

# Jesus Christ's Last Sermon

## Personal Pre-Passover Study and Meditation

Jesus Christ spent his final hours of human life nailed to a cross. Despised and rejected by the world he came to save, history's only perfect person took upon himself the consequences of our sins. The Bible records that on that spring day, from a hill outside Jerusalem, Jesus spoke several times. No one Gospel writer records all his sayings. Matthew and Mark describe one. Luke and John each give us three. Together, these sayings constitute a powerful message from our Saviour's heart during the hours of his greatest personal agony. They reveal Jesus' innermost feelings as he poured out his life for us.

### 1 *“Father, Forgive Them”*

Only Luke tells us that Jesus, shortly after he was crucified, prayed, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (**Luke 23:34**).

**Matthew 27:39-44** [NIV] *“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!’” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.”*

Nearby were Roman soldiers gambling for his clothes, common people whipped to frenzy by the religious leaders, and gawkers who came for the hideous spectacle. The Jewish elders mockingly said they would believe in him if he saved himself. On his left and right were two criminals condemned to die with him.

Not everyone at the foot of the cross was hostile to Jesus. Women who had followed him during his ministry and some of his disciples now came forward. His mother, Mary, was mourning the Son whom God had miraculously given her.

Innocent of any crime against God or humanity, Jesus had been betrayed, arrested, scourged and condemned. Now, from the cross, Jesus' thoughts reached above his pain and rejection. **Instead of being consumed with his own pain and misery, Jesus asked forgiveness for those responsible for the evil done to him, by extension, all who ignorantly go the way of sin and death.**

### 2 *“You Will Be With Me in Paradise”*

**Mark 15:29-32** [NIV] *“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!’” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.”*

Jesus next spoke to encourage one of the criminals crucified with him. Both criminals, likely thieves or murderers, early on joined bystanders in reviling Jesus.

**Luke 23:39-43** [NIV] *“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? 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.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise.”*

**One man wanted only escape from his pain. The gulf between them remained, because this faithless criminal had no desire to know his Saviour and repent of his sins.**

**But a miraculous change occurred in the other criminal. He came to believe.** This man was just as guilty as the first. He admitted he deserved to die. **He, too, had mocked Jesus earlier, but now he rebuked the other criminal.**

We are not told of any other conversation between this second criminal and Jesus. Perhaps only Jesus’ example and prayer, which he overheard, moved him so deeply. **Jesus offered him hope for the future. Like the first criminal did, most people reject Jesus Christ.** Their petitions to God thus go unanswered. However, all who surrender to Jesus receive not only strength to face the present, but also lasting hope for the future. There is a future beyond the grave. **Eternal life in God’s kingdom awaits those who will embrace Jesus as Lord and Saviour.**

### **3 “Woman, Behold Your Son!”**

**John 19:25-27** [NIV] *“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”*

**Jesus honoured and showed concern for his mother.** When it seemed impossible for him to help anyone, he provided for Mary’s care through his trusted friend John.

### **4 “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?”**

**Matthew 27:45-46** [NIV] *“From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About 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] *“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?”*

**For the first time, Jesus’ thoughts were on himself.** He cried out, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ – which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

Many have puzzled over Jesus’ seeming doubt. Was Jesus afraid? Had his Father deserted him in his greatest need? Jesus was quoting the first portion of Psalm 22:1, a prophecy of the Messiah’s suffering and exaltation.

**We sometimes forget that Jesus was fully human.** Yes, he was God in the flesh, but he was also subject to all the feelings of mind and body that any of us feel. **Jesus spoke these words after three hours of darkness had covered the land. Jesus hung on the cross alone, where he took our place to feel the pain and anguish that sin causes.**

**There, in the darkness and pain, bearing the burden of our sins, Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy:**

**Isaiah 53:4-6** [NIV] *“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.”*

**Soon Christ would savour the sweetness of eternal victory over sin and death. His final three statements came in rapid succession.**

## **5 “I Am Thirsty”**

**John 19:28** [NIV] *“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”*

**Death drew near.** The time of final sacrifice was close. Jesus had endured and overcome the heat, pain, rejection and loneliness. He could have suffered and died in silence. Instead, unexpectedly, he asked for help.

**Psalm 69:21** [NIV] *“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”*

Jesus asked for a drink and received vinegar, fulfilling David’s 1,000-year-old prophecy.

**Matthew 27:48** [NIV] *“Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.”*

The man who had hurried to answer Jesus’ request said:

**Mark 15:36** [NIV] *“Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”*

## **6 “It Is Finished”**

Jesus had finished his work on earth. His sixth message was one of triumph:

**John 19:30** [NIV] *“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

Jesus’ humility rings in his words. His was not a vain, “I-showed-you” attitude. He did not even say, *“I did it.”* **He claimed no credit. He asked no pity. To the end, Jesus’ mind was on the work he came to do. He announced, for all to hear, “It is finished.”**

## **7 Jesus’ Final Words**

**Matthew 27:50** [NIV] *“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.”*

**Mark 15:37** [NIV] *“With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.”*

Only Luke preserves Jesus’ words:

**Luke 23:46** [NIV] *“Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.”*

God is love, and Jesus’ ministry showed what love is. He gave himself for us. He preached his last sermon most effectively, by both word and example. **In his last seven statements, he affirmed God’s greatness and glory.**

## **God's Work Goes On**

**Jesus' example and words on the cross bore fruit even before his death, when the repentant robber acknowledged him as Lord and appealed for his mercy.**

On that Passover so long ago, Jesus finished his own mission as a human on earth. But his work goes on now in his church. Christ's followers today preach his gospel of salvation. They show his love for fellow humans. And they look for his return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**This is the wonderful message of good news that Jesus Christ preached the day he died for all.**