

THE STATE OF MIND OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

The scene of the crucifixion has been depicted in a thousand artistic representations. That is the visible side. What was going on within—in His mind and heart? Others have been crucified physically. In fact, two robbers died on crosses beside Jesus. But Jesus was undergoing what people with good reason have called, the last temptation, the final ordeal or testing.

Hours previous to this He had been in agony in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane. It was not physical agony. At the beginning of His ministry He spent forty days and nights in the wilderness without nourishment. The physical hunger was real. But there was more than food involved when the tempter said, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” That’s what people were saying who passed by. (Matthew 27:40) Likewise priests, scribes and elders said, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him” (verse 2). Even the robbers said the same thing.

Some said, “He cannot.” But could He? I tend to believe that He could, and that this was one ingredient in the ordeal. Yes, He wanted people to believe, but what good would it be to demonstrate to a handful of people at Golgotha?

At one point on the cross He uttered a single word, which in English is rendered, “I thirst.” The context is: “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst” (John 19:28).

Theologian Emanuel Swedenborg says. “Those who think of these things only naturally and not spiritually may believe that they involve nothing more than that the Lord thirsted.” But He was expressing a desire for the salvation of the human race. He longed for, thirsted for, genuine belief among mankind.

“We will believe,” they cried. Just come down from the cross. Could He do so? Had He not said to the disciples that he could summon more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53).

Power He did have, and no one could take His life. “No one takes 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” (John 10:18).

“Do you not know that I have power to crucify you?” So said Pontius Pilate representing the Roman Empire. The response was that power is something “given from above.”

Another representative of Rome's power witnessed the crucifixion. The centurion gasped, "Truly this man was the Son of God." He had seen the darkness come over the land and sensed cosmic dimensions in what was taking place.

I do not pretend to grasp all the momentous things involved in the crucifixion. In fact I regard much of it as beyond human comprehending. At this season I contemplate the explanation by Swedenborg that that "pure love" was being attacked by infernal forces. And I ponder the assertion in Swedenborg's *Heavenly Secrets* that Jesus was undergoing "temptations more grievous than have ever been endured by anyone."

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