



## Behold, the Crucified

Even modern English Bible versions often end up retaining the rather un-modern term “behold” in their translations of the Hebrew word *hinneh* and the Greek word *idou*. This is because there is no other equivalent English word that quite does the job that *behold* does. All the three terms—Hebrew, Greek, and English—have a certain gravitas, and, whenever used, command us to pay careful attention to what follows.

In John’s narrative of the trial and the crucifixion of Jesus, there are five occurrences of the term—three coming from the mouth of the unwitting prophet, Pilate, and twice from the mouth of our Lord Jesus. Each occurrence summons us to a facet of the person and work of Christ.

In John 19:4, “Pilate came out again and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’” We may render Pilate’s words as: “Behold, the Guiltless One!” Christians have always claimed, and will always claim, that Jesus, the Innocent, bore the sins of a guilty world. When his executioners twisted together a crown of thorns and thrust it upon his head, little did they know that they were enacting a prophetic truth! For in that single image—the crown of thorns on his head—is encapsulated the central Christian claim: that this guiltless-but-crucified one bore upon himself the guilt and curse of the whole of creation. Remember:

“Cursed is the ground because of you.... Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you” (Gen. 3:17-18).

The following verse is the second time the word occurs: “Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’” (v.5). Jesus is the window to God; He is also the mirror to man. In him, we see what is wrong with us, and what we are meant to be. The poetic poignancy of the occurrence is also found in the allusion that, just as the first human being, Adam, takes stage on the sixth day of creation, Christ, the New Human Being, takes centre stage on the sixth day—Good Friday—of new creation.(1) And we are summoned to pay close attention to him, the man.

We are no longer helplessly and hopelessly fated to take the curse of Adam. There is another pattern for being fully and truly human: Behold, the man!

The third time “behold” appears is in verse 14, where “[Pilate] said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King.’” In his book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcolm Muggeridge, in his inimitable way, says, “The crown of thorns, the purple robe, the ironical title ‘King of the Jews,’ were intended to mock or parody Christ’s pretensions to be the Messiah; in fact, they rather hold up to ridicule and contempt all crowns, all robes, all kings that ever were. It was a sick joke that back-fired.”(2) Muggeridge is perhaps being a touch cynical here, and may be guilty of rendering serious political reflection and engagement impossible and pointless. All the same, the Christian claim that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., the King) is a claim that effectively loosens all other claims, renegotiates all other allegiances, recasts all other power, downsizes

all other authorities, domesticates all other principalities, and tempers the Christian resolve to not give beings and things, apart from God and his Christ, an ultimacy that they demand but do not deserve. Christ, in short, dismantles idols and unravels idolatries.

The final two occurrences are found in John 19:26-27: “When Jesus then saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.” We may club the two occurrences to mean, “Behold, your new family!” Theologians have also often noted John’s allusion to the Church in his record of Jesus side being speared (Jn. 19:34): as Eve, the bride of Adam, issued forth from Adam’s side, the Church, the bride of Christ, issues forth from the crucified’s side, with the blood and water symbolising the two foundational sacraments of the Church, Lord’s Supper and Baptism. At the foot of the Cross, there is the creating and forging of a new family, a new community, a new humanity—the Church: a believing that leads to a belonging.

*by Kethoser (Aniu) Kevichusa is a member of the speaking team at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries in Nagaland, India. Printed in “A Slice of Infinity”, aimed at reaching into the culture with words of challenge, words of truth, and words of hope, on 25 February, 2016*