will not be mocked.

## WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

That sign may be partially responsible for the conversion of the criminal who hung on his own cross next to Christ. He said:

We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." – Luke 23:39-42 NIV

- Interesting choice of words ... kingdom.
- For whatever reason, this guy chose to believe the sign.

He had a sign over his own head, listing his transgressions; it probably read: treason, rebellion, or murder. But, whatever it was, he told the other criminal: "We are punished justly."

- He knew he was a royal mess.
- He read a royal proclamation.
- He asked for the King's help.

We all have a moral standard written on our hearts. We all have our own signs.

Q: What violations do you bear the guilt and shame for?

Q: What hangs over your head?

There's an incredible prophecy in Isaiah 53:4-6.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. – Isaiah 53:4-6 NIV

- His sign can be nailed right over the top of yours.
- Your transgressions can be hidden by His sacrifice.
- And your guilt & shame can be covered by His blood.

## BACK TO THE NAILS

The bulk of the Inchtuthil nails are in the museum of Scotland, but some were sent to the U.K. for analyses and then exported under official permit to an antiques dealer in Chicago.

- We bought (\$135/each) and borrowed 67 Inchtuthil nails.
- These nails are not replicas - they are 2000 years old.
- Manufactured by the Roman government about the year 78.
- Identical to the type of nails used at the crucifixion.

In a moment the ushers are going to pass them out, and you'll have the entire worship set to pass them down your aisle.

- I'd recommend that you press the tip into your palm.
- If you want you can close your eyes and thank Jesus.
- You can take this opportunity to make Him your King.

I love J.B. Phillips translation of Colossians 2:14.

He has forgiven you all your sins: he has utterly wiped out the written evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it to the cross. – *Colossians 2:14 JBP*