

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

THIS IS JESUS

"This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Matt. 27:37.

There He hangs--on a cross! He was born in a manger, a friend of the poor, and a frequent guest of the rich. He healed and restored outcasts, lepers, the blind, crippled, the frustrated, and the resentful.

But now, He hangs there--a criminal. Some had been coached to say that He was a threat to the empire; others, that He had disturbed the peace.

At that moment, Jesus is suffering the worst pain of body and soul it is possible to experience. And what is He thinking about? What words come from those parched lips? "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." He still believes in us, that at heart we are better than our deeds reveal. Ignoring hatred, He continues to love us.



REV. D. M. CLARK

IN FACT, HE ISEXCUSING us to God, whom He asks to forgive us, as we do a child, or one held to be incompetent to answer for his acts. During the years He has taught men to forgive others. Now He is dying, and offering forgiveness to the human race.

The soldiers beneath the cross are trying to keep up their courage by mocking Jesus.

Look closely, and you will see these words on a slab over His head: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Back in town, the priests are trying to get Pilate to change the wording on the sign. But Pilate, who was afraid to deny them a crucifixion, now has the courage to let the inscription remain.

Two thieves are hanging beside Him. Are they zealots--revolutionists? If so, they are dying for their attempt to free their country from the Roman yoke. Jesus is dying to free all men from Satan's yoke.

The priests might have let the thieves live, but Rome would not. Rome would have let Jesus live, but the priests would not; so they crucified all three.

The sky is black. The crowd is uneasy. One thief turns his head toward the central cross, saying: "Jesus, remember me."

Raising His bowed head, Jesus says: "today you will be with me." No catechizing, no probing into his past, no probationary period. Jesus, on the cross, gives a penitent sinner immediate forgiveness and eternal status.

After the sadistic crowd leaves, a sobbing woman's voice pierces the hillside. Jesus sees her. It is His mother. She is leaning on John. Her dying son says: "Woman, behold thy son." Turning His eyes toward John, He continues: "Behold thy mother."

THERE IS A LIMIT to human endurance. The physical torture, mental and spiritual anguish, have reached the peak. Now, Satan intrudes.

"Well, Master, looks as though you lost after all. You wasted your life. Remember how I warned you? With a bit of compromising you could have been our national hero. Now look at you--dying on this pole like a criminal."

Out of such agony of soul, Jesus cries out: "My God, my God--why hast thou forsaken me?"

Fever and pain parch the tongue and the spirit. He says, "I thirst." Mercifully, the end is drawing near. As it does, the Living Water, which He shared with so many, does not fail Him.

On the screen of memory, His thirty-three years flash by. As a boy of twelve, had He not sought to do His Father's will? Eighteen years later, torn between the security of a thriving business and the uncertainty of life on the open road, had He not done what He believed to be God's will.

THROUGHOUT HIS MINISTRY, had He not always referred men's gratitude and praise to

## BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH HONORS PASTOR



REV. AND MRS. I. W. WILSON recently honored with spiritually elaborate commemorative services on the occasion of the Reverend's seventh anniversary as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, are shown with a few parishioners and other well-wishers. The association of seven years brought expressions of gratitude and appreciation from both the honorees and the church membership. Pictured above (l-r) are: Bro. Robert Brewer, Mrs. Amanda McClaine, Mrs. Mildred Daniels, Rev. I. W. Wilson, Bro. Reuben Montgomery, Mrs. I. W. Wilson, Mrs. V. C. L. Coleman, little Myrtle Kai Coleman, Rev. V. C. L. Coleman, Mrs. Sadie Jones, Mrs. Rosie Lee Brewer, Mrs. Odessa Bowman, and Mrs. Bessie Drumgloe.

### Jehovah Witnesses

THREE DAYS OF BIBLE INSTRUCTION

Three days of Bible instruction are scheduled at the Convention Center, April 1-3, by Jehovah's Witnesses.

According to Mr. Odell Clark, presiding minister of a congregation in Las Vegas, "These three days of Bible instruction will give encouragement to many persons. The problems of the world today depress many people and so the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, the sponsors of this three-day Bible program have arranged a program that shows God's attention to things happening on this earth. The highlight of the assembly will be the free Bible talk on Sunday at 3 p.m. April 3 "DOES GOD HAVE INFLUENCE IN THIS TWENTIETH CENTURY?" said Clark.

The many delegates from 20 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses from parts of four states have made definite arrangements to attend this Christian assembly.

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God, instead of accepting it for Himself? Could He possibly have done better with His life? He might have saved His neck by compromise, but would another thirty years have served God better than immortalizing His words and deeds by dying for them now? In life, He had lived for others; so that man might live again through Him.

Triumphantly, He exclaims, "It is finished!" It is pitch dark now. Nature herself--the universe--weeps, through torrent and earthquake, over man's inhumanity to man. Even the soldiers have run for shelter. Only the three, on the crosses, remain on Golgotha.

Jesus' head rests peacefully on His breast. The pain is over. He is leaving the temporal and entering the eternal. With the faith and trust He taught others to have, He says: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The cross, until now a disgrace, is transformed into a symbol of love, forgiveness and eternal life.

There He hangs--our Savior and Lord.

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