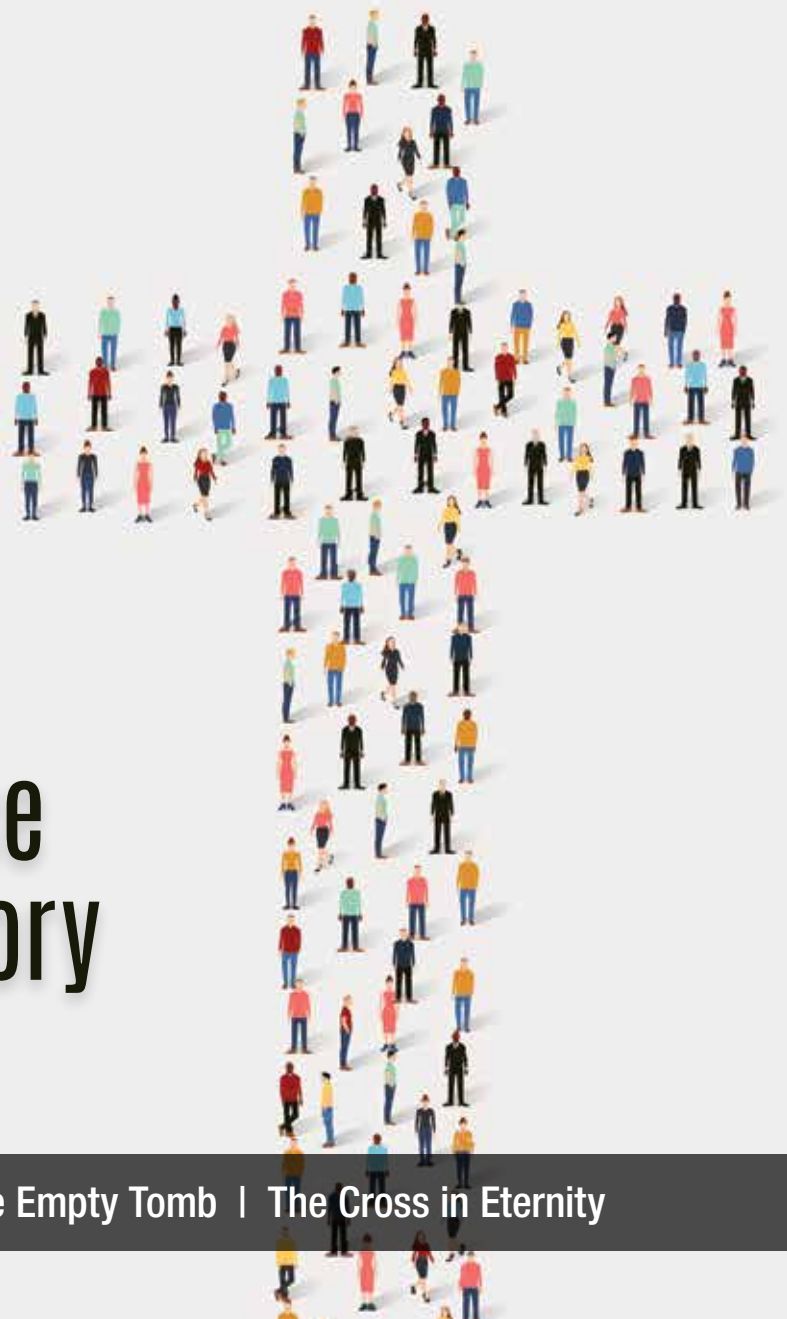


the
REFORMATION
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Vol. 59, No. 3

**The Cross
of Calvary:**
The Centerpiece
of Human History



A Definite Plan | The Empty Tomb | The Cross in Eternity

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 59, Number 2

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Editor D. P. Silva
Assistant to the Editor B. Montrose
Layout and Design E. Lee
D. Lee

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>
E-mail: info@sdarm.org

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Human Values vs. DIVINE VALUES

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God gave a clear distinction between what He considers to be essential for our eternal happiness and what we as humans consider essential for our happiness.

Human values

“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in **his wisdom**, neither let the mighty man glory in **his might**, let not the rich man glory in **his riches**” (Jeremiah 9:23, emphasis added).

According to human criteria, three things constitute the most important things in this life: 1. Human wisdom; 2. Human might; and 3. Human riches.

God declares that human wisdom is foolishness: “For it is written, I [God] will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:19, 20).

Solomon testified about human wisdom: “I have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecclesiastes 1:16–18).

How about human might? Before God, human power is nothing. In the

Bible we find many practical lessons about human power before God. When Israel was living under slavery in Egypt, God, through His mighty actions, showed how foolish it is to resist His will.

When the king of Assyria challenged God’s power to protect His people, a single angel destroyed the whole Assyrian army of 185,000 men in one night.

How about human riches? Christ told the parable of a man who prospered under God’s blessing but didn’t recognize his duties to use his riches for God’s glory. He made plans for his prosperity without considering God’s will. The Lord said to him: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20, 21).

The richest man in Old Testament times—one blessed with houses, vineyards, gardens, orchards, pools, servants, maidens, cattle, silver, gold, treasures of kings and provinces, singers, musical instruments—declared: “I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and [there was] no profit under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:9–11).

Solomon was powerful, wise, and rich. However, he used all the gifts of God to glorify himself. At the end of his short life, He was totally disappointed with his own endeavors.

Divine values

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24).

True value in God’s sight, is knowing and understanding Him (“This is life eternal” John 17:3). Knowing God results in exercising lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness on the earth. The apostle Paul, after knowing God’s wisdom, God’s riches, and God’s power, declared: “[The Lord] said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 30, 31).

Which values shall we choose? *R*



IN THE CONTEMPORARY MIND

How much of an impact are we allowing it to make on us?

by Barbara Montrose

The Christian religion centers around a pivotal event in human history—the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. The apostle Paul aptly declares, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

In a comprehensive study published in 2011 by the Pew Research Center for Religion and Public Life, there were 2.18 billion Christians around the world. This represents 31.7% of the estimated global population of 6.9 billion—nearly a third of the earth’s inhabitants.

In 1910, the worldwide percentage of Christians was around 35%—with the vast majority being in Europe. Today, the location is more varied, with only about 26% found in Europe, 37% in the Americas, 24% in sub-Saharan Africa and 13% in Asia and the Pacific. The largest number of professed Christians per capita within a single nation is found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (95.7%), followed by Mexico (95.0%) and the Philippines (93.1%). The largest total number in a single nation

is found in the United States. Slightly more than half of these profess to be Roman Catholic, 36.7% Protestant, 11.9% Orthodox, and 1.3% other Christian-related faiths (the study included Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses in this category.)

The statistics show Christianity to be the world’s largest religious group. Islam comes in second, representing a little less than ¼ of the world’s population.

The greatest increase in professed Christians in recent years has been in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Today, 61% are found in these areas. Nigeria now has more than twice as many Protestants than Germany, the birthplace of Protestantism.

About 10% of professed Christians live in countries as minorities—and every year, an estimated 100,000 are martyred for their faith.¹

A crucial point

So, we see that Jesus Christ is indeed a familiar name in much of the world. But here are a few questions for us all to ponder: Is the religion which we as Christians profess actually

making our character uniquely Christlike in the public eye? Are people of other religions consistently seeing us walking in the footsteps of our Master in daily life—as model representations of meek, unselfish living, looking out for their interests above our own? Do our lives epitomize the Golden Rule? Are we forgiving, loving, and renowned for an amazing lack of greed? Are we daily taking up our cross and following the Man of Calvary?

If we can’t respond positively to all of the above, why isn’t our faith making more of an impact? “To give the impression that our faith, our religion, is not a dominating power in our lives, is greatly to dishonor God.”²

There’s a solution: “Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps **fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary.**”³

Keeping Calvary fresh in our memory—how does this work?

“Jesus has said, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men

unto Me' (John 12:32). Christ must be revealed to the sinner as the Saviour dying for the sins of the world; and as we behold the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary, the mystery of redemption begins to unfold to our minds and the goodness of God leads us to repentance. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and as the sinner beholds this love, it softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition in the soul.

"It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended. And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, 'What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?'

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; **a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross** in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."⁴

Beholding the Lamb

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the

crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee."⁵

Many of us appreciate the scenes of Calvary—but why isn't this having a stronger impact on our actual character in this generation? Why aren't we taking this more seriously today?

The True Witness to God's professed people in the last days of this earth's history warns that our generation has a problem of lukewarmness. What does it mean to be lukewarm? It's not cold and it's not hot; it is diluted to be neither. So, nothing seems to be having much of a strong impact on us—even Calvary.

While the Laodicean syndrome of lukewarmness has been characteristic of God's professed people since 1844, it seems that the problem is getting worse as we near the close of time. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

One of the most common ways that faith is being diluted is by distractions. Wikipedia.com provides a good definition of "distraction" as "the process of diverting the attention of an individual or group from a desired area of focus and thereby blocking or

diminishing the reception of desired information."

So, isn't the biggest problem with our relationship to Calvary that we are not allowing it to have as great an impact on our minds as it should because we constantly seem to be getting distracted by something? Instead of staying consistently focused on anything, we are easily sidetracked. Our fervor is cooled off; we do everything halfheartedly because half of our mind is usually somewhere else. "The deep plotting of Satan will reveal its working everywhere for the purpose of distracting attention from present duty."⁶

One of the biggest culprits right now: distraction

These days, many tend to live with a divided mind and we need to realize how much it's affecting us.

"People are constantly checking their laptops, tablets, and phones because they worry about receiving new information after everyone else, responding too slowly to a text or an e-mail, or being late to comment on or like a social media post.

"Numerous studies support this diagnosis of the problem. In my lab we've found that many people, regardless of age, check their smartphones every 15 minutes or less and become anxious if they aren't allowed to do so. . . .

"Digital overload may be the defining problem of today's workplace. All day and night, on desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones, we're bombarded with so many messages and alerts that even when we want to focus, it's nearly impossible. And when we're tempted to procrastinate, diversions are only a click away.

"This culture of constant connection takes a toll both professionally and personally. We waste time, attention, and energy on relatively unimportant information and interactions, staying busy but producing little of value. As the late

Clifford Nass and his colleagues at Stanford University have shown, people who regularly juggle several streams of content do not pay attention, memorize, or manage their tasks as well as those who focus on one thing at a time. The result is reduced productivity and engagement, both in the office and at home. . . .

“Researchers have demonstrated that the mere presence of a phone makes people less productive and less trusting. . . .

“Why are we allowing ourselves to be so debilitated by technological distractions? Some people refer to the overuse of digital devices as an addiction. But since most of us don’t appear to gain much pleasure from the behavior—a defining feature of addiction—I wouldn’t classify it as such. More accurate are terms such as FOMO (fear of missing out), FOBO (fear of being offline), and nomophobia (fear of being out of mobile phone contact)—all forms of anxiety that border on obsession or compulsion.

“Although we turn to technology to soothe our anxieties, overdosing on it just exacerbates them. To break the cycle, we must limit the use of our devices. Only then can we regain our ability to focus.”⁷

Taking regular “recharge” breaks or even fasts from the frequent bombardment of hyperlinks, Facebook feeds and Twitter alerts, using special tools to filter emails, resisting the tendency to attempt multiple mind-requiring tasks in tandem can help. While many people have a lot of good spiritual information on their phone or tablet (such as the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, and other great resources), we should nevertheless examine whether having the glut of the information age all on the same

device might also tempt some of us to distraction:

“Dozens of studies by psychologists, neurobiologists, educators, and Web designers point to the same conclusion: when we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracting thinking, and superficial learning. It’s possible to think deeply while surfing the Net, just as it’s possible to think shallowly while reading a book, but that’s not the type of thinking the technology encourages and rewards.”⁸



“The Net seizes our attention only to scatter it. We focus intensively on the medium itself, on the flickering screen, but we’re distracted by the medium’s rapid-fire delivery of competing messages and stimuli. Whenever and wherever we log on, the Net presents us with an incredibly seductive blur . . . presenting us with far more distractions than our ancestors ever had to contend with.”⁹

We become “‘distracted from distraction by distraction.’ . . .

The Net’s cacophony of stimuli short-circuits both conscious and unconscious thought, preventing our minds from thinking either deeply or creatively.”¹⁰

“The average attention span for the notoriously ill-focused goldfish is **nine** seconds, but according to a new study from Microsoft Corp., people now generally lose concentration after **eight** seconds, highlighting the affects of an increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the brain.”¹¹

Why is it so important to improve our focus for the sake of our spirituality?

Digital tools are useful and handy, of course, yet we must also be aware that “Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. **The arch-deceiver** hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful mediator. He **knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth.**

“Those who would share the benefits of the Saviour’s mediation should permit **nothing to interfere with their duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God.**”¹²

The call of the hour: to focus more deeply

“God calls upon His light-bearers to put away all selfishness, all that confuses them, and distracts them from their work.”¹³

Did Jesus know we would have these challenges and temptations at the end of time? Was He aware that

people's attention spans would shrink so drastically, they would become distracted so easily, and their entire ability to focus would diminish?

"Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of His people. . . . He has pledged Himself to be our helper."¹⁴

"Over the winds and the waves, and over men possessed of demons, Christ showed that He had absolute control. He who stilled the tempest and calmed the troubled sea spoke peace to minds distracted and overborne by Satan."¹⁵

"If there is anything in our world that should inspire enthusiasm, it is the cross of Calvary."¹⁶

"The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space—the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father's face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart, and crushed out His life on Calvary's cross."¹⁷

"It would be well for us to spend **a thoughtful hour each day** in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. **If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.**"¹⁸

"**Well would it be for us if we could always remember Calvary,** where Jesus bore the terrible burden of the sins of the world. In His expiring agony hear him exclaim, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' (Matthew 27:46) and remember that He endured the hiding

"Always remember Calvary . . ."

of His Father's face, that it might not be forever hidden from fallen man. He endured shame, cruel scourging, insult, and mockery, that we might be reconciled to God and rescued from endless death. **If our minds dwell upon these themes, our conversation will be in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, and even vain thoughts will seem out of place.**

"He who died for us loves us with a love that is infinite. He wants us to be happy; but He would not have us find our happiness in foolish jesting and joking, which disgrace the holy cause we profess to love.

By dwelling upon the themes of eternal interest, the mind is strengthened, and the character developed. . . .

"The religion of Christ is not what many think it is, nor what their lives represent it to be. The love of God in the soul will have a direct influence upon the life, and will call the intellect and the affections into active, healthful exercise. The child of God will not rest satisfied until he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sustained by His life-giving power. **When he sees a weakness in his character, it is not enough to confess it again and again; he must go to work with determination and energy to overcome his defects by building up opposite traits of character. He will not shun this work because it is difficult. Untiring energy is required of the Christian; but he is not obliged to work in his own strength; divine power awaits his demand.** Every one who is sincerely striving for the victory over self, will appropriate the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' (2 Corinthians 12:9).

"Through personal effort, joined with the prayer of faith, the soul is trained. Day by day the character

grows into the likeness of Christ, and finally, instead of being the sport of circumstances, instead of indulging selfishness, and being carried away by light and trifling conversation, the man is master of his thoughts and words. **It may cost a severe conflict to overcome habits which have been long indulged, but we may triumph through the grace of Christ.**"¹⁹

"It is impossible for us to believe that Jesus endured the untold agonies of the cross for us, without having our hearts melted in love for Him. And if we love Him, we shall be solicitous to please Him, to obey Him. The heart stirred by the love of Christ will earnestly inquire, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'"²⁰

Now, that will finally make an impact! *R*

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A Definite Plan

The agony, suffering, torment, rejection, and crucifixion of Christ, had all been foretold centuries and even thousands of years before they all happened. Knowing full well what this dissident world had in store for Him, Jesus made Himself subject to the scriptures and to the bloodstained path they traced out for Him. Listen to what He said in heaven, just before coming to earth.

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (**in the volume of the book it is written of me,**) to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:5–7).

The words, “In the volume [or scroll] of the book, it is written of me” show that Christ was acquainted with every phase of prophecy about Himself. After His crucifixion and resurrection, when He met two defeated disciples along a road talking gloomily about what had just occurred, Jesus said to them,

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have

spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25–27).

The prophecies identifying the Messiah in the Old Testament can be divided into four main categories:

1. Prophecies predicting the time of His birth and death.
2. Prophecies identifying what He did.
3. Prophecies foretelling what people did to Him.
4. Prophecies describing traits of His character.

It is significant that God gave us so many prophecies about Jesus! There are over 350 prophecies or references in the Old Testament describing Christ.

Some of the most fascinating prophecies about Jesus are those specifying the manner and timing of His death. By combining the prophetic ceremony of the Passover service instituted in the days of Moses and later, Daniel’s vision of the 490-year period predicting when the Messiah should come, we arrive not only at the

year, the month, and even the exact day but also the very hour in that day of Jesus’ last breath upon the cross. It is amazing!

It is not my purpose in this article though to expound on these astonishing prophecies, but to show you something that seems to me to be even more awe-inspiring. That is how Jesus navigated through life, knowing full well the great and definite plan of God—that He, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, was to lay down His life a ransom for the race. It was a choice He made in heaven, understood by Him as a child on earth, and one that He daily renewed as He grew and approached the frightful scandal of the cross.

Christ’s courage and determination, His intrepidity, His heroism in laying down His life, strikes out in contrast to the attitude of His eager but often baffled disciples. Again and again, we see Jesus in the gospels, seeking to open their minds up to the mystery of His suffering and death, but time after time, He is met with dazed amazement, sometimes puzzled skepticism and even stern rebuke. But on He went, treading the wine press

alone, as it were, and of the people there were none with Him.

Prophecy unfolded

Jesus' mind must have been filled with every detail of this plan. From the manger to the cross, the scriptures were His guide. They traced out the purpose of His birth and the implications of His death. We often read words like these in the gospels, "now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying . . ." (Matthew 1:22). It was the Word of God He made Himself subject to—it was that which contained the will of God for Him, the definite plan of redemption.

It is amazing to see how faithful Jesus was to this plan; how careful He was not to go faster than the providence of God would take Him. Yet He walked in step with the perfect timing of prophecy and moved fast enough to keep outside of the reach of evil men and angels bent upon destroying Him before His work was done.

When Jesus healed people early on in His ministry, He usually told them not to spread the news of their healing. He did this to avoid premature attention. It was for this same reason that He charged His disciples, "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ" (Matthew 16:20). Similarly, when He cast out demons, "he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him" (Mark 1:34).

When Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting His death, He avoided going to those places. It was not yet His time. His capture and His death, later in His ministry, were not an accident or a failure of the plan—they were part of the plan. Christ was always in full control of what happened to Him. He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17, 18).

After Christ's ascension, Peter told the Jews, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22, 23). In verse 23 the English Standard Version reads, "this Jesus, delivered up according to **the definite plan** and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23, ESV, emphasis added).

But while Christ was with them, this was a point the disciples were

"Jesus made Himself subject to the scriptures and to the bloodstained path they traced out for Him."

slow to learn. The very first time that Jesus sought to relate the reality of His suffering to His disciples, He was met with a surprising reaction. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:21, 22).

What is more remarkable is Christ's response, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things

that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23).

Christ then introduced His disciples to the nature of His ministry, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (verse 24).

The cross was ever before Christ. It was the reason He was born and the waymark that shaped His life. Often we see Him mention His suffering and the crucifixion when in conversation with His disciples or the believers—and it's as though nobody heard Him. They just carried on as though nothing was said. Sometimes they were too afraid to ask Him what He meant in case they might realize the unwelcome reality of the cross. An example of this is found in Mark 9:8–10 just after Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James, and John.

"And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And **they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean**" (Mark 9:8–10, emphasis added).

But Jesus kept familiarizing them with His suffering, especially as they neared Jerusalem.

"And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him" (Mark 9:30–32).

Jesus was not dissuaded. It seems that the closer He came to the cross, the more determined He was to go through with it. Look at this amazing verse: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Mark tells us, “they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him” (Mark 10:32).

As Jesus approached the final Passover with His disciples, He again predicted His death. But this time He was even more specific with regard to the timing, “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified” (Matthew 26:2).

After this He made five references to His death all found within chapter 26 of Matthew:

1. When Mary Magdalene anointed Him with an alabaster box of precious ointment, Jesus said, “For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial” (Matthew 26:12).

2. When Jesus tells His disciples to go into the city, “to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, ‘My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples” (Matthew 26:18).

3. At the passover, when He dipped His hand in the dish with Judas, He said, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him” (Matthew 26:24).

4. As He instituted the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of His death.

5. And finally as He said these words after supper, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matthew 26:31).

Gethsemane and its aftermath

It becomes clear that Jesus was consciously following the definite plan of God for Him, as written out in the holy scriptures. He saw it all before it happened, and although the multitudes did not understand it, and His own disciples had other plans, He pressed forward—with each step, taking on more of the guilt

of the world upon His shoulders. He was doing it for them. He pressed forward, until He came to the garden of Gethsemane. It was from here to the crucifixion that His soul was to be tortured by the dreadful nature of sin and its consequences. His soul was now being made an offering for sin.

It was Jesus’ custom to go to this garden and pray, but this night He chose this garden for you and me. Notice the reason why: “When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. **And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place:** for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples” (John 18:1, 2, emphasis added).

It was because Judas was going to find Him there that Jesus went there. Nothing reveals the love of Jesus to me like the victory He gained for the human race this night at the garden. Our eternal destiny hung by a thread with Jesus, and He decided to cast His lot with us—but not without a dreadful struggle! We will never fully know.

Prostrate, tormented, Jesus had lain praying while pressed against the dark cold soil moistened by His own tears, His own blood.

Everything Christ had done from infancy to manhood, He did to get to this point—and it was here, at the garden of Gethsemane that the destiny of the human race trembled in His hands. Three times He cried out in agony.

The first time He said, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The second time, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42). He said similar words the third time He prayed. And then, the scriptures contain this curious account of what He did:

“Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now,

and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people” (Matthew 26:45–47, emphasis added).

Christ now alerts His disciples and says, “Let us be going,” but where? Was He now running away from Judas? No! No! He had already struggled with laying down His life as a sacrifice for sin, but now, having made up His mind to go through with it, where does He go? Notice these words in the gospel according to John:

“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. **Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek Ye?**” (John 18:3, 4, emphasis added). What courage! This was not a small crowd. A band of Roman soldiers was made up of at least hundreds of men. But there was no fear with Jesus. The cup of shame and suffering had already trembled in His hand, but He had decided to drink it. He “went forth,” confidently, fearlessly to meet His enemies, and to selflessly embrace His cross.

The definite plan of God for Christ included you and me. Let us be faithful, as Jesus was, in submission to God’s will written out for us in the Scriptures.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:18–20). *R*

“In the Fullness of Time”

by Walter Lukic



God creates time, space and matter

The world as we know it and the life in this world could not be imagined without space, time, and matter (mass/energy). Matter, as we know it, cannot exist without space and time.

How powerful and thrilling is the message on the first page of the Bible—the biblical record about time, space, and matter coming into existence: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). All three have their origin here: God sets up the great celestial clock and introduces time (“in the beginning”); God creates space (“heaven”); and then, out of nothing He creates the matter (“the earth”). Without this supernatural revelation, the most learned scientists of our age or of any age can only speculate about cosmology—the origin of the universe and of the fundamental structure of the universe—time, space, and matter.

As the work of creation progresses from day to day, on the fourth day God brings into existence the celestial bodies: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and

let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also” (Genesis 1:14–16).

Two important truths stand out in this inspired record: Only God by creating matter out of nothing (that is the meaning of the Hebrew word *bara*) can give existence. The Creator simply said, “Let there be,” and nonexistent matter instantly came into existence, “and it was so.” Second, God not only brings something into existence, He also gives purpose to the matter He creates.

Two distinct, useful purposes of the celestial bodies for planet Earth are plainly stated:

a) Measurement of time: “And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14).

b) Illumination: “And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth” (verse 15).

God creates existence and God gives purpose to whatever He creates.

God operates in time

Just one Bible verse from 1 Corinthians 2:7 is sufficient to show that God Who created this world is the One Who exists both in time and outside of time: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” By His nature God is both transcendent (outside of this world) and immanent (inhabiting space and time).

God operates on time

It is fascinating to learn that measurement of time, even in our days, is still determined by the movement of the celestial bodies, as God originally intended it. Based on the rotation of the Earth, time can be measured by observing celestial bodies crossing the meridian every day. It is only when each day at a given time multiple radio telescopes receive a beam of light from distant quasars that those data are correlated with the data received from an atomic clock at the U.S. Naval Observatory. Celestial objects of immense luminosity are still needed to determine the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) around the world.

God still keeps in motion the earth, the sun, the moon and all the stars. All of them move in perfect order and with perfect timing. “He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their name” (Psalm 147:4). Isaiah echoes the same thought: “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (40:26).

The truth that God operates on time and that His plans know no haste and no delay is forcefully brought out in the history of His deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt. (Genesis 15:14; Exodus 12:14.)

“Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay. . . .

“So in heaven’s council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”¹

As the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, God is not only the founder and caretaker of the laws of nature; He made also the moral laws to govern the conduct of all intelligent beings. Once the first humans transgressed God’s moral law, God immediately set in motion the plan of salvation.

Salvation in types and shadows—at the “appointed times”

For about 4,000 years, animal sacrifices pointed the repentant sinners to the coming Saviour, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

In addition to the routine daily sacrifices, the sanctuary services included also the services on the specially appointed days throughout a calendar year. These Old Testament annual religious festivals were known as the feast days, ceremonial Sabbaths or the “appointed times” (Hebrew *moedim*). All the festivals

were grouped around two harvesting seasons—four feast days in the springtime and three in the autumn.

All the ceremonial Sabbaths were assigned to certain dates in the Hebrew month, governed by a lunar calendar. The Passover (Leviticus 23:5); the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 6); the Feast of Firstfruits (verses 10, 11); the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (verse 16); the Feast of Trumpets (verse 24); the Day of Atonement (verse 27); and the Feast of Tabernacle (verse 34).

It is important to note that the weekly day of rest, the seventh-day Sabbath, was not controlled by the lunar calendar and was not part of the system of ceremonial, annual Sabbaths.

Of even greater importance is to observe that each *moed* or “appointed time” in the Hebrew calendar signified a particular saving event in the life and ministry of our Saviour Jesus Christ:

1. Jesus died and offered Himself as our sacrifice exactly on the Passover, the 14th day of the first month (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42).

2. The following day (the 15th) was considered the “Sabbath” and was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Only the sacrifice of Christ completed the day before could make humans free from sin, figuratively represented by unleavened bread.

3. “On the morrow after the Sabbath” or on the 16th (the Feast of Firstfruits), the priests were instructed to wave the sheaf of the firstfruits (barley harvest) before the Lord. The third day following the Passover and His death, Jesus was resurrected as the firstfruits of those who sleep in the Lord, on the first day of the week (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; Matthew 28:1).

4. Then, exactly on the 50th day following the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost), the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples of Christ and empowered them to witness for Him (Acts 2).

We could also show how the fall feasts (*moedim*) have found and will find their fulfillment in the closing ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and thereafter. It is not by accident that we call the great work of our Saviour in both the Old and New Testament times the “plan of salvation.” It is indeed a well-designed and meticulously executed plan wherein the time element plays a central role.

God has a detailed timetable for each saving event in the life and ministry of His Son. Not surprisingly, the coming of the Son of God and of the Son of Man to this earth, to our space and time—His entry into the public ministry and His sacrificial death—were likewise predicted with mathematical precision.

Details in the Messianic prophecies

Messianic promises in the Old Testament can be traced from the books of Moses all the way to the book of Malachi. Many are found in Isaiah—just to name a few: Isaiah 7:14; 9:1, 2, 7; 11:1, 2, 4, 5, 10; 40:3–5; 52:13; 53:1–12; 61:1–3.

Another prophet of God, Micah, foretold about the Messiah’s birth: “Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

While in exile in Babylon under discouraging circumstances, God reminded the prophet Daniel that He was in control with the following explanation: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24).

Here is a brief exposition of this passage: Seventy weeks or 490

prophetic days are equal to 490 years. The historicist school of prophetic interpretation relies on the day-year principle as recorded in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6. According to this principle, a prophetic day stands for a calendar year.

The prophecy of seventy weeks applies primarily to Daniel's people, Israel. During that period, important events closely connected with the Messiah would occur. Most importantly, this prophecy provides a timeline for the important events in Messiah's life and public ministry:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Daniel 9:25).

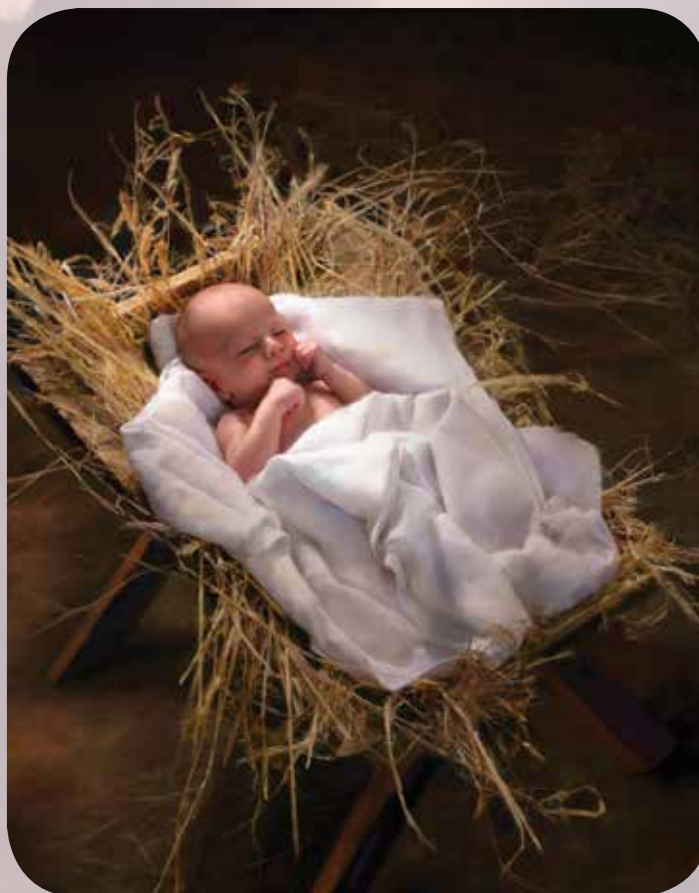
The starting date for the seventy-week prophecy was the date when a decree was to be issued "to restore and build Jerusalem" (verse 24). Of the four decrees issued by various Persian monarchs, only the decree made in the fall of 457 B.C. by Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) to Ezra in the seventh year of the king's reign, as recorded in Ezra 7:12–26, satisfies the prophetic qualification (authorization for full reestablishment of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation).

Therefore, the year 457 B.C. is the starting year for the calculation of the seventy weeks (as well as for the calculation of the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, referring to the Messiah's closing ministry in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary).

From the year 457 B.C. until Messiah the Prince there would be

7 weeks plus 62 weeks, totalling 69 weeks or 483 years. Starting in the year 457 B.C. and going forward 483 years brings us to the fall of the year A.D. 27. As we look into the biblical and Jewish history we can see that something of extraordinary religious significance took place at that time.

"And after threescore and two



weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. . . . And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (verses 26, 27).

No other interpretation seems more fitting to us than the one declaring that the future Messiah would die—not for His own sake but for others. In the last prophetic week, in other words, in the last seven days or years of His life and public ministry, the Messiah was to confirm the covenant with many. The central

point is the midpoint of the prophetic week, or 3½ years following the inception of Messiah's public work, when He would cause the sacrificial system to come to an end. The middle of the last prophetic week brings us to the spring of the year A.D. 31. It is a well-established fact that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified at the Passover of A.D. 31.

It should be noted that the phrase "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9 reads in Hebrew as "seventy sevens (šavua)." Seventy weeks could be conceived of as seventy periods of seven days/years, in other words, seventy sabbaticals. Understood this way, the "seventy sevens" constitutes ten jubilees (jubilee a cycle of seven sabbaticals or 49 years), the last (the seventieth seven) signifying the ultimate jubilee. In Luke 4:14–21, when Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah, He saw the ultimate jubilee fulfilled in His own life and ministry.

Sadly, the Jews failed to acknowledge that Messiah, the great Son of David, would need to die and to offer His righteous life as a sacrifice for sin in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:6, 7.

Their wrong ideas about the Messiah's character and the nature of His reign were to have very tragic consequences for the entire Jewish nation.

The unexpected Messiah

One of the greatest ironies of history is that the Jewish leaders were found in a state of complete surprise and shameful ignorance when their long-awaited and anxiously hoped-for Messiah was born in the town of Bethlehem. It was not the Jews, but the foreigners, who discovered that the promised King of the Jews was about to be born. The diligent study

of the Hebrew messianic prophecies and curiously, the study of the starry heavens, lead the wise men from the East first to Jerusalem and then to the town of Bethlehem in Judah in their search for a newborn Jewish King. (Matthew 2:1, 2.)

“The light of God is ever shining amid the darkness of heathenism. As these magi studied the starry heavens, and sought to fathom the mystery hidden in their bright paths, they beheld the glory of the Creator. Seeking clearer knowledge, they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures. In their own land were treasured prophetic writings that predicted the coming of a divine teacher.”²

Israel’s King was born not in a royal palace or in one of the highly esteemed Jewish families, but in a family of a poor Galilean carpenter from Nazareth. He did not come to restore the earthly reign and worldwide dominion of the Davidic Dynasty as His contemporaries had expected. He rather lived a life of an ordinary, simple young man practicing carpentry together with His earthly father. (Matthew 13:55.)

The time was ripe

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4). When the hands on the great celestial clock reached the appointed time, the Messiah was born.

The “fullness of time” is a meaningful expression. What kind of “fullness” (Gr. *pleroma*) and which “time” (Gr. *chronos*) is meant here? This fullness should not be understood only in a formal sense, as a correct point on a linear, chronological timeline. This fullness means much more. Jesus came to this world when certain preparation had taken place not only in the sphere of religion but also when the favorable conditions existed in other spheres of both the Jewish and the world community.

Politically the Mediterranean Europe and the Middle East were under the stable rule of the Roman Empire. Augustus Caesar (63 B.C. to A.D. 14) consolidated the power and established the Roman Peace (*Pax Romana*) that lasted for about two centuries. To facilitate trade and commerce and the rapid movement of their military units, the Romans maintained good roads and communication lines all over the Empire. They also developed one of the most impressive legal systems in the world, which is still studied in the civil law countries. The Romans inherited and cultivated the valuable legacy of the ancient Greeks. Alexander the Great had created a vast empire through which he spread the Hellenistic (Greek) culture, Greek learning and Greek language, which became the common language of that age and the language of the New Testament. Through the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint or LXX) that was in existence for about two hundred years before Christ, the Word of God was available to the Gentiles and to the Jews living in diaspora. These dispersed Jews, with all their deficiencies, bore witness to the true God. All these factors—political and economical stability and cultural and linguistic common heritage greatly contributed to the birth and spread of early Christianity.

The “fullness of time” and the heavenly clock did not govern only to the birth of the Son of God. His baptism and entry into the public ministry as well as His death on the cross and resurrection were likewise the fulfillment of the divinely inspired prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27. When 69 prophetic weeks or 483 literal years expired in the fall of A.D. 27, Jesus was baptized of John in the Jordan River. From that time the Messiah was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the good news about the approaching kingdom of God:

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is

fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15). The expression, “the time is fulfilled” unquestionably refers to the prophetic time in Daniel 9:25 that is referred to above.

John the Baptist had also declared: “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

In a remarkable Sabbath appearance at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus directly confirmed the fulfillment of a major messianic prophecy (Luke 4:18, 19, 21; cf. Isaiah 61:1, 2).

We cannot escape the conclusion that the “acceptable year of the Lord” in connection with the “deliverance of the captives” is another proof for the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24 (the 70th week in the seventy-week prophecy being the year of Jubilee when the debts are forgiven, the land is returned to the original owners and the Hebrew slaves are made free).

In the fullness of time, God sent the One to Whom the entire ceremonial system pointed.

By His death He fulfilled the ceremonial law which pointed to the suffering Messiah.

Through Christ we are not only sons, but also heirs of God—through Christ we become heirs of the Kingdom. We are already citizens of Messiah’s kingdom of grace, but very soon we will be both citizens and co-regents in His kingdom of glory. Looking back at the fulfilled prophecies and realizing how God has worked in the past, our hearts are filled with confidence that the work which the Messiah now performs will be completed at the appointed time. We are further confident that He will come again in the clouds of glory—both as our Saviour and also as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Most certainly, He will come again “in the fullness of time.” *R*

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

What Happened on Calvary?

by Davi P. Silva

When I was just a little boy and read the book *The Life of Christ* about the death of Christ on the cross, I was moved with pity and thought that surely the Lord could have freed Himself from that terrible situation. I was very angry with those who crucified and tortured Him. And I was wondering why Christ didn't deliver Himself from the cross. What happened to our dear Saviour—I just couldn't understand. I had no idea of how the significance of His death related to our eternal salvation. Legalistic as I used to be, I believed that if I would just do right, for sure I would be saved. The great problem: How could I do right without Christ? Two options appeared to me, since I was almost totally ignorant about the gospel of Christ:

1. Pretend to do right; or
2. Recognize my true condition and become hopeless about my eternal future. This second option became my spiritual reality.

Later, studying deeply the gospel, I came to understand that if Christ had come down from the cross, there would be no hope of salvation for humanity. Why not?

To understand the deep meaning of Calvary, we need to consider two essential points:

1. The condition of eternal life;
2. The nature of sin.

The condition of eternal life

When Adam and Eve were created, they received immortality under

the condition of perfect obedience to God's word. To have permanent access to the tree of life, they needed to develop a character in full harmony with God, through perfect and perpetual obedience to the divine Law. As a matter of fact, they possessed conditional immortality as long as they would eat of the tree of life. And God gave them power to be perfectly obedient children.

But when they transgressed the express word of God and ate the forbidden fruit, they immediately had to die the eternal death. "The wages of sin is [eternal] death" (Romans 6:23). The transgression of our first parents created two major problems for God's government:

a. They did not develop perfect character as the basic condition for eternal life. Now, as corrupted sinners, they couldn't obey perfectly God's commandments. They became worthy of eternal death.

b. Breaking divine precepts, they became debtors to the eternal law. Their transgression could be paid for only by the Creator Himself. To save man from the pit of sin with all its terrible consequence, Christ was chosen to become man, to develop the perfect character that Adam failed to do, and to pay the penalty of sin, which is eternal death.

The nature of sin

Sin is not only the action of transgressing God's law. When our first parents disobeyed God's word (action) they became sinners by nature and by tendency. Sin

contaminated both humanity and nature. Man had been created in the image of God. Now, a sinner by nature and by sinful inclinations, he transmitted his corrupt conditions to his descendants. "Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image" (Genesis 5:3, emphasis added). David declared: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). The apostle Paul confessed:

"When we were in the flesh, **the motions of sins**, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. . . . I am carnal, sold under sin. . . . I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin which is in my members**" (Romans 7:5, 14, 23, emphasis added).

The presence of sin on this planet corrupted man and nature. Everywhere we see disease, violence in man and animals, and death. The more sin is spread, the more complicated the world's situation becomes.

What solution was provided by Divine wisdom?

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

"God gave Christ to our world to save us from eternal death."¹

In His human nature Christ would do what Adam and Eve should have

done—yet did not do because of their disobedience. Jesus would develop a perfect character and die in their stead.

“Jesus lived the character of God. He was willing to be, or to do, or to suffer anything to save men from eternal death. He condemned sin that He might not be compelled finally to condemn the sinner. Jesus bore the penalty of death in order that the sinner might not suffer this terrible consequence, and made an atonement for us.”²

The first condition of eternal life, Christ met during His life of 33 years. During this time, He kept perfect obedience to God’s commandments and developed a pure and perfect character. Now He was prepared for the sacrifice, because only a spotless life could be accepted as a perfect sacrifice. The second condition for our salvation He would meet by surrendering His pure life on the cross of Calvary.

Close to the end of His earthly life, Christ declared: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30).

“Amid impurity, Christ maintained His purity. Satan could not stain or corrupt it. His character revealed a perfect hatred for sin. It was His holiness that stirred against Him all the passion of a profligate world; for by His perfect life He threw upon the world a perpetual reproach, and made manifest the contrast between transgression and the pure, spotless righteousness of One that knew no sin. This heavenly purity annoyed the apostate foe as nothing else could do, and he followed Christ day by day, using in his work the people that claimed to have superior purity and knowledge of God, putting into their hearts a spirit of hatred against Christ, and tempting His disciples to betray and forsake Him.”³

“Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the

condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.”⁴

Gethsemane and Calvary

After partaking of the Passover meal with His disciples and instituting the ceremony of feet washing and the Lord’s supper, Christ headed to Gethsemane. Arriving at that place, He experienced terrible anguish. What was happening to the Son of God? The sins of the entire world were placed upon Him. Because of sin, He felt the separation between Him and His Father. Then He prayed three times: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). “Father, if it is possible, pass from Me this cup.” But He finished His petition, adding the words of submission to God’s plan: “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). After that terrible ordeal in Gethsemane, Christ was arrested and taken to the presence of Annas, and then to Caiaphas, the high priest, then to Pilate, to Herod, then back to Pilate—and from the hall of judgment of Pilate, He was taken to Golgotha.

“That He might sanctify the people with His own blood,” Christ ‘suffered without the gate’ (Hebrews 13:12). For transgression of the law of God, Adam and Eve were banished from Eden. Christ, our substitute, was to suffer without the boundaries of Jerusalem. He died outside the gate, where felons and murderers were executed. Full of significance are the words, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us’ (Galatians 3:13).”⁵

“Jesus was to be crucified for the sins of men. What suffering, then, would the sinner bear who continued in sin? All the impenitent and unbelieving would know a sorrow and misery that language would fail to express. . . .

“Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father’s presence.”⁶

“While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for

His enemies, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness—‘for they know not what they do.’ . . .

“That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world. It took in every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Upon all rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God. To all, forgiveness is freely offered. ‘Whosoever will’ may have peace with God, and inherit eternal life.”⁷

“Jesus, suffering and dying, heard every word as the priests declared, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe’ (Matthew 27:42). Christ could have come down from the cross. But it is because He would not save Himself that the sinner has hope of pardon and favor with God.”⁸

Christ was crucified between two thieves, companions of Barabbas. By placing the Lord in the center, the Jewish authorities intended to imply that Christ was the main criminal. During the six hours He remained hanging on the cross, He suffered terribly. However, His physical pain was superseded by the anguish caused by separation from His Father.

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to

a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Savior in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So, great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."⁹

Although Christ had never committed a sin, He became sin (by imputation) in behalf of the entire world.

"For [God] hath made [Jesus] [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Where was the Father during the terrible ordeal Christ went through when hanging on the cross?

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him."¹⁰

What was the whole purpose of the terrible suffering of the Son of God? Two main purposes were involved in the mission of Christ on earth:

1. Reveal God's loving and just character;
2. Save sinners.

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that

flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, **It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.**"¹¹

We praise God because Christ, in His human nature, was absolutely successful in His mission of redemption.

"It is finished"

This expression is full of meaning. In spite of the suffering, mocking, torture, and extreme anguish that no human being can understand (except ultimately the lost), Christ was victorious over sin and Satan.

"To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, 'It is finished,' had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory.

"Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion."¹²

"Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice. The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for

man's redemption. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19). . . .

"The law requires righteousness—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can 'be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' (Romans 3:26)."¹³

"Christ is the Lord our righteousness. Let us take our stand on His side. Let none be ashamed to acknowledge Him as their leader, their counselor, their guide, and their exceeding great reward. Is this sacrificing anything? Is it an honor to be numbered among Satan's army? Those who make this choice gain nothing. Only death, eternal death, awaits them."¹⁴

Paul well knew the meaning of Calvary when he declared: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). *R*

References

- ¹ *The Upward Look*, p. 159.
- ² *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 81.
- ³ *The Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1899.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 623.
- ⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 741.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 743, 745.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 744, 745.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 749.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 753.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 753, 754.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 755, 756. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 758.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 762.
- ¹⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, December 20, 1905.



by Liviu Tudoroiu
[Emphasis added throughout.]

Why?

A premonition of the sacrifice of the Son of God

Adam is facing the gentle and humble eyes of the lamb; deep silence is pressuring his conscience. He is moved with compassion. The lamb does not have any part in the sin of the world. Adam trembles. The authoritative voice of God persuades him to slay the lamb. In the last instance, his heavy hand falls like a sudden thunder, and the blood—still warm from the lamb’s body, flows over his hand. He feels the lamb’s last tremble and his eyes glance in astonishment toward heaven. Adam’s eyes and the lamb’s eyes meet together in a unique final look. Adam steps back, drops the sharp tool and for the first time he understands this

strange expression: “Death.” Then Adam understands what he did not understand, while he was dressed in fig leaves. Now he can define the pressure of guilt in his conscience. “What did I do?” His conscience is responding from on high:

“This is the price of your disobedience.”

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Over the years Adam saw in his two sons his own character. One son, Cain, bearing the fruits of his father before conversion and Abel, the other son showing the character of his father after conversion. Cain and Abel are

the character of the same person, Adam. They struggle their entire life for supremacy. And always Cain (the symbol of sin and rebellion) will fight to remove the symbol of conversion and true repentance from our conscience, which is symbolized by Abel.

It was in the plan of God to display the Messiah, the Saviour in the life of Abel, reflecting His only begotten son Jesus Christ.

Seth was the third son. He reflected the recovered humanity, stronger in mental and physical stature than Abel. This was foreseeing the great plan of redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was the second Adam that will take the weak and feeble human nature to be elevated to a higher state that was meant to be. Jesus Christ would elevate us to the

adoption of sons and daughters of God. And the implication is infinite. To be sons and daughters of God means to have a share in the mystery of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with **me in my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). This is infinite majesty, this is beyond our comprehension, is the overwhelming power of God’s love and God’s grace—a tremendous display of what the heart of a Heavenly Father can do.

Looking to God’s own Lamb

After a few good centuries, another man not so great in physical stature like Adam, but strong in faith and conviction, arrives on the scene. Abraham repeated the same ritual—but this time, this “Adam” in the person of Abraham did not have a lamb on the altar but his only begotten son, in the person of Isaac. This test of faith and obedience was far greater than the test of Adam. The emotional pain was excruciating. The command was uttered once, and was enforced by the complete silence of God. After three days and nights without food and without sleep, the old great man is facing his last exit of faith. Resurrection. “God can resurrect my son, and he will do it,” he trusts by faith.

When the last embrace was offered and the last tears were shed, when the universe was invited to attend the spectacle of pain and agony, it was evident that what Adam could not sacrifice for selfish reasons, Abraham would accept by drinking the cup of bitterness to the full extent of human reasoning. Unfallen worlds, leaders of angelic hosts, were gazing upon the scene with woe and amazement.

It was **then** evident that the Lamb of God will be a man-lamblike Messiah. Such were the footprints of antitypical prophecy about the incarnation of the Son of God born in Nazareth.

In later years the psalmist David, by inspiration prophesies in Psalm 22,

describing the experience of our Lord Jesus alone on the cross of Calvary, “for dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (verse 16).

Isaiah confirms this in chapter 53 of his book, where he describes in a vivid, unquestionable prophetic manner the tremendous suffering, pain and anguish of our beloved Saviour:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7–9).

This prophecy was fulfilled “while the disciple John was anxious and troubled about the sacred remains of his beloved Master, Joseph of Arimathea returned with the commission from the governor; and Nicodemus, anticipating the result of Joseph’s interview with Pilate, came with a costly mixture of myrrh and aloes of about one hundred pounds’ weight. The most honored in all Jerusalem could not have been shown more respect in death.

“Gently and reverently they removed with their own hands the body of Jesus from the instrument of torture, their sympathetic tears falling fast as they looked upon His bruised and lacerated form, which they carefully bathed and cleansed from the stain of blood. Joseph owned a new tomb, hewn from stone, which he was reserving for himself; it was near Calvary, and he now prepared this sepulcher for Jesus. The body, together with the spices brought by Nicodemus, was carefully wrapped in a linen sheet, and the three disciples bore their precious

burden to the new sepulcher, wherein man had never before lain. There they straightened those mangled limbs, and folded the bruised hands upon the pulseless breast.”¹

Thus was fulfilled that the Lord might indeed be “with the rich in his death.”

Over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament, are more than simple evidences that prove the historicity and prophetic coherency of the Scripture, anticipating the arrival of Messiah.

Catastrophic reversal of interpretation of prophecy

What is very sad is the fact that at the first appearance of Christ, the people were immediately expecting the glory of His second appearance. And now after 2,000 years, the people of God are waiting for Jesus to come in the secrecy and relative obscurity of His first appearance. Some call it “the secret rapture.”

Why so much confusion? Why so many misunderstandings? To answer properly to these questions, we need to unveil another chapter, maybe the most important, most vital chapter of the entire plan of salvation. It’s called Golgotha; it’s the chapter that revolutionized all of human history and turned the arrow towards a new direction.

Why Golgotha?

This is not easy; this is not simple; it is the most complex theological question in the past and the present modern era: Why Golgotha?

First of all, Jesus Christ is our **Creator**, second, He is the **Author of the Law**, and accepted the humiliating position of becoming **the Saviour** of the world. On Golgotha Jesus cleared the character and honor of the Father from the false accusation of the fallen angel and the old enemy of God. On the cross Jesus proved that God’s character is love and justice united together. The risk was infinite and real, this following

statement should shake every fiber of our conscience and open the eyes of our mind to the big picture behind the curtain that shows the tremendous implication that the plan of salvation would not have worked. Jesus is our Saviour—what a Saviour!

“He was the Lamb ‘without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:19). Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour’s head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.”²

At Golgotha Jesus proved that **salvation from sin, not in sin**, is the reality of his sacrifice. On Golgotha Jesus Christ proved once again that the first chance of mercy must be given to His murderers.

Golgotha was made possible because **Jesus was the Friend of sinners but not the friend of sin**. In the process of conversion there is a two-way conclusion: Sin will crucify the Saviour in my heart or Jesus will crucify sin in my heart. There is no cooperation in between our Saviour and our sin. We cannot have two masters.

“The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for **two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world**—those who would be **saved by their merits**, and those who would be **saved in their sins**. **Here is the secret of its power.**”³

If that is the secret of her power, what is the secret of the power of the people of God? “**Here is** patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments of God**, and the **faith of Jesus**” (Revelation 14:12).

Golgotha declares war on sin, and love to the sinner. What Christ is winning for us on the cross is the vital element lost in the garden of Eden by our forefather Adam, and it’s called **will power**. This was destroyed by his wrong decision and later the new

course of our actions. Now is the time when Jesus interferes in between man and sin and revives in man the power to say “NO” to sin.

“The power which Christ imparts, **enables man to resist** the tyrant and usurper. Whoever is seen to abhor sin instead of loving it, **whoever resists and conquers those passions that have held sway within, displays the operation of a principle wholly from above.**”⁴

What makes man so touched in the scene of Golgotha that persuades him to stand against sin as never before? What is that something that will determine man to fight against his old friend, “SIN”?

“**As we look upon Him** whom we have pierced, **we mourn for the sins that have brought anguish upon Him. Such mourning will lead to the renunciation of sin.**”⁵

It is not force, it is not a political compromise, it is the power of love—and if the love of God does not attract us there is no other resort to save us. God does not imply a service of fear to serve him, no, no, no, it’s just the simple attraction of His love that makes man to have peace in the presence of his Saviour.

Golgotha has changed the vision of the entire universe about who God is. The unfallen worlds will always remember afar the love of the Father that went for one single bit of atom called planet Earth to send his only begotten Son to redeem the human race.

This love was displayed being evident in every generation that lived on earth. To the first murderer of the world, Cain, the Father sent His best evangelist and missionary in the person of Abel. To the ten sons of Jacob guilty of murder, Jesus sent His best evangelist and missionary in the person of Joseph. To the worst Pharaoh in history, the Lord Jesus sent the best preacher He had at that time in the person of Moses; for the worst king of Israel (Ahab) the Father sent the best disciple He had at that time in the person of Elijah. When David was about to slay the house of Nabal,

the Lord Jesus sent to David the best woman preacher He could find to arrest an emergency—the wife of Nabal in the person of Abigail. To Solomon Jesus sent a special preacher such as “Life.” Life was the preacher that taught Solomon precious lessons. To Herod the Lord sent John the Baptist. To Saul of Tarsus the Father sent the last disciple of the era named Stephen. And after the death of Stephen the Lord sent the “new Paul” to the worst Caesars ever known in the person of Nero.

After that, the Waldensians were sent to the popes, bishops, and cardinals of the Roman Church.

“**The first offers of mercy must be made to the murderers of the Saviour.**”⁶

What I have found mysterious and challenging for human wisdom is that the closest to the throne of God will be those that were the worst enemies of His Gospel:

“Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the ‘great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues’ . . . ‘before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.’ Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs.”⁷ *R*

References

¹ *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 227, 228.

² *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 256.

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 572.

⁴ *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 108.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 300.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 820.

⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

Very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. . . . And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:5, 6). Before the sun rose on that first working day after the crucifixion, these godly women began their journey to the tomb to complete the work of anointing the body of Jesus for His final resting place. As the sun began to rise in the east, the tomb was already empty. They came seeking a dead Rabbi—but instead they found the living Saviour—for He had already risen.

We often talk about the cross of Calvary and its place in the plan of redemption. It is true that we are justified by the death of Christ and through the shedding of His blood we are reconciled to God. However, if Jesus came into this world, lived a holy life in humanity, paid the penalty for our transgression by His spilt blood and then remained in the tomb, we would have absolutely no salvation through those actions alone. Why? “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be **saved from wrath through him**. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God

by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life**” (Romans 5:8–10). We are saved by a living Saviour Who left the tomb empty. We are saved by His life. We need a resurrected Christ to bring us salvation.

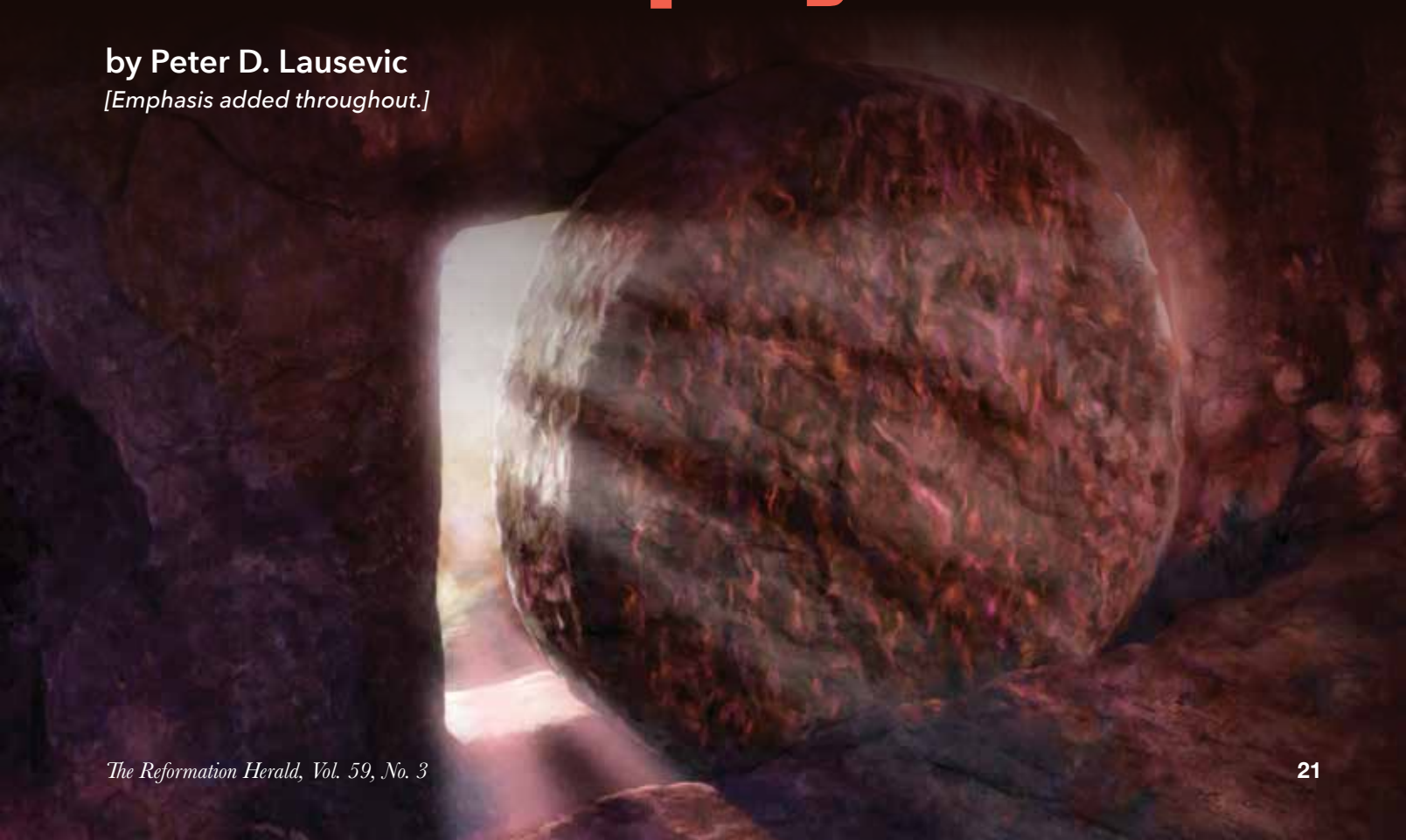
The gift of immortality

Why is the living Saviour so important in the full plan of redemption? Keep in mind that this world was in total darkness before the Messiah came. “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isaiah

The Empty Tomb

by Peter D. Lausevic

[Emphasis added throughout.]



60:2). It is to this environment that Jesus came as “the light of the world.” And what happens when we accept Jesus as the Light of the world? “I am come a light into the world, that **whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness**” (John 8:12; 12:46).

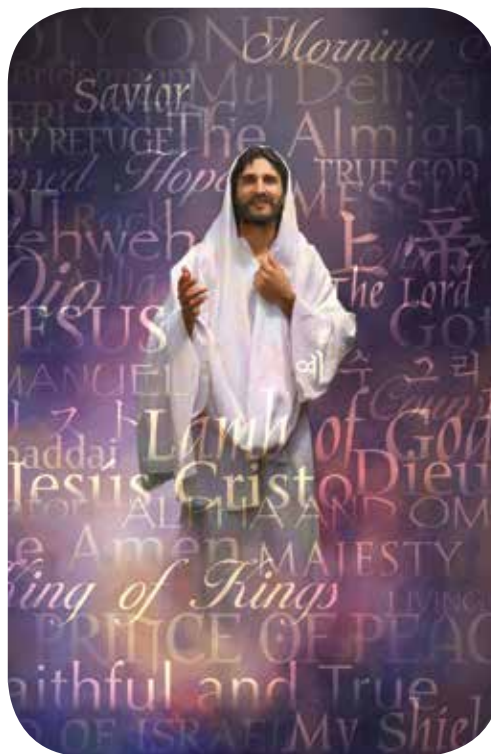
When we speak of Jesus as the Light of the world, what are we actually talking about? This is not just so that we are able to see. Rather it is speaking of something that even gives us the capability of seeing. “In him was life; and **the life was the light of men**” (John 1:4).

“[John 1:4 quoted.] It is not physical life that is here specified, but **eternal life, the life which is exclusively the property of God**. The **Word**, who was with God, and who was God, **had this life**. Physical life is something which each individual received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. **But the life of Christ was unborrowed**. No one can take this life from Him. ‘I lay it down of myself,’ He said. **In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived**. This life is not inherent in man. **He can possess it only through Christ.**”¹

This life is by nature in Jesus Christ and voluntarily He gave this life for our salvation. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. **I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again**. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17, 18). As He is able to voluntarily give up His life so He is able to voluntarily take it up again. In other words, He has the power to resurrect Himself. Without this ability, the cross would be useless to humanity.

Why could Jesus make such a powerful promise? “Not one of the angels could have become surety for the human race: their life is God’s; **they could not surrender it**. The

angels all wear the yoke of obedience. They are the appointed messengers of Him who is the Commander of all heaven. **But Christ is equal with God**, infinite and omnipotent. He could pay the ransom for man’s freedom. He is the **eternal self-existing Son**, on whom no yoke had come; and when God asked, ‘Whom shall I send?’ He could reply, ‘Here am I; send Me.’ He could pledge Himself to become man’s surety; for He could say that which the highest angel could not say—I have power over My own life, ‘power to lay it down, and . . . power to take it again.’”²



Jesus did not have to die—neither on the cross nor ever. He could have lived and never died. It was fully His willing act to die on the cross. “While as a member of the human family He was mortal, **as God He was the fountain of life for the world**. He could have withstood the advances of death, and refused to come under its dominion; but voluntarily He laid down His life, **that He might bring life and immortality to light**. He bore the sin of the world, endured its curse, yielded up His life as a sacrifice, that men might not eternally die.”³

This resurrection—and the fact that He raised up His own body—was so important that it was used as a sign that He really is the promised, hoped-for Messiah. He declared, “Destroy this temple, and in three days **I will raise it up**. . . . But he spake of the **temple of his body**” (John 2:19, 21).

The perfect life that Jesus lived in human flesh and His ultimate death on the cross of Calvary is everything to us.⁴ He brings divinity into humanity through His forgiving grace. But we need more! Yes, much more! We need a living Saviour. We find this kind of Saviour in the Deity of Jesus Christ. “‘He that hath the Son hath life’ (1 John 5:12). **“The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life.”**⁵

We need a Saviour that can Himself break the bonds of the tomb and leave it empty. **“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life**. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for **He has life in Himself** to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, **He takes up again, and gives to humanity.**”⁶

Combined with His human nature, this power of divinity and the resurrection is brought into humanity.

Why is Jesus able to give immortality?

It is impossible to give what we don’t have. Jesus cannot offer and ultimately give me immortality if He Himself is not Immortality. My Saviour is Immortality; My Saviour is Resurrection; My Saviour is Life. If we try to make Jesus anything less than that, we are completely lost. That kind of saviour would still be in the tomb. But the tomb of Jesus is EMPTY!

Why? What was the cause of the empty tomb of Jesus? The Saviour explained, “**‘I am the resurrection, and the life’** (John 11:25). These words could be spoken **only by**

the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. **Only He who is one with God** could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. **In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.**⁷ Because He is fully God He was able to respond to the call of the Father to resurrect.

“When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ’s tomb, saying, **Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself.**”⁸

When we accept Christ, we put on immortality at the resurrection morning. “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have **put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54). We put it on and become immortal—but we are not immortality. We still have to eat of the tree of life for all eternity. But Jesus always was and always will be the immortal King. He does not need to eat from that tree to maintain life. He is life. “Now unto the **King eternal, immortal**, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

What is the purpose of His resurrection?

Why is the resurrection so important in the Christian’s life? “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Corinthians 15:16–18). The tomb of Jesus must be empty. Without an empty tomb we are lost. That fact that Jesus broke the prison house of death makes it possible for us to look to a bright future.

But why did Jesus resurrect immediately rather than wait till the end of time and then resurrect everyone at once? It is because He has a work to do to prepare a place for us. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he **ever liveth to make intercession** for them” (Hebrews 7:25). To bring full salvation to humanity, we can trust in a living Saviour who left the tomb empty.

Through this whole experience—death, resurrection, and intercession in the heavenly sanctuary—we have confidence in Christ as our elder Brother ministering in our behalf. “For both he that sanctifieth and they

“When we accept Christ, we put on immortality at the resurrection morning.”

who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is **not ashamed to call them brethren**” (Hebrews 2:11). Because He is alive as our elder Brother we can have boldness, we can have confidence to come before Him in all our times of need. (Ephesians 3:11, 12.) “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15, 16). Because of His perfect victory in humanity, He can help us accomplish the same in our sinful human nature.

“It is **not God’s will** that you should be **distrustful**, and torture your soul with the fear that God will not accept you because you are sinful

and unworthy. ‘Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.’ Present your case before him, pleading the merits of the blood shed for you upon Calvary’s cross. **Satan will accuse you of being a great sinner**, and you **must admit this**, but you can say: ‘I know I am a sinner, and that is the reason I need a Saviour. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:7, 9). I have no merit or goodness whereby I may claim salvation, but I present before God the all-atoning blood of the spotless Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is my only plea. The **name of Jesus gives me access to the Father**. His **ear**, his **heart**, is open to my faintest pleading, and He supplies my deepest necessities.’ ”⁹

Because of the confidence we have in a resurrected Saviour Who understands me as a human being, Who knows what I am going through, Who has been right where I am and yet became victorious and broke the bondage of the sepulcher, what can I be assured of when I come sinful as I am before the throne of God? “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you**. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23, 24). I can have the full confidence that my prayers will be answered. (Romans 8:34.) Understanding His atoning work and ministry serves as the anchor to our faith during these trying times in the last days of this earth’s history. (Hebrews 6:18, 19.)

As we look to the living Saviour ministering in our behalf, we cannot help but long for His return so that we can be with Him where He is. We long to spend eternity with the One who has endured so much for us while on earth and then work for our complete salvation in the sanctuary above and prepare an

eternal dwelling for us. (Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9.)

Resurrecting the saints

We have learned to expect death as a normal part of life. People are born, they live, and they die. However, through the message of the gospel we have a hope that burns within our hearts. That hope is that our tomb will also be empty. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10, 11). This idea that we shall live again in the resurrection is considered one of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. (Hebrews 6:2.) This hope is based on the fact that the grave of Jesus is empty because our Saviour is alive. (1 Peter 1:3.)

Now how does the resurrection of the saints take place? How is it possible that a human being who died comes to live again—not just for a few days, but for eternity? “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11). If we have the same Spirit, if we have the same experience, the same power that resurrected Jesus will resurrect us. Just as Jesus resurrected Himself by His divine power, it is He that performs our resurrection also. (John 5:28, 29.)

“The **voice** that cried from the cross, ‘It is finished,’ was heard among the dead. **It pierced the walls of sepulchers**, and summoned the sleepers to arise. Thus will it be when the voice of Christ shall be heard from heaven. **That voice will penetrate the graves and unbar the tombs, and the dead in Christ shall arise.** At the Saviour’s resurrection a few graves were opened, but at His second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life. **The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His**

church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.”¹⁰

This we symbolize in every baptismal service—both for the future resurrection and in the new life of the believer. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that **like as Christ was raised up from the dead** by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.** For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the **likeness of his resurrection.** . . . Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also **live with him.** . . . For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that **he liveth, he liveth unto God.** Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **dead indeed unto sin**, but **alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (Romans 6:4–11).

Therefore we have a life to live, a work to do. “For he that is dead is freed from sin. . . . Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For **sin shall not have dominion over you:** for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have **obeyed from the heart** that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then **made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness**” (Romans 6:7–18).

Conclusion

“**We have a living Saviour.** He is not in Joseph’s new tomb; He is risen from the dead, and has

ascended on high as a substitute and surety for every believing soul. . . .

Then shall we permit ourselves to have a vacillating experience of doubting and believing, believing and doubting? Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in ‘the Lord our righteousness.’”¹¹

“The sinner so recently dead in trespasses and sins is quickened by faith in Christ. He sees by faith that Jesus is his Saviour, and alive forevermore, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In the atonement made for him the believer sees such breadth, and length, and height, and depth of efficiency—sees **such completeness of salvation**, purchased at such infinite cost, that his soul is filled with praise and thanksgiving. He sees as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and is **changed into the same image** as by the Spirit of the Lord. He sees the robe of Christ’s righteousness, woven in the loom of heaven, wrought by His obedience, and imputed to the repenting soul through faith in His name. **When the sinner has a view of the matchless charms of Jesus, sin no longer looks attractive to him;** for he beholds the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely.”¹²

Yes, the tomb is EMPTY and our Saviour is alive forever more. And if we surrender all to Him today, our tomb will also be empty for eternity and we will be alive with Christ for all the ceaseless ages of eternity. *R*

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- ¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1130.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 1136.
- ³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 484.
- ⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 904.
- ⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 786, 787.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 785.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *The Signs of the Times*, July 4, 1892.
- ¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.
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by Eli Tenorio

The Cross in Eternity

Often we hear with astonishment about Palestinians and Jews killing each other. We read with stupefaction the history of Christians persecuting and killing each other. And sometimes we witness believers hurting each other in different ways, church members misrepresenting motives, blackening reputation, dissecting character, which Inspiration says is even more terrible than the horror of the cannibal feasting on the still warm and trembling flesh of his victim.

These atrocities committed by professed religious people have discouraged many sincere souls and have been used as an excuse for many unbelievers to keep a distance from religion.

If these perplexed souls could only look to the Lamb of God hanging on the cross of Calvary, they would be able to see the contrast between the attitude from some professing to be

religious and zealous for their God—and the attitude of Christ.

One amazing contrast with the religious intolerance of many professing to serve God today is seen in the manner in which Jesus treated Judas. Jesus knew that Judas was stealing from the early Christian church treasury and, though sin is repulsive to Him, Christ never condemned or reproved Judas for his bad behavior. Jesus cared more about Judas than about the money he was stealing. Money could be replaced, but Judas was too precious for the compassionate Jesus, and He would not let him go without doing all that was possible to save him. Jesus wanted to keep Judas as close to Him as possible—hoping that His love would finally reach and win Judas over. But in the end, Judas finally betrayed Jesus and delivered Him to the hands of His enemies to be crucified.

Who calls his betrayer “friend”? Jesus did!

Despite the betrayal, Jesus never gave up on Judas!

On the night Judas came with the soldiers to deliver Christ into the hands of His enemies, Jesus—fully aware of Judas’ intentions—still greeted him, saying: “Friend, wherefore art thou come?”

Unfortunately, after all the love demonstrated by Jesus, Judas gave up on Him. Then, when he realized that life without Jesus makes no sense, instead of returning to Jesus he gave up on himself. But Jesus loved him to the end.

If Jesus called His betrayer “friend” and loved him unconditionally, how can we hate our brethren to the point of hurting them just because they don’t agree with our point of view? We were made different from each other. People

work in different ways; they think differently; they are not exactly like us, but this does not mean they are bad and deserve to be hurt in any way.

Christ prayed for His enemies. He blessed those who cursed Him, and He loved and died for each one of us while we were still His enemies: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:8, 10).

He died the death of the cross. Why was it such a terrible death? The person would die slowly. The pain was such that the victim would desire to die instead of dying slowly! It was a shameful death reserved for the worst lawbreakers. The victim was considered accursed of God.

The cross is shining today and will shine throughout eternity to show that: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Who killed Jesus on the cross?

Christ's sinful enemies, ungodly men, killed Him on the cross. And let us remember that while living in sin we were all enemies of Christ and therefore guilty of His death. Our sins killed Him at Calvary!

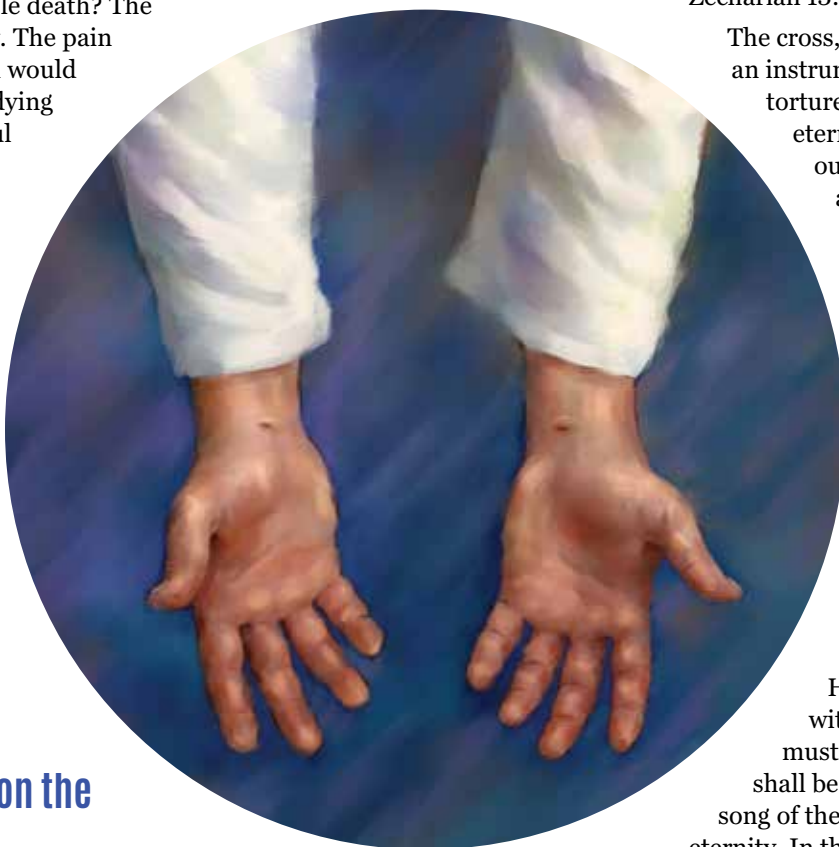
Nevertheless, He chooses to call us His friends: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Still, He chooses to forgive and save us: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

Inspiration tells us that one day Christ will come back to this world to take the redeemed home, and we will travel with Him for a few days towards heaven in a cloudy chariot with wings and wheels formed by angels.

Before entering the pearly gates of heaven, we will stop at the sea of glass and participate in a beautiful ceremony.

The millions of redeemed will form a square about their Redeemer, and there we will see the two Adams (Christ and Adam) together. Jesus



with His right hand will place the crown of victory on the head of each redeemed soul. The crown will have our new name on it. Then, every redeemed person receives the victor's palm and the shining harp.

Millions of saints are present. Who will be the first one to receive the crown, the palm, and the harp? How long will it take for my name to be called? It will not matter; there will be no hurry. We will finally be with Jesus in eternity.

Maybe it will be during this ceremony that some will see the wounds of the cross on Jesus' hands for the first time and will ask Him: "What are these wounds in thine hands?" (Zechariah 13:6).

At that moment Christ could complain about the way He was treated when trying to save His "enemies." He could explain that He had come down to this world to save us and we mistreated, despised, rejected and crucified Him. But instead, He just says: ". . . I was wounded [in] the house of my friends" Zechariah 13:6.

The cross, which was considered an instrument of shame and torture, will be remembered in eternity as the place where our Saviour redeemed us and granted us eternal life. Those wounds in Christ's hand will remind the saved ones and the angels of Christ's death on the cross. The cross will continue being the science and song of the redeemed throughout eternity:

"Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In the light of the cross alone can the true value of the human soul be estimated."¹

John the Revelator describes: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (Revelation 21:1). The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. . . .

"One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel

work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory: 'He had bright beams coming out of his side: and there was the hiding of his power' (Habakkuk 3:4, margin). That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour's glory, there 'the hiding of his power.' . . . And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power.

"The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father's face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary's cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!' "2

Why will the cross be remembered in Heaven?

Can you imagine someone having a relative condemned to die the death of the cross? How shameful would it have been to the family! It was something they would probably do their best to forget and hide from others.

When we have the option, many of us do our best to get rid of our scars or hide them.

Christ can easily get rid of the scars in His hands and thus avoid remembering His death on the cross. Why will He keep this remembrance of the cross through all eternity?

Jesus will carry the scars in His glorified body into eternity to serve as a constant reminder to us of His great love and sacrifice for us. The inhabitants of heaven and of the New Earth will never forget or doubt God's love, and therefore sin will not rise again (Nahum 1:9). The redeemed and the angels will forever be grateful for and sure of God's love.

"The cross will be remembered in eternity as the place where our Saviour redeemed us and granted us eternal life."

The scars of the cross will remind us that He was wounded at the house of His friends—at our house!

Then we will further understand and appreciate with even deeper emotion the lines of the hymn we often sing:

*"Jesus, keep me near the cross;
there a precious fountain, free to all,
a healing stream, flows from
Calvary's mountain.*

Refrain:

*"In the cross, in the cross, be my
glory ever, till my ransomed soul
shall find rest beyond the river.*

*"Near the cross, a trembling soul,
love and mercy found me; there the*

*bright and morning star sheds its
beams around me.*

*"Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
bring its scenes before me; help me
walk from day to day with its shadow
o'er me.*

*"Near the cross I'll watch and
wait, hoping, trusting ever, till I
reach the golden strand just beyond
the river."*

[Reformation Hymnal, no. 340.]

Are you expecting a Messiah with wounds in His hands?

A story is told about a Christian lady in Cairo who made acquaintance with a Jewish boy and asked him if he was expecting the Messiah. He replied, "Yes, and we believe he will come in a few years." Then the lady asked him, "Will your Messiah have wounds in His hands?" The boy stared confused, then she explained: "Your prophet Zechariah says that when the Messiah comes, He will be asked, 'What are these wounds in Your hands?' Then He shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends' (Zechariah 13:6). Are you expecting the Messiah with wounds in His hands?" The boy left puzzled and could not sleep that night. Early in the morning he returned and asked the lady if she knew more about these wounds on the hands of the Messiah. The lady rejoiced in having the opportunity to tell the story of Jesus to this little boy and thus led him to give his heart to Christ.

Here in this world, as well as throughout eternity, the cross of Jesus will continue being the only reason for us to glory: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

"This wonderful manner of His love was evidenced at His crucifixion, and the light of His love is reflected in bright beams from the cross of Calvary. Now it remains for us to accept that love, to appropriate the promises of God to ourselves."³ *R*

References

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273.

² *Maranatha*, p. 362.

³ *Daughters of God*, p. 221.

CHRIST

and Him Crucified

by Peter C. Cay-ohen

Paul and Silas were said to have “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) with the unique doctrine they were preaching everywhere they went. Their message was so powerful that people were turning away from idolatry to become followers of Christ, at the risk of imprisonment and death.

The most essential knowledge

What did Paul identify as the most important knowledge to be gained? He told the Corinthians:

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ

and him crucified.” “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 2:2; 1:23, 24).

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: . . . For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:17, 18).

Paul was inspired to write that the most important knowledge one could obtain is the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified.

The just dying for the unjust

What makes the crucifixion of Christ so important? The apostle explains:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

Of the three crucified by the Roman authorities on Calvary, only

Christ was resurrected. The others were crucified for their sins, but the innocent Lamb of God was crucified for ours.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;” “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why Jesus had to die

To be able to appreciate the significance of the message of Christ’s death for our sins, let’s go to the beginning of history. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created holy but not immortal. In Eden they were placed on probation. “Immortality was promised them on condition of obedience;” [but] “by transgression they would forfeit eternal life.”¹ They received the sentence of eternal death since God had warned: “Thou shalt not eat of it [the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil]: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

Yet the couple was spared and given a second chance to live, albeit for a limited time. Why were they spared? We read:

“The news of man’s fall spread through heaven. Every harp was hushed. The angels cast their crowns from their heads in sorrow. All heaven was in agitation. A council was held to decide what must be done with the guilty pair. . . .

“Sorrow filled heaven, as it was realized that man was lost . . . and there was no way of escape for the offender. The whole family of Adam must die. I saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of sympathy and sorrow upon His countenance. Soon I saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father. . . . Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father, His person could be seen. . . . He then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been

made for lost man. He told them that He had been pleading with His Father, and had offered to give His life a ransom, to take the sentence of death upon Himself, that through Him man might find pardon; that through the merits of His blood, and obedience to the law of God, they could have the favor of God, and be brought into the beautiful garden, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life.”²

“The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place. He shall have another chance.’ ”³

During their first probation, Adam and Eve chose death by choosing to sin. But Christ volunteered to be their Saviour and promised to take their punishment. On the strength of Christ’s promise, the human race was spared and given a second chance—another period of probation to choose life over death. Yet Jesus had to fulfill His promise to die for the sins of humanity.

So, “when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5). When the time came for Christ to fulfill His promise to die for the sins of lost humanity, He took the nature of fallen man (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6–8), “for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

Human history could have ended in A.D. 31

While Jesus was hanging on the cross, the devil used human agents to tempt Him, saying: “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40).

Imagine the scenario. The sentence of death pronounced in Eden was not carried out because

Christ promised to take this penalty upon Himself at some future time. In order to die, He first took upon Himself mortal nature as the Son of man, since God could not die. But now, just as He was about to undergo the death penalty, the devil tempted Him to use His divine power to abort His mission.

Had Jesus yielded to the temptation and come down from the cross, the entire human race would have been annihilated under divine judgment that same day. There and then the history of humanity would have ended and we would not have the opportunity to be born in a sinful world.

Even before the cross, Christ had made a decision in the garden of Gethsemane. The fate of humanity was at stake. If He would die for the sins of the world, the second chance granted after the fall in Eden would be confirmed and prolonged to give humanity the opportunity to choose between life and death. But if Jesus would abort His mission and refuse to let the punishment fall on Him, death would fall on the sinful family of Adam.

Even the fate of Enoch and Elijah who were translated to heaven without seeing death, and of Moses who was resurrected to life would have been affected. These men were honored with eternal life through faith in Christ, their Redeemer. But if Jesus had backed out from His appointed work of dying for the sins of the world, the gift of eternal life granted them would have been cancelled and they would have been pulled out from heaven in order to pay for their own sins. They would perish with the rest of humanity.

The fate of humanity trembled in the balance

Under such tremendous pressure, Christ had prayed, “saying, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

“The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour.

He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, ‘O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done’ (Matthew 26:42).”⁴

The decision of Christ in our favor

“The history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin.”⁵

“Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;

even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:12, 18, 19). Christ “died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Divine justice demands that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” for “the wages of sin is death” (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23). And the law of pardon states: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22, RSV).

“Why would you be eternally lost when you can choose to receive eternal life and be saved in God’s everlasting Kingdom?”

For divine justice to be upheld and one pardoned, the person’s blood must either be shed directly or through a representative. Divine justice was upheld when Christ volunteered to die for the sins of the whole world. Christ was the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“A full, complete ransom has been paid by Jesus, by virtue of which the sinner is pardoned, and the justice of the law is maintained.”⁶

The Father “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and

hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13, 14).

“When Satan was triumphing as the prince of the world, God had sent His messenger from heaven, even His only begotten Son, to proclaim to all the inhabitants of the world, “I have found a ransom. I have made a way of escape for all the perishing. I have your emancipation papers provided for you, sealed by the Lord of heaven and earth.”⁷

Christ alone procured our justification from sin when He “gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6). We did not contribute anything towards the procurement of our legal justification from sin. The Bible calls this transaction at the cross justification by grace.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23, 24).

Provision sufficient for all

Some professed teachers of the Bible teach that Christ died only for believers. We are not to restrict the word “all” to mean only the believers on the ground that Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28) because the Bible clearly teaches that Christ died for the sins of all, whether or not they accept the provision.

“Jesus Christ . . . is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours (believers’) only, but also for the sins of the whole world (unbelievers)” (1 John 2:2, parenthesis added).

“The Saviour has purchased the fallen race with His own blood.”⁸

It should further be understood that Christ also suffered once for every sin that the human race has committed from the time of Adam until the end of the world (Mark 16:15, 16; Revelation 14:6, 7).

If Christ died only for the members of His church, it follows

that His death is good news only for them and not for the whole world. Even those who hold this doctrine today would have no hope of being saved because they were not part of Christ's church when Christ died. But Christ tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). The plan of salvation made provision for Him to die for sin only once (1 Peter 3:18) for all time. Therefore there is no need for Him to "offer himself often" as an offering for sin (Hebrews 9:25–28), for His "one time" offering was all-sufficient.

"All things are God's, not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary."⁹

Placed on vantage ground

"As Adam's transgression had brought wretchedness and death, so the sacrifice of Christ would bring life and immortality."¹⁰

"It is at an immense cost that we have been placed on the high vantage ground where we can be liberated from the bondage of sin, which has been wrought by the fall of Adam. . . . A second probation has been granted by the sacrifice of the Son of God. We have a battle to fight, but we can come off victor through the merits of Christ's blood."¹¹

Can a justified person end up being lost?

The Saviour paid the redemption price for every soul. We as sinners are thus placed on vantage ground to choose our own destiny. If everyone would receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, everyone would receive eternal life and enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:5–17) without any legal impediment.

But God will not take any to heaven against their will. Those who do not appreciate the love and sacrifice of Christ for their redemption but will continue in their rebellion against God, hardening

their hearts in stubborn unbelief, will still be lost.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Those who do not believe the gospel have actually made their choice. They have chosen death rather than life. We are free to choose. (See Deuteronomy 30:17–29.)

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7, 8).

We kindly ask our dear readers: Why would you be eternally lost when you can choose to receive eternal life and be saved in God's everlasting Kingdom? Your sins are not actually a hindrance to your salvation because Christ has paid them already. All you have to do is to respond positively to Christ's loving invitation:

"Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

Sin is not a hindrance to salvation

Don't entertain the idea that your sins are a hindrance to your going to Christ. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

The Lord "hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10–12).

The Bible teaches that if a sinner will turn away from wickedness in

sincere repentance and surrender to Jesus Christ as Saviour, "he shall surely live. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezekiel 33:15, 16). This wonderful privilege is granted to all because Christ has already paid all their sins at the cross of Calvary.

Aren't you glad that God has paid for your sins through the sacrifice of His Son? I am very happy, and I hope and pray that you share the same joy. God has promised full and complete pardon of sin to all who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

If as a prodigal son you humble yourself, choose to go to our heavenly Father and say to Him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:18, 19), there will be great joy in the presence of God and the angels in heaven over your repentance, your turning away from your sinful life to a new life in Christ (Luke 15:7, 10).

Dear reader, if you have not made this kind of decision in your whole life, will you make that choice now? You have nothing to lose but everything to gain if you make up your mind to believe the gospel and receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour! *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60.
- ² *Early Writings*, pp. 148, 149.
- ³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1085.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 690.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 692, 693.
- ⁶ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 363.
- ⁷ *Our Father Cares*, p. 92.
- ⁸ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1113.
- ⁹ *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 362.
- ¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 66, 67.
- ¹¹ *Christ Triumphant*, p. 215.

P.O. Box 7240
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240

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Jesus on the Cross

In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. His heart was rent with anguish and oppressed with gloom. But it was not the fear or the pain of death that caused His suffering. It was the crushing weight of the sin of the world, a sense of separation from His Father's love. This was what broke the Saviour's heart, and brought His death so soon.

Christ felt the woe that sinners will feel when they awake to realize the burden of their guilt, to know that they have forever separated themselves from the joy and peace of Heaven.

Angels beheld with amazement the agony of despair borne by the Son of God. His anguish of mind was so intense that the pain of the cross was hardly felt.

Nature itself was in sympathy with the scene. The sun shone clearly until midday, when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. All about the cross was darkness as deep as the blackest midnight. This supernatural darkness lasted fully three hours.

A nameless terror took possession of the multitude. The cursing and reviling ceased. Men, women, and children fell upon the earth in abject terror.

Lightnings occasionally flashed forth from the cloud, and revealed the cross and the crucified Redeemer. All thought that their time of retribution had come.

At the ninth hour the darkness lifted from the people, but still wrapped the Saviour as with a mantle. The lightnings seemed to be hurled at Him as He hung

upon the cross. It was then that He sent up the despairing cry:

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

In the meantime the darkness had settled over Jerusalem and the plains of Judea. As all eyes were turned in the direction of the fated city, they saw the fierce lightnings of God's wrath directed toward it.

Suddenly the gloom was lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpetlike tones, that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried:

"It is finished." John 19:30.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Luke 23:46.

A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast and died. . . .

The Lamb of God, in dying, had become the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

When Christ died upon the cross of Calvary, the new and living way was thrown open to Jew and Gentile alike.

Angels rejoiced as the Saviour cried, "It is finished!" The great plan of redemption was to be carried out. Through a life of obedience, the sons of Adam might be exalted finally to the presence of God.

Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost.

—*The Story of Jesus*, pp. 145–147.

