

JESUS'  
SEVEN WORDS  
OUR ONE  
WORD



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WORD

MARTIN E. IVES



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To Lois, who was my beautiful earth-wife and now is a bride to Jesus. There is a small cross and small butterfly in the upper corners of her headstone. Her faith was in Jesus and she was ready for her resurrection. If she were here now, she would have excellent suggestions and be my chief encourager.



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments . . . . .	ix
Preface . . . . .	xi
Anticipation from the Old Covenant . . . . .	1
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” . . . . .	11
“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” . . . . .	17
“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” . .	23
“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” . . . . .	27
“Dear woman, here is your son...Here is your mother” . . . .	31
“I am thirsty” . . . . .	35
“It is finished” . . . . .	39
Confirmation of Death . . . . .	43
Confirmation of Resurrection . . . . .	51
Epilogue: God’s Gift for You and Me! My Gift out of Gratitude . . . . .	61
Guide to Reading through the Bible . . . . .	69
Challenge . . . . .	71
About the Author . . . . .	75





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OVER THE YEARS I have read commentaries on Jesus' "Seven Words" with appreciation. Two old volumes have been especially precious for me. One is *The Suffering Savior: Meditations on the Last Days of Christ* by Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher. The author presents Jesus' last crucial week, giving attention to detail, and applies it in a way that elicits emotion in the reader. Krummacher was born in Germany on January 28, 1796, and died December 19, 1868. This volume first appeared in German in 1854 and was translated into English in 1856. He received great examples of the merits of Bible study as pastors and professors visited his home and conversation was led by his pastor father. Krummacher occupied several prominent pulpits and was highly commended by church leadership and the public. I hope you find a copy and read it.

The other volume is actually a set of eight by Rudolf Stier titled *The Words of the Lord Jesus*. Volumes seven and eight are titled *The Words of the Passion* and *The Words of the*

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

*Risen and Ascending Lord.* The style is more exegetical but not boring, and is very personal. The set was published in German in 1843 and in English in 1855 to 1858. Rudolf Ewald Stier was born March 17, 1800 in South Prussia and died December 16, 1862. He wrote separately on the words of the risen Jesus, the words of angels, and the words of the apostles given in Acts. He also gave us commentaries on Psalms, Proverbs, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, and Jude. I hope you can borrow or find at least volumes seven and eight of this set.

These are old classic writings in my library. They have challenged me to think and pray and write using my personality.



## P R E F A C E

**M**ANY BELIEVE THE Bible was written over a period of about 1500 years by about 40 people. It has such a unity of themes, continuity of history, and admission of detailed personal life that many believe the Holy Spirit guided the human writers in what to include and what material to omit, in spite of what the writer humanly knew or remembered. We can give the Holy Spirit the title of author and over-all editor. Christians refer to the Bible as “inspired” by God. That is, God “breathed out” (not in) his will as to the content. That belief is used in this book.

The scenes and details considered are so unique that man would not contrive them himself. Hence, I present them as a revelation from God rather than a religion by man. I use the term *covenant* instead of *testament*. *Testament* has a strong connotation in our society of an agreement between a person and an entity. *Covenant* gives more emphasis of two personalities involved. Remember that *covenant* is used frequently in the Bible.

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

I encourage any reader of the Bible to accept an authorship that warrants reading in the sequence given to us in this one book, the Bible. Then for the subject before us, let us read the Gospels from Matthew to John in the book sequence. I expect that this treatment will be refreshing and challenging simply because it is God's message. With time and familiarity, one becomes comfortable saying it is God's Word.

In the New Covenant we frequently read *Christ* and *Jesus Christ*. In one sense this is an abbreviation of the full title *Jesus the Christ* or *Jesus the Messiah*. Any time *Christ* is read, there should be a fleeting recollection of the need for and fulfillment of that special person promised throughout the Old Covenant.

The butterfly symbol is used to represent metamorphism from an unattractive, limited creature to a beautiful and rather limitless creature. In similar fashion, the believer will be changed into a sinless beautiful creature, not "flying" aimlessly but ushered into God's presence.

May this material and the presentation of it in Bible sequence be an encouragement to read the entire Bible starting, of course, with Genesis. In doing so, notice that some events in their immediate setting may seem rather objectionable, or they may seem excessive. As in a mystery novel, some events may seem insignificant or even repetitious. Near the end, however, all the parts become important to the whole. We expect that same conclusion in the Bible because God is the author, intending to reveal his plan for us in this earthbound life so that we can be prepared for eternity—in the presence of God, Holy God! "For God so loved the world... not perish... have eternal life" (John 3:16).

## PREFACE

I have endeavored to review textual emphasis, to highlight the drama of the moments, to show contrast or climax, and to give pastoral suggestions of application to one's life today. My style is conversational.

A few pages of the Gospels give us the birth of Jesus. We are thrilled. Maybe it is a surprise that approximately one-third of the four Gospels is used to present the death week of Jesus. That quantity of material indicates a major subject. The intention of Holy God is evident throughout the week named Passion Week. In that week, Good Friday seems an anomaly to us until we remind ourselves that what Jesus did for us establishes that day as "good for us." May you not feel good, but rather thrilled, even exclaiming "Hallelujah."

M. E. I.

March 2010





# ANTICIPATION FROM THE OLD COVENANT

**N**O ONE HAS ever had so many written forecasts of the place and purpose for a person who did not arrive until centuries later as did Jesus the Christ. Frequently, an author was shunned or imprisoned if such matters written did not soon occur. God protected the writers. Isaiah was one of those whose writing indicated very vivid events that did not occur during his lifetime, and as we look back, we see that they did not occur for centuries. God does not forget but simply has a time sequence different than we would suppose. Another element to note when reading from the Old Covenant is that the Hebrew language has a verb form that emphasizes the certainty of an event in the future. That form of certainty is translated into English by using our past tense, even though it did not happen until long after the writing.

Let us patiently start in the Old Covenant with the first pages of the Bible. God said that a serious problem came upon humanity by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

That problem is named sin. From then onward, humanity has had the proclivity to disobey or ignore God. That was soon evident by the evil nature of society. God showed his judgment by starting humanity again with only a small remnant, Noah and family.

The basic problem was that the intimate and helpful relationship between God and people was broken by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Sometimes a person expresses the emotional depth of the loss of a loved one by the words, "I died." Adam and Eve seemed to think primarily of the broken social relationship and had difficulty realizing any lasting effect upon them or even upon their offspring. God declared judgments upon them that extended into the future, and body death came later. God took the life of an animal to symbolize a covering of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Whatever extended conversation God may have had with Adam and Eve is not recorded. The gravity of their disobedience is recorded. God illustrated the broken personal relationship by putting Adam and Eve out of his close physical fellowship. Note: He did not leave them; he put them out. Several clues are evident that God planned not to leave the situation in that condition. God pronounced that at a future time Satan's influence would be stopped. No time was designated.

For the next era of time, God declared that people were to use his example and take the lives of animals as sacrifices for a covering of their new inherent nature of disobeying. God told Moses to write that command as a standing requirement for a multitude of occasions. It is succinctly stated in Leviticus 17:11: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." That is God's plan; life is required. There is no plan B.



## ANTICIPATION FROM THE OLD COVENANT

*Atonement* means at-onement: a means of restoration of fellowship. Significantly, the purpose is to become again at-one with Holy God! The method is to accept the system that God clearly presents to people and that satisfies him.

Had I lived then, I would have had a few words for God. “God, you made us people as the crown of your entire creation; you talk to us; you guide us. These animals are beneath our dignity. So how can they represent us in equality?” And God, knowing my heart, would perhaps have been waiting for me with, “Martin, shut your mouth, sit down, and wait for the rest of my plan.” Most likely, God would have quoted his own words, such as, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

God’s plan continues as we read through hundreds of the pages of the Old Covenant. The prophet Isaiah, in the midst of his extensive writing, indicates a special person would come and that upon his life would be placed the burden of correction, of at-onement. This person, not an animal, and principally being a person without our proclivity, would completely satisfy God. It would cost his life! Giving a short clip from the long chapter 53 of Isaiah, verse 5: “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.” (Remember that in the Hebrew language, giving the certainty of the future is translated into our English by the past tense.) Years passed and Isaiah never indicated he saw such a person. Why wasn’t Isaiah killed for forecasting an event that did not take place during his lifetime? God protected. Centuries passed after Isaiah’s life and no such person appeared. Several other prophets also wrote rather specifically of a special person to come called a Messiah.

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

*Messiah* means anointed. Frequently, olive oil was applied upon an object or person, such as a priest or king, as a lifelong dedication to God. David, anointed as king, became the symbol for the ultimate anointed one, Messiah, to arrive later. *Christ* in Greek is the equivalent of *Messiah* in Hebrew. The dove upon Jesus at baptism was the symbol of God himself, not a human priest, anointing Jesus.

We read the entire Old Covenant and are left with a sense that something is not finished. Four more centuries passed with no prophetic written pronouncements. “God, you declared ‘what’s next’ but we ask, ‘when, when, when?’” Note the brief statement in Isaiah 60:22, “I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly.” “Yes, God.”

Ah, now, after those four silent centuries, we have additional sources—the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We understand that these were written at much the same time, a few years after Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Scholars have discussions about precisely dating these. The gospel of John was apparently written a few decades after those three.

A parenthetical topic is needed for a moment: inspiration. Christians believe God inspired the writing of the entire Bible. Many books have already been written on this subject and it is simply affirmed here. However, Christians seldom apply that concept to the formation of the canon of the Bible, which occurred through several years of meetings of the early Church Fathers. That, too, is well documented. I believe that God directed in the choosing of the writings and, as well, the sequence for our reading centuries later. I will use that premise throughout the following chapters. In human terminology, I consider the Holy Spirit to be the editor, using the personalities of the human writers.

## ANTICIPATION FROM THE OLD COVENANT

A corollary to that: We, as people living now, receive God's message in written form. An ordinary author of a book hopes the reader starts at page 1, after reading the preface and introduction, and continues consecutively to the end. If a reader starts at page 398, then reads page 56, then page 277, then page 143, etc., the author is apt to retort, "Don't bother." Now, as we read what the Holy Spirit presents to us, we should assume there is continuity, repetition for emphasis, illustrations of actual people, and especially an overall theme leading to some form of climax. With God as the author, then, the content and the sequence are intended by God! Even more significant, God's intention must be important for our lives and we had better give heed. Although today Christians have already read to the end, let's look at Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the sequence as presented to us, and then we'll take a look at John.

Now, note the anticipation from the first portions of the Gospels. In Matthew, God declares to Joseph that Mary will have a special baby to be given the title "Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." And "Immanuel," meaning "God with us." (Mt. 1) That is very good news of a God-person finally arriving to solve the problem of sin, one enough like us that we may see and have conversation. Not an animal. Listen, Joseph, conception will be by the power of the Holy Spirit!

"God with us?" Solomon had asked that question centuries ago, "But will God really dwell on earth with men?" That is recorded twice—in 1 Kings 8:27 and 2 Chronicles 6:18. "Yes, Joseph, that applies to this baby—Immanuel!" How unique. How miraculous! These declarations were given at Jesus' birth before any possible human accomplishments took place. Humans declare wonderful accomplishments upon completion thereof. Here, God declares in advance. Then

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

Matthew records that wise men from a distant place entered the capital, Jerusalem, and asked the political leadership not *if* but *where* Christ was born. These men knew something of the Old Covenant. The answer was before one's face in the short writing of the prophet Micah. Where? In Bethlehem. *Christ* is from the Greek language for the word *Messiah* of the Hebrew language of the Old Covenant. All of this—astounding proclamations! [Corollary study: the Trinity. How can God divide himself and be partly on earth? Our only answer is that God is one and, at the same time, three persons.]

Next, we read Mark and find he skips the babyhood and youth of Jesus. He does not skip Jesus' last week.

Further, we read Luke. Luke, being a doctor, had the privilege in that society to spend time with a woman and he obviously had considerable interview time with Mary to enable him to record all that he heard from her for us to read and marvel at today. The direct messenger, an angel, had told her she would have a son to be named Jesus. Aha, repetition and hence reinforcement for the reader because that name was told to both Mary and Joseph. In real time, the announcement was given to Mary first. Also, the son will rule over David's kingdom forever. But wait, the method of conception is not by human father, Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit! We read this in Matthew; again, double testimony is reliable. That is why the child will be called "Son of the Most High" or "Son of God." The Greek society supposedly had gods and offspring of those gods. This case will be verifiable by one's senses: sight, hearing, touch. This will be reality, not mythology.

A parenthesis in our sequence: "Son of God." That title bothers some people and cultures. From the Bible text, it

is obvious that God conceived of having a representative of himself in human form and, if one allows for God to act as he wills, caused Mary to be pregnant. Joseph—no. In that sense, Jesus was Son of God, not son of Joseph. Recall, as one reads the long genealogy in the opening of Mathew and of Luke, that the significance in the Hebrew culture of one's lineage was more important than one's assets as in our culture today. Equally important is the role of a son. He represents the authority of his father and especially the firstborn is allowed a power to act on behalf of the father. Jesus was the first and only "born." Note how Matthew quietly records the authority aspect at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "He taught as one who had authority" (Mt. 7:29). He frequently claimed authority of God in his teaching. He obviously demonstrated the power of God by what he did throughout his public ministry. Both authority and power of God are demonstrated by Jesus' death and resurrection. "No one takes it [life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again" (Jn. 10:18). Jesus—Son of God!

Back to the sequence. One evening, soon after Jesus' birth, shepherds visit and explain what a host of angels told them while on duty as shepherds. "Good news of great joy that will be for all the people...a Savior has been born to you" (Luke 2:10-11). Did they begin to grasp that this child was intended to benefit people of all cultures in the world then and later? They did not even know how big the physical world was, nor how complex and varied the societies were.

Now let's skip to the most important part of Jesus' life as indicated by the authors. All four gospels give about one third of their words to the last week of Jesus' life, not to the

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

birth week. And within that week, what is the significance of the hours on the cross? Again we will use the sequence of the authors, obviously Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Later, John.

Considerable opposition had risen during Jesus' public ministry. Part was out of jealousy and the apparent threat of loss of prestige. The other part was that Jesus indicated that he is one with the Father, and even is God. Thus he was considered by many religious leaders to be a heretic. With that conclusion, the opposition rose with the intent to kill. [Corollary study: How much did Satan influence society in subtle ways to create such conflict using his consistent intent to oppose God? Does Satan influence our societies today?]

A large public approval was apparent the day Jesus entered Jerusalem that last week. That crowd hoped that Jesus would become their earthly king. Some believed enough to hope for the Messiah King. Yet opposition grew strong during the week. Jesus had some time for teaching. He had said at least three times that he would be abused and even killed by crucifixion at Jerusalem, and rise again. How could the disciples believe that Jesus the healer, the one who resurrected others from death to life, could possibly allow himself to be killed? Yes, the disciples pondered, for they were ordinary people. Jesus was subjected to unorthodox trials. He was subjected to taunts and physical abuse. He was given questions which were insincere. Very few were sincere.

He was sent to be crucified outside the city.

## ANTICIPATION FROM THE OLD COVENANT

Two types of crowd are presented during this last week. One was evident the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. The mood was praise by action and by words: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!” (Mt. 21:9 and Psalm 118:26). Evidently they had listened to Jesus teach and observed his miracles. The other crowd was the religious leaders who became so vocal during the latter part of the week. They did not have “ears to hear” and hence their pride and jealousy rose with intent to kill.

No ordinary human person would intentionally proceed toward a certain and cruel death that was intended by the religious leadership. Today, especially in our culture, an ordinary person would have in mind as many legalistic loopholes as possible. No ordinary person would be so visible and specifically verbal as Jesus. But Jesus was no ordinary person.

No elected leader or even a dictator could say...

No strong athlete or an Olympic champion could say...

No financier could say...

what Jesus the Christ said on the cross!

What did Jesus say while on the cross?

Seven statements of Jesus are given in the four gospels. There are three possible sequences for this consideration. First is the time sequence in which they occurred. Second, is a cluster of those directed for human response at that time: “Today...in Paradise,” “Woman...Son...,” and “I thirst.” Then a cluster directed to God as Father—the other four words. Or third, the sequence which we read from the authors Matthew and Mark and Luke, and then lastly John. That is the sequence herein used:

## JESUS' SEVEN WORDS, OUR ONE WORD

- Matthew 27:46      “My God, my God....”
- Mark 15:34        “My God, my God....”
- Luke 23:34        “Father, forgive...”
- Luke 23:43        “Today...in paradise.”
- Luke 23:46        “Father...commit my spirit”
- John 19:26-27     “Woman...Son...”
- John 19:28        “I am thirsty.”
- John 19:30        “It is finished.”

Hence, we first examine “My God...”

