

The cries from the cross in John's gospel. Appledore. 26 March 2011.

Reading : Mark 15. 40, 47-16. 1; John 19. 23-30.

As most, if not all of you know, this is the last of this seasons rallies, during which you have been studying the trials and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. I understand that, in earlier months, you have looked at our Lord's central cry from the cross recorded by both Matthew and Mark – His so-called 'cry of dereliction', 'My God, my God, why did you forsake me' – and the three cries recorded by Luke – first, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' ... second, that addressed to the malefactor, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise' ... and third, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'.

As you will have gathered from our reading, it falls to me this evening to cover the Saviour's remaining cries, recorded for us by John in chapter 19. No doubt you noticed that, speaking pedantically, there were actually four cries, and not three, as is usually said. One cry was addressed by Jesus to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son' ... one to the beloved disciple, 'Behold, you mother' ... and two were spoken generally, 'I thirst', and 'It is finished'.

The first two of these – those addressed to His mother and to the beloved disciple – are normally grouped together and treated as a single 'cry' ... making a total of seven cries in all from the cross, rather than eight. And I have no wish to quarrel with that way of regarding our Lord's cries, if that suits people.¹

First then, we look at verses 25 to 27.

Although verse 25 opens with the word 'Now' in the King James Version, this would probably better be translated as 'But' ... as it is, for example, in both the Revised Version and the English Standard Version. Certainly, the Greek construction which John uses at the close of verse 24 and the opening of verse 25 draws a deliberate contrast between the two groups of people in view,² and it would be accurate to render his words, 'On the one hand, the soldiers ... did these things. But, on the other hand, there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene'.

It was for this reason that I commenced our reading at verse 23, and not at verse 25. On the one hand, John was saying, there were *four gambling soldiers together with their centurion*; on the other hand there were *four devoted women together with the beloved disciple*. I say 'four' women because 'Mary the wife of Clopas' is clearly not to be identified with our Lord's 'mother's sister' – because if you do read verse 25 that way you end up with the most unlikely circumstance of two sisters both having the same name, 'Mary'.

In their accounts of the crucifixion, Matthew and Mark identify only three ladies who, along with other women who had ministered to our Lord when He was in Galilee, 'looked on from afar'. These were, Matthew and Mark tell us, 'Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons'.³

When I read of Mary Magdalene here in John's account, I enjoy the thought that she, who, according to verse 11 of the following chapter, later 'stood' *outside* our Lord's sepulchre, now 'stood' *alongside* His cross.

When comparing the gospel narratives, there can be little doubt, either that 'Mary the wife of Clopas' in John's account was one and the same as 'Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses' in Matthew and Mark's accounts, or that 'His mother's sister' in John was one and the same as 'Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons' in Matthew and Mark.⁴

I will come back a little later to the questions why Matthew and Mark do not include our Lord's mother along with the other ladies, and why they locate the other ladies 'afar' off from the cross – in contrast to John who both includes our Lord's mother and describes the women as 'standing by' the cross of Jesus.

The identifying of 'Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons' as the Lord's 'mother's sister' would go a long way, of course, to explain why, according to Matthew 19 and Mark 10, she and her sons had once presumed to ask the Lord to allocate positions of importance to her sons, granting them to sit on thrones at His right and left hand, when He, the Son of man, would sit on the throne of His glory in His manifested kingdom.⁵ After all, they were 'family' – 'according to the flesh' she was His aunt and they His cousins. And, if in *his* day, King David had allocated the chief positions of responsibility to members of his own family – in his case his nephews – why, Salome and her sons may well have reasoned, should not the Son of David do the same?

But this brings us to consider briefly the identity of the man who this gospel describes in verse 26 as 'the disciple ... whom He (the Lord Jesus) loved'. Tradition identifies him as John the apostle, one of the sons of Salome, and the author of this gospel. And I think it fair to say that all the biblical evidence points to the same conclusion.

The disciple whom Jesus loved is referred to as such five times by John.⁶ We learn from the first reference (in chapter 13 verse 23) that he was present the previous evening in the upper room, and that he was therefore one of

the twelve.⁷ And, leaving aside our reference in chapter 19, on every other occasion this disciple is found in company with Simon Peter. Given that the only apostle associated with Peter in the following book of the New Testament (Luke's 'Acts') – and that reasonably frequently⁸ – is the apostle John, this suggests most strongly that the disciple mentioned in verse 26 is indeed John. Add to this that the author of the gospel consistently avoids disclosing the disciple's name – a fact wholly consistent with modesty and self-effacement if John was speaking of himself, but inexplicable if the disciple in question was somebody else.

And it is no small tribute to *John's* love for the One whose love he so much appreciated, that he – who, in company both with his brother James and with Peter had earlier witnessed our Lord's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and who, in company with just Peter, had earlier entered the palace of the high priest for our Lord's private examination before Annas, should now venture alone to associate himself with our Lord in His humiliation and death on the cross itself.

Who better therefore to have committed into his hands the immediate care of our Lord's mother?

And if any should wonder why it was that the Saviour chose John rather than His (the Lord's) own brothers according to the flesh for this privilege, let them remember that John was close to hand – which our Lord's brothers were not – and that, as John himself had noted back in chapter 7 verse 5, they did not yet believe in Him. Nor should we forget that John himself was a blood relation to Mary ... he was her nephew.⁹

But speaking of remembering, I can't help wondering whether, as John stood by the cross and heard our Lord's exchange with one of the two malefactors crucified with Him ... whether John remembered then the request which he and his brother had asked of the Lord when He made His way to Jerusalem for the last time; namely to be assigned places on His right hand and on His left hand. Certainly John had every reason to be glad now that our Lord had not seen fit to grant that request!

But, returning to our passage, although there were four women standing by the cross, verse 26 tells us that Jesus had eyes for only one – that He 'saw His mother' ... as from His cross He looked into the face of the woman of whom, according to Luke 2, godly Simeon had said at the time of our Lord's consecration in the temple, that, metaphorically, 'a sword will pierce through your own soul'.¹⁰ And today was the day!

Perhaps, just for a moment, my Lord remembered the time He had entered the world through her womb ... perhaps He recalled the time when she had watched Him grow up as an infant, and had washed, clothed and fed Him ... perhaps He thought of the thirty years they had shared together in lowly Nazareth. I do not know.

But I do know that His mother had now reached an age at which, in normal circumstances, she would have looked to Him, her first-born Son, for support. But, instead, she was compelled by her very love for Him to stand and witness Him suffer the humiliating and agonising death of a condemned criminal. Surely He must have seen the misery written across His mother's face as she stood there ... helpless. His wounds bled but she could do nothing to staunch the blood. His mouth was parched but she could do nothing to moisten it. Arms which had once gently clasped her neck were outstretched out on the tree but she wasn't able to caress them.

Doubtless He knew that every lash of the soldier's scourge had made her wince – that she had felt each iron spike driven through His hands and feet – that every taunt and cheap jibe flung in His teeth had wounded and stung her too. Oh yes, He knew that His mother certainly didn't feel 'highly favoured' and 'blessed among women' now!

And how, we reverently enquire, did the Saviour Himself feel when, knowing all that *she* was suffering, from His cross He 'saw' his mother'?

But, whatever else, He knew that she must be provided for. And so, with His *words* – if not with His *eyes* also – He directed her gaze towards John, and John's gaze towards her ... 'behold, your son ... behold, your mother'.

And with those few words the Saviour accomplished at least two things.

First, without actually saying it, He charged John to take Mary into his care – which it seems that John did immediately. For, as we read, '*from that hour that disciple took her to his own home*'.¹¹ And so, I suppose you could say, that, if when he first knew the Lord, at our Lord's word ('Follow me'), John had left a father *for* Him,¹² now in the closing hours of our Lord's life on earth, and again at our Lord's word ('behold, your mother'), John gained a mother *from* Him.

Earlier I said that I would come back to the questions why Matthew and Mark do not include our Lord's mother along with the other ladies, and why they locate the other ladies 'afar' off from the cross. I don't think it is difficult to answer either question.

First, neither Matthew nor Mark mention Mary because, at the time of which they were both then writing – namely of the time of the Lord's death – she wasn't there! For in that very 'hour' when our Lord spoke to John, he (John) had taken the arm of the broken-hearted lady and had led her away to his own accommodation in Jerusalem.

And it is surely fair to assume that, after Mary's departure, when the supernatural darkness enveloped the scene of the crucifixion, the women who remained by the cross would have drawn back some way – even if, on account of that darkness, the soldier's on guard had not themselves required everyone to keep away from all three crosses for fear of some rescue attempt.

But the fact that John immediately escorted Mary away from Golgotha also explains several other interesting features of the passion narratives.

Firstly, that John alone of the gospel writers makes no mention of those three hours of darkness – a period which slots in between verses 27 and 28. John mentions neither this period, nor our Lord's cry of desolation which marked its close,¹³ for the simple reason that, at the time, he was temporarily absent from the scene.

And, secondly, it provides a likely answer to the tantalising question, why was it that, as we read earlier from Mark's gospel, although Salome is said to have been, along with the two Marys (Magdalene and the mother of Joses), at the scene of the Lord's crucifixion ... and is said, again with the two Marys, to have come to the sepulchre early on the first day of the week ... why was it that she was conspicuous by her absence when, according to the last verse of Mark 15, the two Marys witnessed the Lord's burial? It seems to me that John, immediately following our Lord's words to him, had escorted Mary to his own home, but that he had soon returned to the place of crucifixion ... at which point Salome (being John's mother and sister to Mary, the Lord's mother, remember) had left the cross to be with her sister.

I said that, in effect, our Lord was telling John to take Mary into his care. And so He was. Indeed, scholars assure us that the very form of expression used, 'behold, your son ... behold, your mother', amounted to what is known as a 'testamentary disposition' – namely, the gift of something upon one's death – which, again they assure us, it was perfectly legal for a crucified man to make.¹⁴ And so, using what was in effect an official formula, Jesus 'bequeathed' His mother to John, and in so doing, placed her under John's immediate protection.

The nearest parallel I have been able to trace in the ancient world comes from the writings of one Lucian, an Assyrian who wrote in Greek. In one of his books, Lucian tells of a man from Corinth by name Eudamidas, who, and I quote, "though he was himself in very narrow circumstances, had two friends who were well-to-do", one of whom was 'Aretaeus his fellow townsman'. 'When Eudamidas died', Lucian wrote, 'he left a will behind him ... The terms of the will ... were as follows: To Aretaeus I bequeath my mother, to tend and to cherish in her old age ... Aretaeus', Lucian added, 'most generous of heirs, accepted the ... bequest and is supporting the aged mother at this day'.¹⁵ And, as we have read, John was in no way behind Aretaeus in looking after that lady who was entrusted to his care.

We read in verses 23 and 24 how the soldiers responsible for our Lord's crucifixion 'took' our Lord's garments. And so, because by law the garments of an executed man automatically became the property and 'spoil' of the soldiers on duty, it was these men – and not our Lord's mother – who effectively inherited His earthly possessions. But although therefore the Saviour was in no position to grant Mary His clothes, He could – and did – give her something far better ... He gave her somebody to provide for her, both then and after His death.

And, in so doing, I guess we could say that, from the pulpit of His cross, He preached a sermon on the fifth Commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother' – a Commandment He Himself had quoted on two earlier occasions (once to the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 15 verse 4, and once to the so-called 'rich, young ruler' in Matthew 19 verse 19).¹⁶

And it can only move us to worship to find that our Lord was *not* so occupied with His own sufferings as to forget the needs of His mother! Well then might we say, 'What a Son was this!' – true not only to His Father in heaven, but to His mother on earth!

But I suggest that, with His words 'Woman, behold, your son', the Saviour was doing more than providing for her immediate future. I suggest that these words were also, in effect, His 'farewell', His 'goodbye'. For, as I understand them, they marked the close of an earthly relationship which He and Mary had shared for a third of a century.

Oh, I know that it is quite likely that Mary and the Lord met again soon after His death – during the 'forty days' when, according to Acts 1 verse 3, 'He showed Himself alive' to His disciples 'after His passion'. Certainly we know from later in that same chapter that Mary was present among the 120 disciples at the 'upper-room' prayer meeting immediately following the Lord's ascension.¹⁷

Yet even if Mary *did* meet the Saviour during that forty-day period, their relationship would have been very different then. For then she would have been simply a disciple along with the rest. He would then be no longer her Son; He would be to her, as to the others, the risen, living Lord.

[Sister in Doncaster, recently husband of many years called home ... unhappy loss that, though recognise, long-treasured relationship have ended, not continue in heaven. Not be her husband then. To shame, no idea what say. Finished cake. Next morning, Lord's day, knew what should have said and what consolation have offered.

That we have a great and sympathetic High Priest¹⁸ in the presence of God who understands exactly how that sister felt ... for, when here, He knew what it was to have an intimate earthly relationship severed by death ... that even He couldn't take an earthly relationship through the tomb, and that He was therefore equipped to enter into her deepest feelings.]

Dropping down now to verse 28, we pass over, not only the three hours of darkness, but our Lord's fourth – and central – cry from the tree, 'My God, my God, why did you forsake me'. But now that the more terrible aspect of His 'soul' suffering¹⁹ was past, our Lord made brief mention of another aspect – that of His *physical* sufferings.

And, in recording the fifth cry of the Saviour, 'I thirst', John supplies the explanation for the movement on the part of one of the soldiers, reported for us by Matthew and Mark. For it is far from obvious why, in response to what the soldiers mistakenly regarded as a summons for Elijah, one of them should have acted to relieve our Lord's thirst. But we readily understand his action when we know that the utterance, 'I thirst', followed hard on the heels of that earlier cry which the soldiers had misinterpreted as a call for Elijah to deliver Him.²⁰

The gospel writers place little emphasis on the physical sufferings of Jesus on the cross, but the fact that He ever uttered the cry 'I thirst' shows how real His pain and sufferings were.

Resolved that His faculties would not be clouded while He suffered, the Saviour had earlier refused the offer of drugged wine ... a sedative drink provided by the kind-hearted women of Jerusalem to dull the senses and lessen the pain of those who suffered crucifixion.²¹ But now, resolved to proclaim that His great work of salvation was completed, He both seeks and gladly accepts, not drugged wine, but some of the sour wine which was to hand.

From what we are told, Jesus had taken no refreshment from the time when He supped with the apostles in the upper room the previous evening. Since then, He had endured the agony in the garden, had passed through the repeated examinations before the Jewish council, Herod Antipas, and the Roman governor, and had now hung for six hours upon the cross.

And if verse 1 of Psalm 22 ('My God, why ...?') spoke of His deep spiritual suffering, verse 15 ('my tongue cleaves to my jaws') expressed well one of the acute aggravations of crucifixion – that of a raging, burning thirst.

His mouth was dry, and before He could announce loudly the completion of His work, He needed first to have His parched throat moistened – and I have my eye on the words of that other Psalm of the Suffering Messiah (Psalm 69), the third verse of which says, 'my throat is dried', rendered 'my throat has become hoarse' in the Greek Old Testament.

And what mysteries lie here. Just think *who* it was that cried, 'I thirst', that day.

The One who, in the words of Psalm 104, 'sends the springs into the valleys ... to give drink to every beast of the field; where the wild donkeys quench their thirst'²² ... He thirsts!

The One who satisfied the thirst of a whole nation throughout their forty years of wilderness wanderings²³ ... He thirsts.

The One who, at the climax of the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7, 'stood and cried, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink',²⁴ ... He thirsts.

The One who had said to the woman from Samaria back in chapter 4, 'Give me to drink', but did so that He might provide her with 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life'²⁵ ... He thirsts. And I note we don't read that He ever did drink of the water drawn by the woman from Sychar's well, any more than He ever ate the food brought by His disciples from Sychar's city.²⁶

What a thought! That the 'fountain of living waters', of whom the prophet Jeremiah spoke more than once, was Himself thirsty that day on the cross!²⁷

We read in 2 Samuel 23 that, when David was thirsty in his stronghold, he said longingly: 'O that some one would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!' Following which, three of his mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David.²⁸

Now it is the Son of David who thirsts. But the Lord Jesus has no 'three mighty men' at hand to risk their lives to provide Him with pure spring water to slake His thirst. He is beholden rather to Pilate's soldiers for moistening His lips with 'vinegar' (a combination of sour wine and water)²⁹ in unintentional fulfilment of scripture.

And how different this wine must have tasted to the 'good wine' which He had so liberally provided to meet the needs of others in Cana of Galilee back in chapter 2!

'Jesus', we read, 'knowing that all things were now accomplished. John used that expression, 'Jesus knowing' three times in the second half of his gospel. At the beginning of chapter 13, we were told that the Lord knew *that His hour had come*,³⁰ and at the beginning of chapter 18 that He knew *all that His hour involved* – 'all that was coming on Him'.³¹ But now, in verse 28 of our passage, we are told that He knew that *His hour was forever past* – 'that all things were now accomplished (being the same verb as is translated 'finished' in verse 30).

But He not only knew it – He wanted *others* to know it. Hence His cry, 'I thirst'.

And then the Saviour's mighty cry resounded over Golgotha that mid-afternoon – echoing I suspect through the very courts of heaven – broadcasting that the storm of God's wrath – which was by rights *my* eternal destiny – had spent itself ... that the darkness which, for three hours, had enveloped the Light of the world was forever past ... that the momentous work He had been given by the Father to do – greater *by far* than any work ever entrusted to man or angel – had been fully and forever completed.³²

It was 157 years ago this month that James Hudson Taylor first arrived in China – March 1854. During his 51 years of service there, the China Inland Mission which he founded established 20 mission stations, brought 849 missionaries to the field, trained some 700 Chinese workers, and developed a witnessing Chinese church of 125,000. It has been said at least 35,000 were converted through Hudson Taylor personally and that he baptized in the region of 50,000.³³

The story began when, as a lad in his teens, Hudson Taylor read a pamphlet from his father's library - which pamphlet made much of the words 'The Finished Work of Christ!' 'There dawned upon me', he later wrote, 'the joyful conviction that, since the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid upon the Cross, there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees, accept the Saviour and praise Him for evermore!'"³⁴

And Hudson Taylor is only one among thousands to whom this cry of Jesus has come to mean so much But what, I want to ask this evening, did the cry mean *to Jesus Himself*? In its fullness, it is, of course, impossible for any of us to know – but to Him it *must* have been – at the very least – a cry of triumph and a cry of satisfaction.

It was most certainly a cry of victory. For, contrary to all appearances, His crucifixion and death were no tragedy. This was no despairing moan of a helpless martyr – no sigh of exhaustion, pain, despair or defeat. Jesus died with the cry of the victor on His lips.

The Lord Jesus didn't fall into the category of those of whom He once spoke who undertake a work which, in the event, they are unable to finish – 'which of you', He said in Luke 14, 'intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it ... lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish'.³⁵

You may remember *the men of Babel* of Genesis 11 – who, for entirely different reasons to the man of whom Jesus spoke, – 'left off building', KJV – 'stopped building',³⁶ – and who never completed the tower and city which they had begun. The Lord Jesus was no *Samson*, who, we read in Judges 13, only 'began' to deliver God's people Israel from their Philistine oppressors – leaving others – Samuel, Saul and notably David – to finish the work.³⁷ Speaking of David, the Lord Jesus was no *Joab* – David's nephew and commander of David's army – of whom the Bible says in 1 Chronicles 27 that he '*began* to number (the people), but he *did not finish*, because wrath came on Israel (on account of the census (tomorrow!)).³⁸

Ah, no – unlike the man of Luke 14, unlike the men of Babel, unlike Samson, and unlike Joab – the Lord Jesus finished what He had begun.³⁹

Beyond any shadow of doubt, His 'It is finished' was a mighty word of *triumph*!

But surely it was to Him also a cry of great – of immense – satisfaction. As a rule, the greater the task, the greater the satisfaction in completing it. Think of King Solomon. 2 Chronicles 3. 1 says that, 'Solomon *began* to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David his father' – a point repeated in

two other places in the books of Kings and Chronicles.⁴⁰ But no less than nine times in the books of Kings and Chronicles we read of Solomon in connection with building the temple that he 'finished it'.⁴¹ He *began* and he *finished* - it was a great achievement. Full marks, Solomon.

But far more impressive than ever the construction of the Temple at Jerusalem had been the creation of the heavens and the earth – of which it was said in the first verse of Genesis 2, 'Thus the heavens and the earth were *finished*, and all the host of them'. I understand that last December astronomers revised their estimate of the number of stars in the known universe ... and did they! Many now think that the number of stars may be as much as three times higher than thought previously. They now talk in terms of 300 sextillion stars. If, like me, that means nothing to you, let me translate ... that means 300 followed by 21 noughts.⁴² To put it another way, if you could count from one to one million in one second, it would only take you ten billion years to count them all. And, for all we know, this 300 sextillion stars is just a small part of God's universe. So, the creation of the heavens and the earth was certainly an impressive achievement.

But I want you to take home with you tonight that here at Golgotha in John 19 we witness an infinitely *more* impressive work, not only than the construction of Solomon's temple, but than the creation of the vast stellar heavens. And, in case someone cares to question that claim, we need only to ask four simple questions about each of these three great finished works.

1. Who performed the work?

First, building the temple at Jerusalem? 'Solomon', you say. 'You told us the Bible said so!' Yes, but this was shorthand. If Solomon did it himself, he would still be building! According to the Old Testament, in constructing the Temple, Solomon employed a total workforce of 183,850 men.⁴³ When creating the cosmos, God needed no workforce of course, but it is clear from scripture that all three Persons of the Godhead shared in the great work. 'In the beginning *God* created', we read – yet He did so *through His Son* – for 'all things were made through Him ... apart from Him ...' – and it was then, we are told, that '*the Spirit of God* moved upon the face of the waters'. But though it is true that, on the cross, the Lord Jesus offered Himself *to God through* the eternal Spirit, it is clear that neither the Father nor the Spirit had any hand in bearing our sins – of the Lord Jesus only is it said, 'Who *His own self* bare our sins in His own body on the tree'⁴⁴ ... neither the Father nor the Spirit ever having had a body. 'By *Himself* He purged our sins'.⁴⁵ He did it all alone!

2. How long did the work take?

According to I Kings 6, it took Solomon *seven years* (7½ years to be precise, taking account of the Hebrew months specified there) to finish the work of building the Temple.⁴⁶ God finished the creation of heaven and earth in just *six days*! But the Lord Jesus finished the vast work of eternal redemption in just *three hours*!

3. What did the work cost?

Building a Temple in any way fit for the true and living God had proved enormously expensive work – David and Israel's princes had contributed in advance about 3,700 tons of gold, and about 34,600 tons of silver – in value totalling over £80 billion at today's prices.⁴⁷ By way of contrast, God's massive creatorial achievement cost Him only His word – for, according to Psalm 33, 'by the word of the Lord were the heavens made ... He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast'.⁴⁸

But the work which the Lord Jesus finished in John 19 cost Him *everything* – absolutely *everything* – for it cost Him *Himself*.

And

4. What was God's response to the work?

In the case of the Temple, God's pleasure was expressed when it was finished in that - we are twice told⁴⁹ - 'the glory of the Lord filled the house of God'.

In the case of the creation of the heavens and the earth, we are told at the close of Genesis 1 that 'God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good',⁵⁰ – and if *God* said that, I tell you, that is some certificate of satisfaction!

But in the case of our Lord's completed work on the Cross, God, as it were, stooped down, gripped the huge veil in the Jerusalem temple and tore it in two - from top to bottom - that all might know that our Lord's single sacrifice had met God's every demand and that the way into His immediate presence was open – and God then proceeded to shout His loud 'Amen' to what His Son had accomplished by raising Him from among the dead and taking Him to glory to sit at His own right hand.

Yes, the word 'Finished' was undoubtedly for our Lord a cry of satisfaction as well as a cry of victory.

Scholars tell us that the single Greek word translated 'It is finished' was written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times to show that a bill had been paid in full.⁵¹ Today we might use a stamp to do the same. [My invoice from Solaglas for repair to the kitchen window was red stamped 'PAID'.]

The Greeks simply wrote 'It is finished' to confirm that the obligation had been met – that the price had been fully paid. The significance of such receipts for what John was saying that the Lord Jesus had accomplished could hardly have been lost on his Greek-speaking readers ... that, in His suffering and death, He had paid for sins – and had paid in full.^{52 53}

End notes

¹ The second thing I wish to say by way of introduction is that some seven years ago I contributed 17 pages to a Precious Seed publication entitled 'Day by Day: Moments with the Master', and my contribution then included some comments on those cries of our Lord which we will be studying this evening. And, because John's gospel hasn't changed in the past seven years, I reserve the right to allude to – if not actually to repeat – some of the things which I wrote in 2004.

² By the two small particles (μὲν in v. 24 and δὲ in v. 25), John strikes a contrast between the two groups.

³ Matt. 27. 55-56; Mark 15. 40-41.

⁴ Else we are left with John making no reference to the well-attested presence of his own mother at the cross.

⁵ Matt. 19. 20-21 (with Matt. 18. 28); Mark 10. 35-37.

⁶ John 13. 23; 19. 26; 20. 2; 21. 7, 20.

⁷ See Mark 14. 17.

⁸ In particular in chapters 3, 4 and 8 (Acts 8. 14).

⁹ Jesus hands her into the care of the 'beloved disciple' until such time as His brothers will accept their responsibility toward her as true followers of Him. And it seems that the brothers may, quite soon, have accepted this responsibility, for Mary is later seen in their company, whereas John seems to be grouped quite distinctly from them, Acts 1. 14. Also we know that John was reasonably well-placed financially. For he had left, not only his father, but his hired servants, to follow Jesus, Mark 1. 20, and was known personally to the high priest, John 18. 15.

¹⁰ Luke 2. 35.

¹¹ Compare the same Greek expression in John 1. 10 and John 16. 32.

¹² Matt. 4. 22.

¹³ Mark 15. 34.

¹⁴ 'A crucified man has the right to make testamentary dispositions, even from the cross. Jesus now makes use of this right, and with the official formula of the old Jewish family law he places his mother under the protection of the apostle John: "Woman, behold your son! Son, behold your mother!"', E. Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (SCM), page 113.

¹⁵ Compare the following quotation from Lucian (second century AD):

Eudamidas of Corinth, though he was himself in very narrow circumstances, had two friends who were well-to-do, Aretaeus his fellow townsman, and Charixenus of Sicyon. When Eudamidas died, he left a will behind him which I dare say would excite most people's ridicule: but what the generous Toxaris, with his respect for friendship and his ambition to secure its highest honours for his country, may think of the matter, is another question. The terms of the will--but first I should explain that Eudamidas left behind him an aged mother and a daughter of marriageable years;--the will, then, was as follows: *To Aretaeus I bequeath my mother, to tend and to cherish in her old age:* and to Charixenus my daughter, to give in marriage with such dowry as his circumstances will admit of: and should anything befall either of the legatees, then let his portion pass to the survivor. The reading of this will caused some merriment among the hearers, who knew of Eudamidas's poverty, but did not know anything of the friendship existing between him and his heirs. They went off much tickled at the handsome legacy that Aretaeus and Charixenus (lucky dogs!) had come in for: 'Eudamidas,' as they expressed it, 'was apparently to have a death-interest in the property of the legatees.' However, the latter had no sooner heard the will read, than they proceeded to execute the testator's intentions. Charixenus only survived Eudamidas by five days: but *Aretaeus, most generous of heirs, accepted the double bequest, is supporting the aged mother at this day*, and has only lately given the daughter in marriage, allowing to her and to his own daughter portions of ... each, out of his whole property of ...; the two marriages were arranged to take place on the same day. What do you think of him, Toxaris? This is something like friendship,

Works of Lucian, Volume III: Toxaris: A Dialogue of Friendship, page 48.

At ... <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/luc/wl3/wl305.htm>

¹⁶ And which was, as the apostle Paul noted at the beginning of Ephesians 6, 'the first commandment with promise'; namely, God's blessing and long life. And our Lord has certainly experienced 'length of days'!

¹⁷ Acts 1. 12-14.

¹⁸ Heb. 4. 15.

¹⁹ Isa. 53. 10-12.

²⁰ Matt. 27. 46-49; Mark 15. 34-36.

²¹ Matt. 27. 34.

²² Psalm 104. 10-11.

²³ Exod. 17; Num. 20; Psalms 105. 41; 114. 8; 1 Cor. 10. 4.

²⁴ John 7. 37.

²⁵ John 4. 7-15.

²⁶ The Lord of glory called out for a drink! ... just a small part of what He went through that I might never go to that fearful place where, according to His own words, a man can scream out for someone to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue 'for', as the wretched man of Luke 16 explained, 'I am tormented in this flame'. Luke 16. 24.

²⁷ Jer.2. 13; 17. 13.

²⁸ 2 Sam. 23. 15-17.

²⁹ In all likelihood placed near at hand for their own refreshment.

³⁰ John 13. 1.

³¹ John 18. 4.

³² 'It is finished'. This is the last of three great 'It is' sayings of our Lord recorded for us in the gospels - sayings which were spaced fairly evenly over the three and a half years between His baptism and His death - the first coming at the very outset of that period, and the third at the very end, being more or less the last thing He said before He died. First, there was His threefold 'It is written' - spoken to the tempter in the wilderness - when He resisted Satan's final onslaught with the words, '*It is written*, Man shall not live by bread alone ... You shall not tempt the Lord your God ... You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve'. Second, there was His 'It is I' - spoken to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee according to Matthew 14 when, at sometime after 3 o'clock one morning, they were in a boat, then well away from the land, 'tossed/distressed/harassed by the waves, for the wind was contrary'.³² And, when - seeing Him coming towards them through the darkness, walking on the water - they cried out 'It is a phantom' - immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, '*It is I*; be not afraid'. I guess His 'It is written' points us to *His sinless person* - for, as we read, 'when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him for a season'³² ... the enemy had spent all his ammunition and his fiery darts had utterly failed to discover any combustible material in Jesus. Our Lord's 'It is I' points us to *His comforting presence*, assuring us that He is unfailingly with us through our times of anxiety, trouble and distress. But His 'It is finished' points us to *His completed - His perfect - work*.

³³ <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biotaylor2.html>]

³⁴ <http://www.teachingresources.org/issues/1997Winter/Hudson%20Taylors%20Favorite%20Text.htm>

³⁵ Luke 14. 28-30.

³⁶ Gen. 11. 8.

³⁷ Judges 13. 5.

³⁸ 1 Chron. 27. 24. For Joab's part - who had raised an objection, but who had been over-ruled by King David - 'he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's word (David's command) was abominable to Joab', 1 Chron. 21. 6, but in any case his work was interrupted by God's wrath which 'came on Israel'.

³⁹ On one occasion, in the face of the many problems confronting him, Moses was all set to give in. Concerning his task, he said that he was not able to bear the people alone, '*It is too heavy*', were his words, Num. 11. 14. Similarly, on one occasion, the prophet Elijah found the way too hard, became thoroughly despondent and was all set to throw in the towel, crying, '*It is enough*', 1 Kings 19. 4. The Lord Jesus faced waves of opposition altogether unknown to either prophet, and yet He continued, undeterred and undaunted, until He could say - not 'It is too heavy' or 'It is enough' - but '*It is finished*', John 19. 30.

⁴⁰ 1 Kings 6. 1 and 2 Chron. 3. 2.

⁴¹ 1 Kings 6. 9, 14, 22; 7. 51; 9. 1, 25; 2 Chron. 5. 1; 7. 11; 8. 16.

⁴² See ... <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2010/12/3/stars-red-galaxies-dwarfs/>

⁴³ That is, 153,600 in 2 Chron. 2. 2, 17-18; plus 30,000 in 1 Kings 5. 13; plus 250 in 2 Chron. 8. 10.

⁴⁴ 1 Pet. 2. 24.

⁴⁵ Heb. 1. 3.

⁴⁶ 1 Kings 6. 37-38.

⁴⁷ 1 Chron. 22. 14; 29. 4, 7. Solomon 'the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones', 2 Chron. 1. 15. A tonne of gold would have a volume equivalent to a cube of side 37.27cm (Approx. 1' 3"). 35,840 ounces in one ton.

On 1 May 2009, gold was \$883 for an ounce. (http://www.austincoins.com/gold_prices.htm)

3,700x35,840x883=\$117,092,860,000.

On 1 May 2009, silver was about \$12.3 an ounce. (http://www.austincoins.com/gold_prices.htm)

34,600x35,840x12.3=\$15,252,787,000.

Total at 1 May 2009 = \$132,345,647,000 i.e. over \$132 billion. Equals £80 billion on 12 August 2009.

⁴⁸ Psa. 33. 6, 9.

⁴⁹ 2 Chron. 5. 14; 7. 1.

⁵⁰ Gen. 1. 31.

⁵¹ The word *tetelestai* was also written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times. This one word has been found written across several ancient tax documents. The Greek-English lexicon by Moulton and Milligan says this: "Receipts are often introduced by the phrase [sic] *tetelestai*, usually written in an abbreviated manner..." (p. 630). But why would they write "It is finished" on a tax document or receipt? It is because "*Tetelestai*" also means... "PAID IN FULL."

'Receipts are often introduced by the phrase *tetelestai*, usually written in an abbreviated manner, e.g. P Grenf II. 50(a) (b) (c) al., mostly belonging to ii/A.D', The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, by JAMES HOPE MOULTON and GEORGE MILLIGAN, 1929, page 630. (On Maxtor)

⁵² See http://www.bible.org/qa.asp?topic_id=30&qa_id=28.

⁵³ The Bible says, in Eccles 3.14 that, whatever God does, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. And this is most certainly true of the work which Jesus did on the cross - nothing - absolutely nothing - needs to be added - nothing *can* be added. Make no mistake, Jesus' words, 'It is finished' mean that He is able to bestow a full and complete salvation on all who put their trust in Him.