

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XIX

January 24, 2010

No. 4

They Looked Upon Whom They Pierced

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Immediately following Jesus' death on the cross, two interesting events occurred. The Roman soldiers came to break the legs of Jesus and the legs of the two crucified with him. This practice was to hasten death. After breaking the legs of the two thieves, they came to Jesus to break his legs. When they came to Jesus, they observed he was already dead. Therefore, they “*brake not his legs*” (John 19:33). One of the attending soldiers took a spear and “*pierced*” Jesus’ “*side*” (John 19:34). This was probably not a vindictive action, for the soldiers could have broken Jesus’ legs to vent anger. The thrusting of the spear was no doubt to make sure Jesus was dead, which was the mission.

John ties these two events together as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Approximately 1,000 years before the Jesus’ birth, David described God’s righteous one as: “*He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken* (Psalm 34:20). Now, despite the specific intention of the Roman soldiers, God mercifully allows Jesus’ spirit to depart from his pain riddled body, and keep his bones in place. John writes:

“For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:36).

Then, the next action of a Roman soldier fulfilled a prophecy given some 500 years after David. Zechariah prophesied that as God was pouring forth his grace to encourage Jerusalem to supplicate Him, a mournful people “*shall look upon me whom they have pierced...* (Zechariah 12:10). Following “the legs not being broken prophecy”, John writes, “*And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced*” (John 19:37).

Two prophecies, given 500 years apart, were fulfilled surrounding the death of one person: Jesus Christ. It is ironic that the two actions to hasten death were fulfilled when Jesus was already dead. Also, the reason for the second action- piercing the side of Jesus, occurred only because the first action- breaking the legs of Jesus, was not carried out. Yet, not breaking the bones of Jesus fulfilled prophecy. I marvel in the ways of the Lord! He transcends the life time of two men, and overrides the intention of another in bringing about fulfillment of two distinct prophecies.

Zechariah’s prophecy reminds us that when the people looked upon Jesus, whom they pierced, they were looking upon God. They shall look upon “Me”, God says. Christ and God are of the same nature. They both are Deity.

Zechariah’s prophecy was written in a context of God’s grace being offered to encourage people to come to Him. The irony is that the event to make sure Jesus was destroyed, was connected with God’s grace that would allow all who look upon Him to be saved (*cf. John 3:14-15, 12:32-33*).

The fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy leads to another look at the pierced body of Jesus. This occurred after Jesus was raised from the dead. He showed his hands and side to the apostles, and told Thomas to . . . *reach hither thy hand, and put it in my side: and be not faithless, but believe*” (John 20:20, 27). Looking upon the pierced body of Jesus fulfills prophecy and confirms through eye witnesses that Jesus was raised from the dead. Do you believe?