BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2321 ~ Jesus' Death.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Christians throughout the centuries are known for dying peacefully while looking forward to a bright eternal future promised in the Bible to anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus. It is a comfort to relatives and friends left behind to hear of the dying words of those who faithfully served the Lord throughout their lives.

At 88 years, John Wesley, English preacher and songwriter, said on his deathbed: "The best of all is that God is with us, farewell, farewell."
Michelangelo, famous Italian painter and sculptor, said at the end of his life: "I die in the faith of Jesus Christ, and in the firm hope of a better life."
David Brainerd, well-known American missionary gave these words: "I am going into eternity and it is sweet to me to think of eternity."

There are records of people who'd scorned God publicly over the years yet came to the end of their earthly life to discover that not only was God real to them, but also was the terrifying prospect of going to hell without believing in Jesus.
Today's *Bible Adventure* looks at the seven statements Jesus made while dying on the cross. Apart from the first and last ones, the order they were spoken isn't clear, as none of the Gospels record them all in one book.

Firstly in Luke, Chapter 23, after Jesus had been nailed on the cross, Jesus prayed for His enemies, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

In the previous hours He had been mocked, insulted, whipped and condemned even though the judge had found Him innocent. Forgiveness like Jesus showed is central to Christianity. God forgives our sins as we trust in Jesus and confess and forsake them. But in turn we must forgive those who have wronged us. Unforgiveness brings only bitterness and regret. On the cross Jesus gave us the supreme example of how we should forgive our enemies.

Secondly, in fulfilment of prophecy in Isaiah, Chapter 53, Jesus was numbered with the transgressors or ‘sinners’, and crucified between two robbers guilty of crimes against the Roman government. At first, both robbers insulted Jesus but in Luke’s Gospel, one robber repented and rebuked the other one. He said that they were being punished justly for their crimes but Jesus had done nothing wrong. The repentant robber asked Jesus, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus replied: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” The robber’s humble request brought him ultimate joy beyond anything he could ever have imagined.

Thirdly, the Apostle John had gone with his mother, Jesus’ mother Mary, Mary of Magdalene and a number of other women to watch near the cross of Jesus. Jesus’ mother was a widow by now and Jesus, even though He was in agony, remembered His duty as eldest son to take care of her future needs. In John, Chapter 19, Jesus said to His mother: “Dear woman, here is your son!” Then He said to John: “Here is your mother!”

Mary’s grief must have been terrible even though she had been warned by Simeon, the old man in the Temple when Jesus was a little baby, that a sword would pierce her own heart too.

Darkness covered the whole land for three hours from midday. This wasn't an ordinary solar eclipse, because the Passover always fell during the full moon. The darkness was a sign that God had withdrawn His presence from the human race.

Fourthly, just before He had died, Jesus cried out loudly these words from Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus was experiencing the darkness of separation from God and God's full anger against sinful people.
During the time Jesus hung on the cross, God did indeed forsake Him. Our sin was laid on Jesus; Jesus was made to be sin in replacement of ours. But God cannot look upon sin, so He withdrew His face from Jesus.

Before His arrest after Jesus had prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel had come to strengthen Jesus but on the cross, no one came to comfort and strengthen Him there. This is what it meant for Him to give His life as a ransom for many.

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Sixthly and seventhly, following the period of uncanny darkness, Jesus knew that all was now completed except a Scripture verse in Psalm 69 that needed to be fulfilled. He said in John, Chapter 19: "I am thirsty." A container of sour wine or vinegar was sitting close by, so the soldiers filled a sponge with it and lifted it up to His lips. When Jesus had tasted the sour wine He said: "It is finished." Then He bowed His head and in a loud voice, cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

This prayer expressed Jesus' total trust in God. In Luke, Chapter 23, Jesus breathed His last. He had finished the work His Father had given Him to do here on earth. Usually a crucified person at the point of death doesn't have any strength to cry out. But Jesus' cry wasn't a cry of death but one of victory. He had just won the greatest victory ever! By His life of perfect obedience to God and His death on the cross, Jesus had just opened the doors of heaven for all people who recognise His great love for them.

When still with His disciples in John, Chapter 15, Jesus had said, "Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The Apostle John repeated this in 1 John, Chapter 3, when he said, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."
These sayings of Jesus as He was dying on the cross reflect how closely Jesus had been in relationship with His Father in heaven. Jesus is now seated on the right hand of His Father interceding for all who have claimed His free gift of salvation.

Up until the time of Jesus' death, access to God had been very limited. An inner room in the Temple known as the "Most Holy Place" was hidden from view by a thick curtain and considered by the Jews to be where God's presence dwelt. Only the high priest was allowed to enter and then only once a year. When he went in, the high priest took a sin offering for himself and all the Israelite people.

After Jesus had physically died on the cross outside Jerusalem, the heavy curtain in front of the Most Holy Place was torn supernaturally from top to bottom and ultimately destroyed. This meant that no longer would the high priest have to enter the Most Holy Place to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Jesus was now the final sacrifice for sin and He died once, never to die again.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God has now forgiven the sins of the world. Anyone who believes this truth is declared righteous by God Himself. Not only that, they can enter directly into His presence through Jesus 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. It's recorded in Acts, Chapter 6 that after the curtain was destroyed, many of the priests became obedient to the Christian faith.

At the time of Jesus' death, there was listed an earthquake in Matthew, Chapter 27. Rocks were split in pieces and the graves of many holy people who had died broke open to allow the holy people to walk out alive. These Old Testament saints went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people after Jesus' resurrection. This was a sign regarding a final resurrection of all believers that will occur at the end of the world.

On that dreadful day of Jesus' crucifixion at Golgotha, there were four groups of people who had gathered there to watch:

Firstly, the three crucified men – Jesus, the Saviour of the World in between two robbers. Those two criminals represent everyone in the world, past, present and future. Some never come to respect Jesus in their lifetime while others humble themselves and ask for God's mercy. The first criminal never respected Jesus, even on the cross, whereas the second criminal asked for acceptance into God's kingdom when he saw Jesus' innocence.

The second group of people were the 12 soldiers, 4 standing beneath each cross under the command of their centurion. They were just doing their job while taking the prisoners' clothing for themselves. The soldiers under Jesus drew lots over a seamless garment of Jesus' to see which one would get it. This is recorded in Matthew, Chapter 27, and fulfilled a prediction in Psalm 22. The soldiers regarded Jesus Christ as an object of utter indifference as far as they were concerned.

Jesus' executioner at first declared that He was a righteous man, but he went on later to exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The third group comprised the chief priests, rabbis, Temple rulers and crowds of Jews as they mocked and shouted out to Jesus to save Himself and come down from the cross. "He saved others, he cannot save himself. They thought they had won a great victory over Jesus and so would never see Him again or have any further trouble from Him or His followers.

The last group of people were Jesus' grieving family and friends: Mary, Jesus' mother, her sister and John, Mary Magdalene and a number of other women. To them, Jesus was a wonderful person and they loved Him dearly. How sorrowful they felt at the injustice of His trials despite being declared innocent by Pilate. At this stage, they didn't know what God's plan for Jesus really was.

If you lived back in Jesus' day, to which of the of the last three groups of people do you think you would belong? Would you be someone hurling insults at an innocent man, or remain businesslike like a soldier just doing your duty but disinterested in the sufferings of dying men, or would you be grieving because someone you dearly loved had been wronged and crucified?

It was for everyone that Jesus died, both Jews and non-Jews. In Romans, Chapter 5, Verse 8, it says: "God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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