

September 2013

## Looking on the One We Pierced

Dear Brethren:

Outside the wall of Jerusalem three stakes stand out against the skyline. Bodies are still suspended from them. Now the sound of marching feet is heard; a company of soldiers approaches. They stand before one of the stakes. Looking carefully at the first crucified man and concluding that he is still alive, one of their number breaks both his legs with a large mallet. They do the same with another of the crucified men, ensuring that both men will not escape and soon die.

Now they stand before the center stake on which the body of Christ hangs. One of His disciples is standing nearby, watching anxiously. He wonders what they will do to that body. He must have breathed a sigh of relief as the soldiers concluded that the man on the stake was already dead. The mallet was not used. Earlier, and to his amazement, one of the soldiers had taken his spear and thrust it into the Savior's side. That is why He was already dead.

But one of the soldiers with a spear [had] pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water (John 19:34).

The soldier was helping fulfill God's master plan that the Messiah must die. But we also recall what our Savior said in John 10:17–18:

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

The soldier did not have to break Christ's bones because it was prophesied that His bones were not to be broken.

In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof (Exodus 12:46).

He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken (Psalm 34:20).

These things all took place that the scripture might be fulfilled:

For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. . . . They shall look on him whom they pierced (John 19:36–37).

Understanding that these passages in the Old Testament were fulfilled at that moment, we note why the Passover sacrifice concerning the lamb was instituted with the command not to break any of its bones: Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).

Prior to Christ's day until the time of the prophet Zechariah, His name meant "Jehovah Remembers." God will grant them mercy because He is merciful. Zechariah preached God's law to make his hearers aware of their wickedness and to proclaim God's gospel, which alone could change their hearts and bring them back to the Lord.

Zechariah spoke of a time when people would look on the One they had pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child. He foresaw a deep heartrending sorrow on the part of those who had drifted far from God and dishonored Him in their lives. What brings about such a profound change? We read that this great reversal takes place because God pours out upon the people a spirit of grace and a desire for mercy. Look what the prophet Isaiah has to say:

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground:  
I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring  
(Isaiah 44:3).

In Ezekiel 39, the prophet speaks about how God pours out His Spirit, not sparingly, but in full measure. The results of that day will be remarkable, including great sorrow for sin and true repentance. Multitudes will look with broken and contrite hearts on the One they had pierced.

The prophecy in Zechariah is not limited to a physical piercing. To be pierced also means to be blasphemed. To pierce God's name is to profane it. The ancient Israelites had,

by their disobedience, insulted and blasphemed their God. The prophecy was likewise fulfilled at the first Pentecost following Christ's crucifixion. When they heard it, they were cut to the heart.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said . . . Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37–38)

They killed the Author of life (Acts 3:15). Their hearts were penetrated, and they recognized their sin. They had come to know the consequences of sin. They understood that the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Zechariah looked for the future fulfillment of this prophecy, as John also said:

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him . . . (Revelation 1:7).

Now we step forward in time—how far, we do not know. The time has not been revealed to us, but we prepare for an event that is certain to take place: the return of Christ as Judge, Ruler and King. We may not understand all of the symbolism, like why He is coming in a cloud. What is important is that this day is coming, and there will be universal acknowledgment of His rulership. During this time some will rejoice while some will cry. All will see at His return, but not all will view it in the same way. Some will look in praise and joy at the Savior they trusted with their lives; others will look to Him in terror as the wrath of a holy God overtakes them. Where will you or I be? There is no need to leave this question unanswered or to be in doubt. By trusting in Christ alone for salvation, you can be absolutely sure where you stand on the Judgment Day, and with the people of God in all ages you will be able to pray: "Amen, come Lord Jesus."

Your fellow servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaya Owak', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Isaya Owak