

THE CROSS

THE CROSS

An In-depth Look at
The Cross of Christ Revealed in Scripture

Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgment	7
Introduction.....	9
1 The Cross Appears	19
2 The Foreshadowing of the Cross in Abel’s Lamb	23
3 The Flood Is a Type of the Cross	26
4 Mount Moriah Points to Calvary	31
5 The Lamb without Blemish	39
6 The Red Sea Is a Type of the Cross.....	43
7 The Bitter Waters of Marah Sweetened by the Tree.....	48
8 The Stricken Rock of Horeb	53
9 The Rock Stricken Again—a Mistake on the Part of Moses	59
10 The Book of Leviticus Is Filled with the Foreshadowing of the Cross	63
11 Moses Lifts Up the Serpent	66
12 Unveiling the Horrors of the Infamous Cross.....	72
13 The Psalm of the Crucifixion	77
14 The Psalm that Takes Us to Calvary and Beyond	83
15 The Cross in High Definition.....	86
16 What Are These Wounds?	92
17 Behold, the Lamb of God.....	95
18 Destroy This Temple	99
19 Jesus Points Nicodemus to the Cross.....	106
20 Following the Lord Jesus Christ Means Bearing Your Very Own Cross.....	109

21	The Disciples Follow the Lord, Fearing the Cross	112
22	The “I Am” of Jesus Confirmed by the Cross.....	116
23	The Lord Jesus Christ Speaks to Moses and Elijah of His Death	119
24	The Lord Willingly Offers Himself.....	122
25	The Corn of Wheat Which Falls into the Ground	125
26	Gethsemane’s Garden.....	128
27	The Six Trials for the Lord Jesus Christ	132
28	The Sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ while on the Cross.....	150
29	The Apostle Paul Discovers the Cross	171

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This book began during the summer of 1998 when Pastor Robert McLaughlin taught a remarkable series titled “The Cross throughout the Scriptures.” A major source of inspiration for that series was a book by F. J. Huegel titled *The Cross Through the Scriptures* now, regrettably, out of print. Pastor McLaughlin is grateful for the influence that this predecessor work by Frederick Julius Huegel had on his thinking and approach to this subject.

INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin this book on the Cross throughout the Bible with some isagogics or historical background concerning crucifixion. Isagogics means that to fully understand the plan of God for one's life, the Bible must be interpreted within the framework of the historical setting or the time in which it was written. I am going to first approach the subject of this book by trying to describe what suffering and death on a cross was like.

According to ancient sources, crucifixion was one of the cruelest and most humiliating forms of punishment in the ancient world. It was considered the most horrible form of execution. The Jewish historian Josephus described it following the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 as "the most wretched of deaths." He also stated that suicide is preferable to the cruel fate of being put on a cross. This form of terror was widespread across the Roman Empire, which included Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia. Crucifixion originated several centuries before the common era, which is the period coinciding with Christianity, and it continued into the AD fourth century when Constantine, the emperor of Rome, discontinued the practice. Interestingly, no other time in history could or would have allowed our Lord to go through this form of humiliation. Yet prophecy after prophecy in the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would have to endure such ill treatment. Consider these facts:

- The Jewish people did not use a cross or a tree for capital punishment; therefore consider the odds of the Lord Jesus Christ having to die on a cross by the hands of the Jews! The crucifixion

allowed our Lord to fulfill such prophecies as the brazen serpent being lifted up on a pole. The Scripture stated, **“And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived”** (Numbers 21:9). Jesus declared, **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life”** (John 3:14-15).

- People would watch Him as He was suffering publicly. David wrote, **“All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him”** (Psalm 22:7-8).
- His hands and feet would be pierced—**“For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet”** (Psalm 22:16).
- Not one of His bones would be broken—**“He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken”** (Psalm 34:20).
- The prophecy of His crucifixion—**“Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors”** (Isaiah 53:12).
- The piercing of Jesus’s side—**“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born”** (Zechariah 12:10).

The Old Testament talks about hanging people on the tree, but this was done after they were dead as a form of humiliation. **“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day [for he who is hanged is accursed of God], so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance”** (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). This was not death on a cross but a public form of humiliation after

someone was killed under capital punishment. The cross, therefore, was the electric chair, the gas chamber, and the lethal injection of first-century Rome, its many provinces, and captive lands. The Persians, who came from the land now known as Iran, invented death by crucifixion. Later, it was adopted by the Phoenicians (Canaanites, a perverted people) and the Carthaginians (North Africa). It was from the Carthaginians that the Romans got crucifixion. Under the Romans, however, crucifixion degenerated into a cruel means of torture and death. Only one word can come close to describing death by crucifixion: *agony*. Even that word does not fully convey what death by crucifixion was like. Among other things, it was humiliating, tormenting, slow, and very public. A slave, who was pardoned by the emperor after he had already been nailed on a cross, was reported to say, upon his recovery, “On the cross, there are only two things: pain and eternity. They tell me I was only on the cross twenty-four hours, but I was on the cross longer than the world existed. If there is no time, then every moment is forever.”

So while its origins are somewhat obscured, it is clear that death on a cross was a form of capital punishment, which lasted for around eight hundred years; and hundreds of thousands of individuals were subjected to this cruel and humiliating death. Mass executions, in which hundreds and thousands died, appear in literature. One such mass execution was the well-known crucifixion of six thousand followers of Spartacus as part of a victory celebration along the Appian Way in 71 BC. While many people believe that crucifixion was reserved for criminals only, history clearly shows that criminals were not the only ones subjected to this ultimate torture. Alexander the Great had two thousand survivors from the siege of Tyre crucified on the shores of the Mediterranean. In addition, during the time of Caligula (AD 37-41), Jews were tortured and crucified in the amphitheater to entertain the inhabitants of Alexandria.

How an individual expired on a cross has been debated over the years. Many researchers believe that death occurred as the result of a ruptured heart due to the passage in John describing the water and blood flowing out of the wound. John wrote, “**Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high [day]), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when**

they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:31-34). Other scholars have regarded asphyxiation or suffocation as the cause of death.

More recent research has shown the issue to be more complex, depending upon the manner in which the victim was fastened to a cross. If a person was suspended from a cross with their arms outstretched, in the traditional manner depicted in Christian art, they experienced little problem breathing. Therefore, the theory that death on the cross is the result of suffocation is probably not correct if the arms were outstretched. If, however, the victims were tied with their hands extended over their heads and left hanging and their legs nailed, death could occur within an hour because they could not use their arms to elevate the body to exhale. For exhaling to occur in a normal manner, two sets of muscles are needed: the diaphragm and the intercostal muscles between the ribs. With the victims being suspended by their arms directly over their heads, these sets of muscles cannot function properly, so the victims cannot exhale and suffocate. As a deterrent to undesired behavior, Rome would crucify many of its victims where the criminal event took place or, else, along the city’s busiest highways. One Roman writer wrote, “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen where most people can see and be moved by this fear.” Giving the victim a proper burial following death on a cross, during the Roman period, was rare and, in most cases, simply not permitted in order to continue the humiliation. This is what we read in John 19:38: **“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came, and took away His body.”** The victims, in many cases, were simply thrown on the garbage dump of the city or left on the cross as food for wild beasts and birds of prey. It was also common, in those days, for a procession through the streets of Jerusalem where the criminal, along with a statement of his crime, could be publicly displayed. Mark wrote, **“After they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him. They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross” (Mark 15:20-21).**

Many illustrations picture Jesus carrying the full cross, but the full weight would have prohibited this. Evidence shows that He carried what

the Romans called the *patibulum*, which is the crossbeam, and which alone would have weighed up to 150 pounds. This was done to further humiliate the criminal and as a means of further controlling the criminal. Our Lord was carrying the crossbeam on His already raw and bloodied back and shoulders. As He carried the beam, the damaged muscles in His back and shoulders were further damaged under the weight of the crossbeam. Around our Lord's neck hung what was known as the *titulus* on which was inscribed the charges He was being executed for.

Historians also agree that to add further humiliation to the process, the victim was stripped completely naked. This added to the suffering and humiliation of the person being crucified. Once stripped, the victim would be thrown on his back upon the *patibulum*, the crossbeam; and there a Roman soldier would nail the arms in place. The long square-headed spikes used for this purpose would inevitably pass through or close enough to the median nerve of the hands or, in most cases, the wrists so that the nerve was severely damaged. Eventually, this would cause the victim to sense a burning pain from hand to shoulder that is indescribable. This would last throughout the entire time the person hung on a cross and grew worse with each passing minute. Once the victim was nailed to the crossbeam, the victim and crossbeam were raised up and dropped onto the other half of the cross, which had a center notch cut in it, waiting for the victim. The crossbeam would drop into place with such force that the victim's shoulders would often be dislocated, adding to the suffering and increasing the torture. With the victim and crossbeam in place, the Roman soldier, who had nailed the victim, would then gauge where to nail the feet. The higher on the foothold, the longer the person could last. When the soldier determined the proper height, a large spike would be driven through both feet into the foothold. As with the hands, this spike would cause damage to the major nerve, coming down the legs into the feet, with the same results as in the hands: an intense burning pain that grew minute by minute. Eventually, the person's whole world was one of burning pain.

Once the person was fastened to a cross, a soldier would climb a small ladder and nail above the criminal the charges. The person was now crucified. As the person on the cross slowly sagged down with more weight on the nails in the wrist, excruciating, fiery pain would shoot along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain, as the nails in the wrist continually put pressure on the median nerves. As he pushed

himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he had to place his full weight on the nail through his feet. Again, there was the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the bones of the feet. At this point, another phenomenon would occur. As the arms fatigued, great waves of cramps would sweep over the muscles, knotting them in a deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps came the inability to push upward. Hanging by the arms, the muscles in the chest would be paralyzed, and the intercostal muscles would be unable to act. Air could be drawn into the lungs but could not be exhaled properly. Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, partial suffocation, burning pain as tissue was torn from His lacerated back as He moved up and down against the rough timber, and then another agony began. A deep crushing pain occurred deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly filled with serum and began to compress the heart.

Perhaps this will give you a better idea of what is being described in Psalm 22:14, **“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”** According to some historians, the soldiers were not permitted to leave the site until death was certain. At some point, the soldiers would finally put an end to the pain by breaking the legs of each victim while still alive. This would speed up the process of death. The victims could no longer rise up for a breath and would soon suffocate. This is what the Roman soldiers did to the men hanging on either side of Jesus, but coming to Jesus, they found Him already dead. John writes, **“The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs” (John 19:32-33).** To verify His death, a soldier pierced our Lord’s side using a spear. The spear’s thrust went diagonally, from right to left, through the lower lobe of the right lung and into the heart itself. Such a wound would be immediately fatal, and this was done in case a victim was faking death. The soldier, who pierced the side of Jesus, saw that the blood and water had separated. He had already died.

Our Lord also suffered greatly before He came to the Cross. John writes, **“Pilate then took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they began to come up to Him, and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and to give Him slaps in the face” (John**

19:1-3). Scourging was a common practice at the time of Jesus and still is in some parts of the world today. The Jews practiced scourging. Jewish scourging was considered an intermediate death and was inflicted with a long, flexible rod. The victim was given thirteen stripes on the left shoulder, thirteen stripes on the right shoulder, and thirteen stripes across the thighs. Painful as the Jewish scourging was, the Romans developed their own method of scourging to inflict even greater pain and punishment. The Roman scourging was much more severe and was known as halfway death. It was administered by an experienced hand. This trained man used a whip called a flagellum, which had a stubby wooden handle to which was attached a bundle of leather whips. At the tip of the whips, bits of bone, chain, or lead weights shaped like small dumbbells were fastened.

The professional administrator of the scourging, known as a lictor, then picked up his flagellum and carefully took his stance, adjusting it so as to bring the most force to bear on each stroke of the whip. As the whip hit, the bits of bone or chain would dig in deeply into the flesh and even into the muscle. As the whip was pulled back, yanked back actually, pieces of flesh were torn loose. This caused even more damage and pain. The entire process usually took less than four minutes; but the victim was effectively, and severely, beaten about the back, shoulders, and sides of the chest until he was raw and bleeding profusely from thousands of small gashes. Invariably, the victim of scourging slipped into shock. So a review of ancient crucifixion is more than the study of history or archaeology. This study should elicit tremendous gratitude from anyone who catches even a glimpse of what the Lord has done for them. No words could really portray the physical suffering and agony that took place.

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains uplifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Corinthians 3:14-16)

In this Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul tells us that for the Jews, the message of the Old Testament, which they so earnestly read, was veiled or hidden from them. This veil still exists for the Jews when the Torah is read, and it is in vain that the Prophets are read. The deep meaning of the Psalms cannot be comprehended. The book of Isaiah

relinquishes none of its treasures. David speaks a language that they cannot understand. This veil upon the hearts and minds of the Jews will not be removed until they turn to Christ and see that He is their crucified Savior, Messiah, and King.

The sad thing is that today, in the same way, there exists a veil that blinds the minds of Christians so that they may not see fully. They are not able to look deep into the Word of God and see all that is there. The only difference is that, in their case, it is in both the Old and the New Testaments! The entire Bible is, in large measure, veiled to these Christians. This veil has to do with the glory of the Cross of Christ throughout the Scriptures. The main prophecies in the Old Testament about Calvary are unheeded. In fact, God has nothing more wonderful to reveal to man than the Cross. Heaven knows of nothing as glorious as the Cross. For example, in the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, we witness the new song of millions of the redeemed around the throne.

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book, and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” (Revelation 5:9-13)

Think of it: this very universe is a poor insignificant thing when compared to the Cross of Christ. The combined wisdom of the entire angelic creation can never conceive anything that could begin to match its glory. The Cross will stand forever and ever as God’s masterpiece. One writer has said, “Calvary marked the greatest hour in the entire

meritorious history of Deity.” The greatest of the apostles declared that he would not glory in anything except the Cross of Christ. Paul wrote, **“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).**

At the Cross, we have the meritorious attributes of God coming to their most majestic expression. It was at the Cross that God found a way to do what, even according to the Word of God, sounded impossible: God justifying the ungodly and yet remaining just. Paul points to Christ as the One **“whom God displayed publicly as propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26).** At the Cross, we have God declaring the wicked righteous, which is the thought of Romans 5, without a shadow of blame or unrighteousness falling upon His righteous character. At the Cross, the sinner who believes on His Son God frees. Even though such person may be the worst of sinners, and yet there is not a tint of a blemish upon His holy throne or His infinitely sacred and eternal justice. At the Cross, there is a forgiveness that satisfies all the demands of the Law, and has power to transform the wicked into a saint.

So it is when the Christian discovers the glory of the Cross that he first comes to see the Bible in its truest light. It is then that he gets the divine focus and realizes that, throughout the pages of the Scriptures, the Lord was forever aiming at His supreme goal. It is then that the doctrines of the Bible yield their deepest and most costly treasures. Luke narrates for us at the conclusion of his gospel:

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.” But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy

and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:36-48)

Once he understands the Cross, the student of the Bible is no longer in the entryway of revelation as were the apostles until the Lord Jesus Christ opened their understanding so that they might see what was written of Him in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets and realize why He must suffer (showing them the marks of His Cross) and enter into His glory. Now the Christian is in a position to see the central message of the Word of God for a sin-stricken humanity.

The purpose of this book is to unveil the Cross of Christ as it appears all through the pages of God’s Word from Genesis to Revelation.

CHAPTER ONE

The Cross Appears (Genesis 3:15)

John, the apostle, tells us in the book of Revelation that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). In eternity past, the Cross was already a fact in the mind of God. Peter said to the Jews, **“This Man [Jesus Christ], delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Acts 2:23)**. This is why Paul wrote, **“He [God the Father] chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4)**. In First Peter, we read, **“Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:18-20)**.

In Genesis 3:15, the Cross first appeared in the pages of Scripture. Yet the Cross was already a fact in the mind of God back in eternity past though it had not yet occurred in time. Adam and the woman had fallen into sin. All of creation suffered as a result of man’s disobedience, turning away as he did from God to self. You need not look beyond the fact that the earth is one immense cemetery where millions lay dead, their corpses returning to the dust from which they were taken, for proof of the veracity of the biblical account. **“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7)**. Adam and the woman ate from the forbidden fruit

and, therefore, died just as the Lord had warned they would. So could it be that God's original plan in creating man failed? Was Satan to be permitted to lord over man, having deceived him and having brought him under his bondage? Was there no hope of forgiveness and liberation for Adam's race? Would God forever be dishonored, His fatherhood denied, and His purposes unfulfilled? Was it in God's power to undo what the wicked one, under whose power the whole world lies, had done (1 John 5:19)? Was God to be frustrated eternally because man, made in His image and for the satisfaction of His heart, had sinned? These are all questions that need to be answered. To answer these questions, let's begin in Genesis chapter 3, starting in verse 6:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." And the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:6-15).

Of course, man's fall did not take God by surprise; God was not caught napping. Yes, it's true that God made man in His own image with freedom and the power of choice. However, for God with whom a thousand years are but as a day (2 Peter 3:8), the immediate result was rebellion and sin; but the final outcome of it all would be restoration. Victory would be achieved; the Lord God would turn the curse into a blessing (Deuteronomy 23:5). What Satan meant for evil, God would turn into good (Genesis 50:20). Man would be reconciled and liberated; Satan's work would be destroyed, and man would be set free. **“The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).** God did this by means of the Cross.

Man could not be restored by a divine command; that was sufficient for the first creation, but that had been ruined. No divine command could restore it. Man had chosen to follow the ways of Satan, using his own free will against the will of God, to become independent of God. This affiliation had to be respected; God cannot be any other way in any of His dealings. He could not take away man's freedom of choice. Without freedom of choice, man would not be man, nor would he ever be able to satisfy the desires of God's heart. Man must be left free, and he must be delivered from the one who has deceived him, Satan. **“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Revelation 12:9).** Satan's work must be undone, but how? The mere exercise of divine authority and power could not fulfill the demands of the case. Man must learn to love God and hate Satan, but how can this be achieved? Well, man must learn to hate *self*, which is Satan's agent within man, as the governing principle of his life. This is why there are certain passages concerning the Cross that tell man to lose his life:

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. (Matthew 10:38-39)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose

it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26).

Man must learn to love the only One who has the right to govern all things—but how? Only a Man could change this, and He had to be like the first Adam, a federal head of the race. He must be another Adam, One who would begin anew. After Him would come those made out of His likeness, bearing His life and His stamp. He could undo the first Adam’s rebellion and sin by refusing Satan’s claims upon man in the full and free exercise of His own free will and, therefore, shatter the alliance. He would choose obedience at all costs and direct the human race as its Head into a mighty race of devotion and faith and loyalty to God. And Genesis 3:15 tells the story: **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”** It is the first promise in all the Scriptures of the coming of the Redeemer. The Seed of the woman (only Christ our Lord answers to that) would bruise the serpent’s head. The Seed of the woman would bring about enmity on the part of man in relation to the prince of darkness—that old serpent, the devil. This was achieved through the Cross. As we learn in Hebrews 2:14, it was through death that the Son of God brought about the destruction of Satan’s work. By means of the Cross.

When He [Christ] had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. (Colossians 2:15)

CHAPTER TWO

The Foreshadowing of the Cross in Abel’s Lamb (Genesis 4)

In Genesis 3:15, we have the first promise that the Redeemer will come. In the very next chapter, we have our first appearance of the lamb. Abel’s lamb, sacrificed unto the Lord, spoke of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.” And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:1-4)

The question that has often been asked regarding this passage is why was it that Abel’s offering was pleasing unto the Lord while Cain’s was not? What was the reason? Hebrews 11:4 is the New Testament account of that sacrifice. **“By faith (by means of doctrine), Abel offered to God**

a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4). Abel’s offering pointed to the Cross while Cain’s offering pointed to man’s works.

As a result, there emerges, before us, the wicked manifestation of mankind’s first murder and that of one man killing his own brother.

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. (Genesis 4:6-8)

Adam and Eve had turned away from the Lord for their own preference, partaking of the forbidden fruit and rejecting God’s will for their own life; and now, not long after, crime breaks out within the family. Why? And what has this to do with the Cross? Once self is set up as a god and becomes the “almighty” force ruling the heart, evil battles of this kind become the order of the day. Self is now ruling rather than God. That’s why the Lord said, **“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).** When self rules, evil results; and while that evil may not turn into physical murder like this passage portrays, remember that we are told, **“Everyone who hates his fellow-believer is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding [alive] in him” (1 John 3:15).**

Why was Abel’s offering, a lamb slain, accepted while Cain’s offering, the fruit of his own labor as a tiller of the ground, rejected? Was it the nature of the offerings—one being the blood of a lamb, the other the fruit of the ground—which determined God’s approval on the one hand and His disapproval on the other? Was the divine reaction, in the first instance, motivated by the difference between the two men: one being proud and given to anger, the other being meek and humble? That difference did exist, but the difference really has to do with the nature of the offerings. Where there is true faith in God’s Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not only the single ground of acceptance for the sinner, but also the only source of his transformation. Where “the Lamb of God who takes

away the sin of the world” is rejected (man preferring to trust in his own merits), pride is the inevitable result. So the question why Abel’s offering was accepted and Cain’s was not takes us to the heart of our series, and it can only be answered in the light of the Cross. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. The entire Old Testament substantiates that fact. Of course, when we come to the New Testament, we hear the very voice of the Lord saying, **“For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).**

So the principle behind our passage, in Genesis 4, is the question of the ground of man’s acceptance with God. Is it of works, or is it a gift of God? Is it grace, or is it law? Is it what man may be able to do to justify himself before God, or is it what another has already done for him? Is it the Cross of Christ, which provides for my great need as a sinner; or must I do the best I can—bringing, as Cain did, the fruits of my labor—and justifying myself? Thank God, there is a glorious answer to all this; it is the blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. **“And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24).**

So we see that at the very beginning of history, there are glimmers of God’s masterpiece, signs pointing to Calvary’s Cross. We are grateful for these shadows and figures of Old Testament times, all of which point to the real Day of the Atonement in the putting away of sins through the blood of Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

The Flood Is a Type of the Cross (Genesis 6-8)

To speak of the Cross of Christ in the Old Testament, and not consider the account of the Flood and Noah's ark, would be a mistake.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (Genesis 6:5-6)

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:11-13)

Noah is called to build an ark in order that he might escape with his family from the Flood that the Lord had decreed to cover the earth and to wipe out all flesh. Noah does, indeed, build his ark; but the people mock him and scoff at him, saying that he is crazy. Noah then preached the

Gospel and warned them for 120 years, which represented the patience of God. **“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).**

In Genesis chapter 7, the hour of judgment strikes, and God’s Word comes to pass.

Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days; and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. And the water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the surface of the water. And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; (Genesis 7:17-21)

Notice that the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth. This actually points to the greater flood of judgment consummated by the Son of God. He had not come to judge the world but to save it; however, in doing so, He had to be judged. **“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him” (John 3:17).** Just as the world could be saved by being on the ark, the world can now be saved by being “in Him.” It was as He turned His face toward the Cross and entered fully into the way that led to Calvary that the Savior said,

Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. (John 12:31-33)

Just as the ark was lifted above the earth, the Cross had to be lifted from the earth. There are two great facts revealed here; both of which are overwhelmingly typified by the Flood, which—in the days of Noah—took all flesh to death. When we look upon the Cross and understand its

meaning—the meaning for all mankind according to God’s Word—these facts come before us. First of all, He, who was made sin on our behalf, destroyed the power of sin by taking it all down into death. Sin was swallowed up with death on the Cross. The floods of divine judgment swept the immeasurable burden of the world’s sin into the awful death suffered by the God-Man on the Accursed Tree. The Flood, which took all flesh to a watery grave in the days of Noah, is also a type of the Cross of Christ in another sense, which is brought out in 2 Corinthians 5:14, saying, **“Having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.”** It is all brought out in Paul’s epistles; it is the backbone of his theology regarding the Christian life. **“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).** Paul also wrote, **“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him” (Romans 6:6).** The curtain went down on history when Christ our Lord, the Last Adam and the federal head of the race (the New Creation), died. It was the end of the old creation.

So the Flood of Noah’s day is a type of God’s judgment. In fact, look at how Peter puts it:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. (1 Peter 3:18-20)

The Greek word for ark is *kibotou*, which refers to a treasure chest or a wooden ship constructed of gopher or Cyprus wood. Remember that at the time of the ark, there had never been a ship in the history of the human race. It was 450 feet long, the length of one-and-a-half football fields; it was seventy-five feet wide and forty-five feet high. It was made of one material, gopher wood, representing the humanity of Christ. Christ became a true human to propitiate or satisfy the demands of God the Father so that mankind could be rightly related to the justice of God. The analogy is that Jesus Christ is the ark; He is the treasure chest. He is described as the one in whom all the treasures of God exist. **“In Whom**

[Jesus Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). Those who were not on the ark represent those who do not believe in Jesus Christ and are destroyed. The bulkheads of the ark were secured with pitch or asphalt analogous to the work of Christ on the Cross, keeping out the waters of divine judgment. Only one set of plans were used in the building of the ark; there was no need for trial and error. God’s design was perfect; it was completely seaworthy.

The principle is that only the plan of God has stability. There was only one door in the ark, analogous to the fact that there is only one way to adjust to the justice of God; and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ who said, **“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved” (John 10:9).** There was also only one window, analogous to the fact that there is only one objective after salvation, to reach spiritual maturity, because there is only one perspective. And that is divine viewpoint, Bible doctrine. There were three floors to the ark, which, for us, represents the concept of progress after salvation: spiritual self-esteem, spiritual autonomy, and then spiritual maturity. There is only one place of security in time of disaster, and that is inside the ark. The ark represents to us the principle of eternal security, being in union with Christ because of His work on the Cross. It’s interesting to note that all the believers inside the ark were not mature believers, but they were all blessed by association. There was no judgment to those in the ark because **“there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).**

Who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:20-21)

It is important to understand that this is not a reference to water baptism or baptismal regeneration because those who went under the water were destroyed! The water that drowned the unbelieving world was also used to deliver the eight souls who were believers and true humanity. Water was an instrument of destruction for unbelievers, but it was physical deliverance for believers! In the Church age, every believer

is in union with Christ, and we are preserved forever by our relationship with Him. The baptism that now saves us is the baptism of the Spirit not water baptism: **“There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5)**. At the moment of our salvation, the baptism of the Spirit made us members of the royal family of God. Each member of Noah’s family in the ark is analogous to the believer who is union with the person of Jesus Christ. That union delivers members of the royal family of God from any form of divine judgment! To make sure that you don’t think that this is water baptism, look at the phrase **“not the removal of dirt from the flesh (not water), but an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** Those eight souls were a copy of what happens to us in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were delivered from the catastrophe of the Flood by being inside the ark just as we are delivered from the lake of fire by being in union with Christ—due to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Just as they were safe in the ark, so we are safe in union with Christ. Notice that last phrase, **“But an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** Your conscience was delivered at the moment you believed in Jesus Christ as Savior, when God the Holy Spirit entered you into union with the person of Jesus Christ, making you a member of the royal family of God and a new spiritual species. The appeal to God for a good conscience begins with becoming a new spiritual species, a member of the royal family of God, and understanding the implications of resurrection.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mount Moriah Points to Calvary (Genesis 22)

In Genesis chapter 12, we have the call of Abraham.

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

Here is where the story of the chosen people, the Jews from whom the Messiah would come, really begins. The promise of the Messiah who was to come is narrowed down from “the seed of a woman” in Genesis 3 to a particular race, the Jews. In Him, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. All the families of the earth were blessed in Abraham because from his offspring the Redeemer of the world would come. In fact, it was a daughter of Abraham, the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to our Lord; and that would mean salvation for all of the world. You might recall how Abraham’s faith was truly tested because Sarah could not get pregnant and give him a son as an heir. So how could the promise of the Messiah springing from his seed be fulfilled if there were no heir? Remember

that the plan of Sarah—resulting in Ishmael, the child of Hagar, her slave—only complicated the situation. Sarah’s Egyptian slave getting pregnant by Abraham only aggravated matters. Sarah had grown old, and both she and Abraham were beyond the proper time of conception. That’s why we read, **“By faith [by means of doctrine resident in the soul] even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised” (Hebrews 11:11)**. So we are told that Abraham believed against hope and that he staggered not at the promises of God.

In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. (Romans 4:18-21)

So Abraham was indeed given a son, and the child grew to boyhood. Then the dark hour struck.

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

The land of Moriah is an interesting place; it is the same place that would be later called Zion, and the mountain of Moriah is the hill upon which Solomon built the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). The word *Moriah* actually means chosen by the Lord. In fact, one of the hills in Moriah is later called Golgotha, the place of the skulls. Note what great event took place there. **“And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33)**.

Back in Genesis 22:1-2, the Hebrew noun for “burnt offering” is *olah*, which refers to an offering in which the smoke goes upward. As the smoke goes up, it provides a sweet smell to God. The burnt offering represents the concept of propitiation and how it takes a sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It represents the impeccability (sinlessness) of the humanity of Christ, being offered up to God the Father for all of our sins. As sins were all poured out upon our Lord, the justice of God the Father judged our sins being borne by Christ, and justice was satisfied. For justice to be satisfied, justice has to have something to judge, and that’s what took place on the Cross!

There have always been those who would doubt these words of Scripture. How could God make such a demand of Abraham or any man? Wouldn’t it be murder? But again, the event would be a reflection of what God would do on that exact mountain hundreds of years later when He would sacrifice His own Son. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ would even say that Abraham had seen His day. **“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56)**. Notice the obedience of Abraham; he doesn’t waste a moment, and he never questions a word.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you.” (Genesis 22:4-5)

Isaac is a young man, probably twenty-five or so, and he recognizes the authority of doctrine. Isaac is willing to offer himself on the altar because his relationship with his father has taught him to be as obedient to the will of God as his father is. In this way, Isaac becomes a beautiful picture of the uniquely born Son of God, offering Himself for our sins on the Cross. With this in mind, note that the sacrifice on the mountain was to take place between the father and the son only! This is a reference to the fact that when God judged our sins in His Son, it was a private matter between Him and the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, the two slaves

represented the two thieves on the cross who were not permitted to see the transaction that took place between God the Father and our Lord on the Cross. Complete darkness descended in the land during those three hours (see Luke 23:44-45). Just as Abraham's two slaves did not observe the sacrifice, the two thieves on the cross did not see our Lord while He was being judged for the sins of the entire world.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. (Genesis 22:6)

Like our Lord Jesus Christ, Isaac was willing to do his father's will. Just as the father, Abraham, laid the wood on his son, so our Lord would carry the burden of our sins. The fire was on a special torch that would last until they arrived at the top of the mountain. So we have all the ingredients of judgment here:

- The **wood** represents humanity as in 1 Corinthians 3:12.
- The **fire** represents wrath and judgment as in Numbers 11:1.
- The **knife** represents the crucifixion of fleshly desires as in Proverbs 23:2.

Isaac took the wood because he represented the Lord, taking upon himself true humanity and being judged for our sins. The wood was going to be burnt just as the humanity of Christ was judged. Note that Abraham has the knife and the fire; since he is the father, he had the ingredients or the tools needed to execute the judgment of an innocent sacrifice. This pictures the fact that God the Father had the ingredients to execute judgment. God the Father had the perfect righteousness, the omniscience, the wisdom, and the sovereignty; and these are all the ingredients necessary for judging the innocent sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross. The Father had everything necessary to be the judge who would judge our sins as they were poured upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one final significant detail we need to note, and that is Isaac's surprise and subsequent remark, "**And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'**" (Genesis 22:7). How this must have pierced Abraham's

soul as he wondered what was about to happen. **“And Abraham said, ‘God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ So the two of them walked on together” (Genesis 22:8).** Little did Abraham realize, at the time, what a profound and wise answer this was. Notice the phrase **“God will provide for Himself.”** He doesn’t say “for me and you”; he says **“for Himself”!** As far as Abraham is concerned, the one who is really going to go on that sacred altar someday is the beloved Son of Elohim, the Lord Jesus Christ. The lamb was not only provided by God, but it was also for God. These words of Abraham have a double meaning. They tell us that God was the One who would provide the lamb, and they also make known the fact that the lamb was for Himself. In other words, God alone would supply that which would satisfy Himself. Nothing in or of man could ever meet the divine requirements. Nothing that man provides could ever satisfy God. If a sacrifice for sin was to be found, God Himself must supply it.

The lamb was not only provided by God, but it was also for God. That’s because, before blessing could ever flow forth to man, divine holiness and justice must be satisfied. It is true that Christ died for sinners, but He first died (and this is what we are in danger of ignoring) for God! This is what God the Holy Spirit expresses through apostle Paul in Romans chapter 3 where Paul writes:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26)

There are many things we are told about in the Bible that God does for His own sake. For example, let’s take the restoration of our soul. David said, **“He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3).** Notice that it is for His name’s sake that He restores our soul. Sometimes believers commit sins and think that they are not good enough or worthy enough to be forgiven and have

their souls restored back in fellowship with God. In reality, He restores us not because of something good in us but for His name's sake! This is why David wrote, **“For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (Psalm 25:11)**. God pardons and forgives us because, on the one hand, God is holy and can have nothing to do with sin; but on the other hand, He also cannot leave us or forsake us. Therefore, for His name's sake, He will pardon our iniquity! **“For the sake of Thy name, O Lord, revive me. In Thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble” (Psalm 143:11)**.

Because of who and what You are Lord, get me out of the mess I've placed myself in! Did you ever stop and wonder how you actually got out of that jam you placed yourself in? I sure have wondered that. He got us out, and He did it for His sake! There is a fantastic commentary on this principle in the book of Isaiah. **“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25)**. Think about it. God wipes away your sins and doesn't even remember them, and He does so for His own sake. **“For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off” (Isaiah 48:9)**. **“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 48:11)**. God acts for us, but it is for His own sake!

So we continue with our passage back in Genesis 22. **“Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood” (Genesis 22:9)**. Isaac's willingness to be bound is a beautiful picture of the Son of God on the cross, bearing our sins. It is a picture of what they did to our Lord: **“And they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor” (Matthew 27:2)**. And notice the last part of Genesis 22:9 where we read that Abraham **“laid him (Isaac) on the altar on top of the wood.”** When our Lord came into the world, they “laid Him” in a manger (Luke 2:7); and when He left this world, they laid Him in a tomb (Luke 23:53).

So the type continues throughout this passage:

And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:10)

Of course, this was a picture of the Cross and the fact that, in the fullness of time, God's only Son would be sacrificed on this very mountain.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided." (Genesis 22:11-14)

Throughout this entire passage, we have principle after principle of typology. Every person represents some aspect of the Cross as does nearly every detail. For example, the ram is now a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who is available for the sinner as his substitute (see Exodus 22:5; 29:22; Leviticus 8:21 and 9:2). Secondly, as Isaac was on the altar ready to die, all of us were on our way to eternal death, but the Savior takes our place and dies in our stead. Thirdly, horns in the Bible represent power, strength, and grandeur (see 2 Samuel 22:3; 1 Kings 22:11; Luke 1:69). The horns become a perfect illustration of our Lord who, with His great power, was fastened to the Cross for our sins. The One who was nailed to the Cross had the greatest power in the world. Upon the completion of the altar, Abraham now calls the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh, meaning "the Lord will provide." Later it would be called Mount Zion. The place, where Abraham offered Isaac, would be the place where Christ was crucified and where He will return; it is the location of the Temple as well. Thus it is called God's holy mountain. Whenever there is a need for some special provision in our life, the Lord will provide!

This event, where Abraham offered Isaac, was a picture of the Cross. In fact, in the book of Hebrews, we read, **"By faith [by means of doctrine] Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son"** (Hebrews

11:17). Actually, it says his uniquely born son, and that describes Isaac because he was uniquely born! He was born from two people who were sexually dead! His father was one hundred years old, and his mother was beyond menopause at age ninety. In this sense, Abraham is a type of God the Father who was willing to sacrifice his uniquely born son, Isaac (who is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ). Abraham was willing to do it to please God the Father, and this too foreshadows the attitude of the Father at the Cross. **“But the Lord [God the Father] was pleased to crush Him [Jesus Christ], putting Him to grief, if He would render Himself as a guilt offering” (Isaiah 53:10).** While all of this is a picture of the Cross, one thing in the picture did not occur in the reality because, when the Son of God was offered up on the altar of the Cross, no one said stop. **“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).** He was bruised for our iniquities; He could not be spared.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lamb without Blemish (Exodus 12)

When Peter was at the gate of the temple that is called Beautiful, he invited the lame man to rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This caused a great disturbance among the enemies of Christ. Peter then turned to them and said that they had killed the Prince of Life whom God had raised from the dead. Peter also said, **“But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus” (Acts 3:18).**

In none of the prophecies of the Old Testament is this fact more evident than in chapter 12 of the book of Exodus. The prophecy appears here in symbolic form, but this fact makes it all the more real. The Jews, the chosen people of God, were suffering continual hardships in Egypt under Pharaoh who had resolved to break their growing power by oppression and tyranny. However, God had come to their defense and provided in Moses a leader and liberator. The conflict with Pharaoh, in which the Lord Jesus Christ showed His power by striking Egypt with plagues when Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, came to a climax with the death of all the firstborn throughout Egypt, including the heir to the throne in the royal palace. It was then that the Passover feast was first instituted as a memorial to be held throughout all succeeding generations, a sign of Israel’s liberation from Egyptian bondage. Throughout the Gospel, we read that our Lord continually went to Jerusalem to keep the Passover feast. The last time, it was to be Himself, the sacrificial Lamb, slain—not to celebrate Israel’s freedom from the tyranny of Egypt—but to liberate all

mankind from the bondage of sin. That's why we read, in 1 Corinthians, **"For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed."** How appropriate the symbolism of the Passover was when it was first held on the evening of Israel's liberation. It all spoke of emancipation, deliverance, freedom, and liberation. The central figure was the lamb, which was to be without blemish, a one-year-old male. The orders of the Lord Jesus Christ to Moses were that the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel should kill it in the evening and should take the blood and put it upon the two side posts and on the upper doorposts of the houses where the lamb would be eaten.

"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.'" (Exodus 12:3-6)

The lamb was to be taken from among the fold, signifying that Christ would be taken from among men and from among His brethren. Twilight for the Jews begins around 3:00 in the afternoon, which made it a very interesting time for the lamb to die. Also notice, from verses 3 and 6, that the lamb was to be set apart four days before it was to be killed. Christ was crucified on the Passover, and He entered into Jerusalem four days earlier, the very day that the paschal lamb was set apart. **"Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (Exodus 12:7).** The blood was to be sprinkled upon the doorposts, denoting the open profession we are to make of our faith in Christ, and our obedience to Him, as those who are not ashamed of our dependence upon Him. It was also to be sprinkled upon the lintel and the side posts but not upon the threshold, which cautions us to beware of trampling underfoot the blood of the covenant. **"How much**

severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29).

“And they shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs” (Exodus 12:8). The paschal lamb was killed, not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon; and we must, by faith, feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ through the intake of His Word. We must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from Him just as we receive physical strength from our food. We are to have delight and satisfaction in him as we have in eating and drinking when we are hungry or thirsty.

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:54-56)

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. (Exodus 12:9)

In Exodus 12:6-9, we have the lamb that was to be slain and roasted with fire, representing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus even unto death, that is, the death on the Cross. The wrath of God is like fire, and Christ was made a curse for us.

For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:12-13)

This is another passage pointing to the Cross as the central figure of Israel’s emancipation, deliverance, freedom, and liberation. In fact, our

Lord would later point out that the lamb without blemish in the Jewish feast was a symbol of His own sacrifice. He is the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. Jewish bondage in Egypt was a shadow of the universal bondage of man in sin. Pharaoh's oppressive tyranny was a representation of the awful bondage that man is in to the prince of darkness of this world, Satan. The night before our Lord was to become the unblemished Lamb who would set man free from bondage and sin, He said, **"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15)**. The Passover was always to be a type that pointed forward to the Cross. This is brought out in one more important detail that points to the Cross, and it is found in verse 46. **"It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it" (Exodus 12:46)**. The Passover lamb was not to have a single bone broken, which was a picture of what was written in the Gospel of John. **"But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (John 19:33)**. **"For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken'" (John 19:36)**.

CHAPTER SIX

The Red Sea Is a Type of the Cross (Exodus 14)

The Jews had hardly left Egypt when Pharaoh, angered by the fact that his slaves had escaped, decided to make a final effort to bring them back under his power. We read that Pharaoh sent all the chariots of Egypt and their captains in hot pursuit of the Israelites who cried unto the Lord.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. And as Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of

Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.’” But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” (Exodus 14:5-14)

The Jews’ position was indeed fearful and troubling. The Red Sea was before them, forbidding any advance. Egypt’s army was behind them in mad pursuit. On both sides stood high mountains and desert lands; from the human viewpoint, there was no means of escape. Exodus 14:12 above records the murmuring of the children of Israel. However, as has been the case over and over again in the history of God’s people, God intervened.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came about at the morning watch, that the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. And He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting for them against the Egyptians.” Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and

their horsemen.” So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. (Exodus 14:21-30)

How does this dramatic story of the Lord parting the Red Sea reflect the Cross? Look at Exodus 15:

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and said, “I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will extol Him.” (Exodus 15:1-2)

What interests us most, at this point, is the fact that this—the song of Moses and the children of Israel—is contrasted in the book of Revelation with the song of the lamb, which is called a new song. It is the song of the redeemed (ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands) whose theme is not deliverance from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage through the leadership of Moses, but rather, it is redemption from the bondage of sin under the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou was slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’” (Revelation 5:9).** **“Singing with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing’” (Revelation 5:12).** The miraculous events at the Red Sea are great type of the Cross of Christ. The Jews crossed the Red Sea while judgment struck Pharaoh, and the Egyptians

were swallowed by those same Red Sea waters. There is good reason for taking this to be typical of the Cross. In fact, two New Testament passages serve to establish the link.

“And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations.’” (Revelation 15:2-4)

Paul speaks of the things that happened to Israel as shadows and as figures of something far greater yet to come—that is, Christ and His Church. **“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11)**. For the Jews, God’s act of dividing the Red Sea signified deliverance from fearful bondage. In the Scriptures, Egypt stands for the wickedness of this world whose god is the evil one and who, like Pharaoh, fights persistently to keep sinful men in bondage. The Jews came forth, in freedom, to form the nation of Israel—God’s own people. So the Jews represented those who would be redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. These redeemed people would come out of bondage infinitely more tragic and greater than bondage to Pharaoh: the bondage to the slavery of sin. Their deliverance was accomplished by means of the Cross of Jesus Christ. It was through the Cross that the Lion of the tribe of Judah bruised the head of the serpent and thus shattered Satan’s authority over man.

At the Red Sea, not only was there a glorious liberation, but there was also a judgment. Pharaoh and his horsemen, the pride of Egypt, were overthrown. The Lord said, **“For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever” (Exodus 14:13)**. He continued, in Exodus 14:17, **“I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.”** There was a far greater judgment at the Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ said as much, **“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men**

to Myself” (John 12:31-32). The Cross of Christ not only speaks of redemption, but it also points to the defeat of the prince of this world. **“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).**

So the Cross of Christ will be the eternal basis for perfect happiness for those who accept Christ as Savior and cross over the waters of deliverance. The Lord opened the way of deliverance for all who would believe so that they would not have to be consumed by the world as represented by the Egyptians. However, for those who prefer to follow the ways of the Egyptians or the ways of the world, there is judgment and eternal loss for them. The Cross of Christ not only spells redemption for all who, by faith, receive Christ as Savior; but it also pronounces an awful doom for those who reject Him as their Savior. **“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).**

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Bitter Waters of Marah Sweetened by the Tree (Exodus 15)

We have seen the children of Israel being very emotional in their appreciation toward the Lord, singing the song of Moses unto the Lord for His deliverance from the Egyptians. However, with no doctrine, they fail the next water test. At the Red Sea, they had too much water; we will next see that, at Marah, they had the wrong kind of water.

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” (Exodus 15:22-24)

In this passage, Moses brought the children of Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the desert of Shur where, for three days, they found no water. Finally, they came upon water only to find that they could not drink of it because it was bitter. So they named the place *Marah*, which means bitter water, because it was a bitter disappointment for a people whose lips were dry with thirst and who were fainting in the desert. Now, as Moses cried unto the Lord, a tree was shown to him, which he cast into the waters; and the waters were made sweet. **“Then he cried out**

to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them” (Exodus 15:25). So the children of Israel could now drink to their hearts’ content, and they were refreshed. They went forward rejoicing because of this miracle, for a time that is.

What happens after you have had a great emotional experience, and a great deliverance, and you’ve expressed your emotions completely but without any doctrinal reference, general appreciation, or capacity? Well, you become bitter very easily, and so the waters of bitterness came into the picture in this passage. This is a reminder that if your life is governed by emotion, you will fail when the Lord brings in the different tests for the purpose of spiritual advancement. One of the reasons why you will fail is bitterness! They had plenty of water but the wrong kind of it, so they could not drink the water of Marah. They could not lift the shield of faith even though they had just finished singing about the Lord working wonders. Notice what they had just sung in Exodus 15:11, **“Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?”** Notice two words that stand out: *working wonders*. Furthermore, in Exodus 15:13, they continued singing, **“In Your lovingkindness (grace) You have led the people whom You have redeemed.”** They were saved people who had already believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had eternal life.

Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them, “Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.” Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. (Exodus 15:20-22)

The wilderness experience will show how weak God’s people really are, and they will fail under pressure. However, there is a great purpose in the Lord leading us to a wilderness experience: to magnify the power and the mercy of the One who brought us to the place of testing. In times of testing and trial, the Lord reveals what He is for us as He bears with our

failures and mistakes. The wilderness not only shows us who we really are, but it also manifests the ways of God.

“When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah” (Exodus 15:23). Now think of it. They walked three days in the hot and sandy desert without finding any water. Then they find water, but it is bitter. They thought that they found what they were looking for; and then, all of a sudden, that which they found became a source of bitterness to them. So they once again express their rebellion. **“So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’” (Exodus 15:24).** The Hebrew word for grumbled is *luwn*, which means to murmur, to complain, to be malcontent, or to express dissatisfaction. Notice that they speak as if Moses is the one responsible for their situation. Many believers look for someone to blame when the Lord leads them to a place like Marah. In other words, bitter people often look for a scapegoat. Now what did Moses do? Remember that Moses is a man of doctrine. One thing about a true man or woman of doctrine is that their spiritual strength is totally from the Lord not from people. People of doctrine will not allow other people to let them down. Moses will rely on the Lord. He does not use his genius; rather he relies on the Lord. The more you recognize the power of doctrine, the more you recognize your own helplessness.

“Then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them” (Exodus 15:25). The water is now drinkable. Yet there was no secret ingredient in the tree that made the water sweet. What was it that turned a bitter situation into a sweet one? It was Moses’s obedience to the Lord’s command. That’s why the Lord said, in the next verse, **“If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer” (Exodus 15:26).** Once again, God uses a miracle with these people. So it was at the waters of Marah, made sweet by the tree, that we are told the Lord promised the Israelites health and blessing if they would listen to His voice. Israel, of course, was not in a position to grasp the meaning of what had taken place. They only knew that the Lord had delivered them as they were dying of thirst. They did not realize that a marvelous sign

had been given to them, pointing to the “tree on a hill far away.” They did not know that their entire history, so full with meaning for the whole world and future generations, would find its deepest meaning at Calvary’s Cross, cast into the bitter waters of life for the healing of the world. Even the apostles did not know until the hour of the Resurrection when the Savior Himself opened their eyes to see what—in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets—was written concerning His suffering and the resulting glory of the forgiveness of sins of all nations.

How can anyone fail to see, in this experience at the bitter waters of Marah, the deep implications of the tree, which when cast into the water made it sweet? Some might say that this is reading into the event meanings that are not there. Our Lord said, **“You search the Scriptures, . . . it is these that bear witness of Me” (John 5:39)**. The waters of Marah point to the doctrine of redemption, which is God’s solution toward sin. Redemption is viewed from the standpoint of a ransom paid on the Cross for our salvation. Redemption views mankind as born into the slave market of sin through the imputation of Adam’s original sin at birth. Redemption is the saving work of Christ on the Cross by which He purchases our freedom or salvation. The price for this purchase is called the Blood of Christ (see Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). The waters of Marah refer to man being delivered from the bitterness of life. Think how very bitter the waters of life have become because of evil and sin. The world is a sickening and horrifying place without hope of eternal life. Paul said, **“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19)**. Science, technology, education, and medicine are all trying to do their best to heal the bitter waters of life, but death still comes, and evil and wickedness still prevail—it always has. The late Dr. A. T. Pierson wrote the following in a description of the antediluvian civilization:

First, there’s an advance in fullness and clearness of revelation; then a gradual spirit of declension, then conformity to the world, ending with amalgamation with the world; then a gigantic civilization, brilliant but godless; then parallel development of evil and good; then an apostasy and finally a catastrophe.

The antediluvian civilization was an advanced civilization, yet the Lord said, **“The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that**

every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Furthermore, we read, **“Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Genesis 6:11-12).** People don’t like to hear about this; they want everyone to have a positive attitude. They live in denial regarding the real status and condition of the kosmos, the world. The headline from any major newspaper will include murder, rape, crime, and violence. This world is a bitter place without Christ. What may appear to be peace and prosperity could very well be the beginning of heartache and disaster. Paul warned us of this, **“While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).** Improvements may be made, but it is only superficial reparation of the affliction of man, and it will never be more than that. However, when the tree of Calvary is cast into those bitter waters, there is a sweetening, a purifying, a healing, and a redeeming for time and for eternity. This not only satisfies the thirst of man, but also satisfied the justice of God, which can never be satisfied with anything less.

Bring your guilt and condemnation, no matter how shameful and evil it may be, to the Cross of Christ. Bring it to Golgotha’s awful tree and see what happens. It is here where even the most despicable person will be filled with happiness and joy—that bitterness of guilt and shame gone forever. Cast the tree into the bitter waters of this life and—if you are in bondage to any form of passion or lust—see if death does not give way to life, condemnation to forgiveness, helplessness and despair to assurance of eternal happiness and magnificent freedom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Stricken Rock of Horeb (Exodus 17)

In this passage, the children of Israel march forward from the wilderness according to the command of the Lord, and they pitch their tents in a place called Rephidim.

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. (Exodus 17:1)

Now we've seen it all! We've seen too much water at the Red Sea in Exodus 14:9. We have seen the wrong kind of water or the bitter waters of Marah in Exodus 15:23. Now we have the test of no water in this passage. The solution is always the same; no matter how we are tested, all of the solutions are found in Christ. That is certainly true here where, once again, the solution that emerges is the Cross of Jesus Christ. Every test is a glorious opportunity to trust the Lord in that hopeless situation and to further recognize the fact that we really are helpless. In this manner, our helplessness actually becomes a source of encouragement to us.

Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" (Exodus 17:2)

Notice that the people, the sons of Israel, are arguing with Moses and rejecting his authority. Notice the double standards of these emotional and legalistic believers. On one hand, they have rejected the authority of their leader; but on the other hand, they are demanding that he give them water. In other words, they now make a demand that is inconsistent with their rejection. If the Jews reject the authority of Moses, why do they ascribe to him the supernatural power of providing water for 2 million people and their children? You can see how irrational they are! If they thought that Moses could manufacture water, then they should have accepted his authority, but they didn't. They ascribe to Moses a power that he does not possess while rejecting the very authority that he does possess! Moses can't give them water; he's just as helpless as they are. The only difference is that Moses is a man of great spiritual strength. Now remember who led them there; it was the Lord. Here at Horeb, they will be reminded again about that greatest hour in the entire meritorious history of Deity, which was about to come upon the earth: the hour of the Cross. In fact, the Bible records the Cross as "the hour" as we read in the following verses:

Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. (Matthew 26:45)

And when the hour had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. (Luke 22:14)

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23)

The Jews are exactly where the Lord wants them to be. They are in the right place, and they are in the will of God. However, right now, they are simply malfunctioning. By the way, they don't ask for water; the original Hebrew text makes it clear that they demand it. So how is the Cross going to fit into all of this? Well, the Cross is the place where all arrogance, bitterness, cowardliness, and presumptuousness are forgiven. We will see the grace of God pointing to the Cross instead of their failures. The people had pressure from lack of water, but you must remember a very important principle: Moses doesn't have any water either. He doesn't have a fountain in his tent where he could drink and then come out and talk

to them. He doesn't have any water, but notice that he isn't complaining. Moses has the same pressure that they have; in fact, he has more. Not only have they rejected his authority, but now they are also thinking about murdering him. So what do we have here? We have fear, worry, anxiety, anger, hatred, violence, and murder; these are all emotional sins. What will be the solution? The Cross of Christ!

But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Exodus 17:3)

The people, once again, slandered Moses and complained. Inevitably, believers who cannot function under faith-rest become very suspicious. When they asked Moses why he had brought them up from Egypt, they had assumed that Moses had a hidden, sinister reason for bringing them into the desert. In other words, they are accusing Moses of a conspiracy. In their irrationality, which comes from their emotional sins and their hysteria, they assign to Moses their very own motivation and their flaws. They had started to conspire against him! They are arrogant, self-centered, and suspicious; and yet, as we will see, they are still loved by God.

So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." (Exodus 17:4)

Moses has evaluated and estimated the situation correctly. He sees that their anger has turned to hatred, and he sees hatred motivating violence. So what does he do? He uses the faith-rest drill; he talks to the Lord about it. He didn't panic like the people of Israel. Leaders cannot afford to be frightened in a pressured situation. One thing he doesn't try to do is justify himself before the people. He is absolutely innocent, and he still doesn't try to justify or defend himself. He makes no excuses to the people. A lot of people never advance in the spiritual life because they're always trying to justify themselves in all interpersonal relationships. People feel that they're strong if they can justify themselves to other people, but that's wrong! There are people who always have to be right and can never be wrong because they are so occupied with themselves. So notice that Moses did not react; instead of starting a confrontation with

the people, instead of entering into self-justification, Moses goes to the Lord and states the facts. Now the matter is entirely in the Lord's hands. You see, there is nothing wrong with going to the Lord and telling him what is going on; however, once you do, you have to leave it in His hands. So in Exodus 17:4, the people were picking up stones to kill Moses; and therefore the Lord, in His matchless sense of humor and in His grace, is going to bring water for them out of a stone! Of course, the stone will be slightly larger than the ones they are picking up to kill Moses with. The Lord will bring them water from the rock of Horeb.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.”
(Exodus 17:5)

Notice that the Lord doesn't tell Moses to hide behind the rock but, rather, to go in front of the people; and this does not bother Moses at all. He wasn't going to run away from them and look for a place to hide. If you are in a position of leadership, you don't run away; if you are afraid of anyone under your command, you have failed as a leader. So with rocks in their hands, which were very real, and with the motivation of hatred that was very real, the people are ready to kill Moses. One time, they had thought that Moses was wonderful, but now they hate him. That's one of the things all leaders must get used to. The people that they lead may like them one day and hate them the next, but as a leaders, they have to do their job unto the Lord. Note also that Moses was to take the very staff that he had used at the Nile River and then move out. This was to remind them, once again, of their past and of all things the Lord had already done for them; but as we will see, they had forgotten what He had done. **“You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deuteronomy 32:18). “They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt” (Psalm 106:21).** The Lord tells Moses to pass before the people and take with him some of the elders of Israel. Prayer time is over; action time has started! The existence of the elders indicates the principle of delegated authority. Moses doesn't handle all the problems of Israel personally; he delegates responsibility. No one can be a leader without delegating responsibility because all good leadership must have organization, which means delegating responsibility to others.

“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:6)

When the Lord said **“I will stand before you,”** it was a reference to the pillar of cloud. The Lord Jesus Christ had led him to this spot, and Moses simply followed the cloud. Horeb is the place where Moses saw the burning bush, so he is back on familiar ground. The striking of the rock becomes very important. The staff represented the judgment of God, and the striking of the rock represents the Lord Jesus Christ being struck on the Cross. **“And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1Corinthians 10:4).** So the lesson was that the Lord Jesus Christ would be judged for the sins of the entire world. However, why was it used on this particular occasion at a place called Meribah, which means to murmur and to complain, to rebel? It was used to teach the Jews that there was provision to judge their sins and their failures at the Cross, and as believers, they could recover from their murmuring and complaining if they chose to do so. This is analogous to the water of salvation in Isaiah 55:1 and Revelation 22:17.

“Ho! every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” (Isaiah 55:1)

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17)

We know from elsewhere in the Bible that the water did not sprinkle out, but rather, the water gushed out. **“Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing” (Psalm 78:20).** The promise was that as Moses struck the rock, waters would gush forth that the people might drink. The cry of the people had been “Is the Lord among us or not?” So what more proof could be demonstrated? We have a solid rock that was struck by a fragile rod and an enormous stream of

water bursting forth, fresh and pure, enough for over two million people. The people would be able to drink until they could drink no more, and this was done in the sight of the elders. Here is another fantastic picture in the Old Testament that foreshadows the coming Messiah. Our Lord spoke of this same principle, **“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). “What then is this that is written, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone?’” (Luke 20:17).**

However, the Rock was not only rejected; it was stricken. For it is written, **“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” declares the Lord of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7).** It points to the same astounding fact: in the Cross of Christ, healing streams of eternal life flow forth for all mankind. John wrote of how the Roman soldier took his spear and pierced the breast of the Lord, **“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34).** In fact, when the Bible comes to a close in the book of Revelation, we are to understand that all of history is moving toward this sublime consummation prefigured by the stricken Rock of Horeb. **“Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:1).** The Lamb, we are told in Revelation 5, stands in the midst of the throne as one who has been slain; and now the water of life flows from the slain Lamb. It is the stricken Rock from which the water flows. One could stagger at the extent of the call with which the Bible closes. There are no conditions but one, and that is a willingness to come. Every person on the earth is invited. None are too degraded, none are too wretched, none are too hopeless, and none are too sunken in sin; no one is excluded. The entire sinful race is invited to come. No conditions whatsoever but a willingness to come and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The water flows forth from the stricken Rock for all and forever. The things of the earth cannot quench our thirst; only the things of God can. The water still flows from the wounded side of our Savior, the stricken Rock.

CHAPTER NINE

The Rock Stricken Again—a Mistake on the Part of Moses (Numbers 20)

Again the Israelites, as they come to Kadesh, are without water.

Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, “If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why then have you brought the Lord’s assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink.” Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them; (Numbers 20:1-6)

This time, the Lord’s command is not that Moses should take his rod and strike the rock that was before his eyes, but that he should merely

Speak unto the rock with the promise that it would give forth water so that the people and their animals might drink.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.” (Numbers 20:7-8)

However, Moses and Aaron gather the congregation together before the rock and then begin to misrepresent the character and nature of God to the people.

So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, “Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. (Numbers 20:9-11)

Here is where the consequences for Israel’s great leader are seemingly heartbreaking. Moses was told that because he had struck the rock when he had been told simply to speak to the rock, he would not be permitted to bring the people into the land that the Lord would give them. He would see the land of promise, but he would not be permitted to enter it. He would stare at it from a distance and see Canaan’s lovely hills and valleys and streams but never be permitted to set foot upon the land.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as Holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” (Numbers 20:12)

This was the verdict given by the Most High. We know from what we read, in chapter 3 of the book of Deuteronomy, that Moses’s heart was broken.

I also pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, “O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant. Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.” But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, “Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he shall give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.” (Deuteronomy 3:23-28)

It is not hard to understand how much Moses deeply desired to go and see the good land of promise. Humanly speaking, it would seem unfair that he would not be the man to lead the Israelites into the land that flowed with milk and honey, since he suffered greatly to get them there. Moses begged the Lord so that he would be able to go, but the Lord would not hear him. In fact, Moses was told to speak no more to the Lord concerning this matter, and so he did not enter.

Now the question arises—why? Why was Moses’s punishment so severe for striking the rock in an angry fashion when he was told simply to speak to the rock with the promise that the water would be given? There is another great lesson here concerning the Cross. It has something to do with the efficacy of the work of Christ on the Cross. Moses had perverted the type and slaughtered the figure. Moses had done a terrible thing in giving an erroneous view of the Cross with its once-and-for-all consummation of the infinitely glorious work of redemption. The Rock was to be struck only once and was not to be stricken again.

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Romans 6:10)

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to

appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10)

The importance of *once* can never be overstated. The lesson is that no one should even dare to attempt to add to the work of Christ on the Cross.

CHAPTER TEN

The Book of Leviticus Is Filled with the Foreshadowing of the Cross

No book in the Bible clashes more violently with the modern mind than Leviticus. Why did all those innocent animals have to shed their blood to put away sin? Why did the Levitical priests have to continually take a knife and kill innocent animals? Was there no other way to deal with the sinner? Could the Lord possibly take pleasure in the death of so many innocent lambs? Does the constant flow of blood, as we have seen it in Israel's tabernacle with its altar for sacrifice, make any sense?

If the Lord Jesus Christ had not come to the Cross to consummate the work of redemption, there would be no satisfactory answer to those questions. However, He did come as the victim as well as the priest; and thus the Bible, as always, does explain itself. The Lord does make it clear in His Word that He did not take pleasure in the blood of the animals sacrificed by Jewish priests. **“Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them” (Hebrews 10:8).** The first chapter of the book of Isaiah alone is sufficient evidence. **“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats” (Isaiah 1:11).** **“For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering” (Psalms 51:16).** The sacrifices of the tabernacle, the shed

blood of victims without number, were all ordained by God. To resolve this seeming contradiction, we must understand that it was all for Israel's instruction. The Jews needed to have before them a constant reminder that sin is no insignificant matter that God could lightly pass over. God's law demanded nothing less than the death of the sinner.

Sin would surely be judged, yet how would justice be done on God's behalf? The divine claims of the law must be met. The punishment that sin merits must be administered. If not the sinner, then it would have to be One who could stand in the sinner's place. It has been said that the easiest people to win for Christ are lawyers simply because they understand the inflexible nature of law. The demands of God's law could not be neglected. It was useless to speak of mercy for law knows no mercy and law shows no mercy. The righteous demands of the law must be met. If the blow does not fall on the guilty, then it must fall on one who takes responsibility and accepts the punishment for the wrong involved. It is indeed strange that the shedding of the blood of animals in Leviticus is a foreshadowing, by means of types and symbols, of the great reality that was to come. The blood of animals pointed to the voluntary offering of the Lamb of God on the altar of Calvary's Cross for the sins of the world. The gruesome sight of the innocent shedding blood did make an overwhelming impact. In Leviticus chapter 16, we have the sacrifices of the great Day of Atonement. Aaron, the high priest, was instructed to take two goats; and lots were to be cast.

When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:20-22)

The goat upon which the lot fell was to be a scapegoat sent into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people and returning no more.

Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16:15)

The two goats provide a twofold portrayal of the sacrifice of our Lord. First, He took our sins into the land where they would be remembered no more. **“And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17)**. Secondly, He tasted death for every man in order that the just demands of the Law might be completely fulfilled on our behalf (Hebrews 2:9).

The book of Leviticus taught these different aspects of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Animal blood was shed in four out of the five Levitical sacrifices under the ritual plan of God for the Jewish age. Here are the five sacrifices:

- The **burnt offering** taught propitiation or expiation with emphasis on the work of Christ; therefore, animal blood was used (Leviticus 1:3).
- The **food offering** taught propitiation with emphasis on the unique person of Christ; therefore animal blood was not used (Leviticus 3:11). Note that blood is not connected with our Lord’s living but with His death. The food offering is the only bloodless offering.
- The **peace offering** represented the doctrine of reconciliation based on the work of Christ on the Cross; therefore animal blood was shed at the altar (Leviticus 7:11). On the Cross, our Lord reconciled man to Himself by removing all the barriers. The removal of the barriers called for His spiritual death; consequently, blood was used.
- The **sin offering** taught rebound, emphasizing the forgiveness of unknown sins (Leviticus 4:3). Whenever you confess your known sins, simultaneously God forgives all unknown sins in your life. Therefore, animal blood was shed. So the blood of Christ is related to rebound as well as salvation.
- The **trespass offering** taught rebound, emphasizing the forgiveness of known sins and confessed sins. Again, animal blood was shed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Moses Lifts Up the Serpent (Numbers 21)

Nothing in the entire Old Testament is more meaningful for the Christian than what took place as Israel was coming into possession of the land of Edom by the Red Sea. In the incident of the fiery serpents, the Cross of Christ appears in all of its glory. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself used this passage as an illustration of the Cross in John 3 where His interview with Nicodemus is recorded. **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14)**. It was a long, monotonous journey from Mount Hor through the wilderness in the land of Edom. We read that the people—worn out with fatigue, famished, and thirsty from lack of water—spoke against God and against Moses.

Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.” (Numbers 21:4-5)

By now, Israel certainly should have known that Jehovah-Jireh (the Lord will provide) would not fail His people. They had seen His

faithfulness over and over again. They had seen His mighty power acting on their behalf to solve every problem and supply every need they had. Now they were actually even complaining about heavenly food! When they said **“We loathe this miserable food,”** the food in question was the manna from heaven. So in verse 6, the Lord tried a different approach, but one that was still designed to point to the Cross.

The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. (Numbers 21:6)

Sin is a fiery serpent, and its sting is the sting of death as we learn in 1 Corinthians 15:56, **“The sting of death is sin.”** Sin bears within itself the horror and the pain of its own punishment. However, Romans 5:20 teaches that **“where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”**

So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.” And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. (Numbers 21:7-9)

So in verse 9, we have the principle of look and live. Every one of us, at one time or another, has known the shame and pain of the serpent’s bite (sin); but here we are told that a look of faith at the crucified Lord brings a spiritual healing, from God, to the soul of the sinner. The fiery serpent spoke of Christ being lifted up on the Cross in order that He might save, through the look of faith, those who were dying from sin.

Why a Serpent?

The serpent was an appropriate figure of the deadly and destructive power of sin. In Genesis 3:15, unregenerate sinners are said to be the serpent’s seed. The serpent, therefore, represented the sinner. It seems strange to us that a

serpent upon a pole would represent the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. It seems totally unfitting to describe our Lord as Satan is described, a serpent. The most contemptible of the animal kingdom could never represent the most wonderful of the heavenly kingdom! However, remember that on the Cross, **“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “He was made a curse for us so that the curse might be removed” (Galatians 3:13).** Nothing could be more appropriate to depict that than the figure of a serpent. Consider the fact that the serpent is called the devil and Satan, and Satan is the author of sin. On account of the Cross, the enemy has been judged; his authority has been shattered. The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down. He can no longer point to a broken law. Sin, which gave the devil legal ground on which to exercise authority, has been expiated. **“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death” (Revelation 12:11).**

At the Cross, Satan, the prince of this world, met his demise forever—defeated by the Son of God. Christ became a curse in the place of the sinners, and all of our iniquity fell on Him there, but there was never any similarity. Really, it is an infinite contrast in order that everything pertaining to the evil one might be taken into death. **“The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).**

Why didn’t Moses use one of the actual serpents and spike a fiery serpent on the pole? Well, it would have damaged the typology. It would have pictured God’s judgment on the sinner himself, and worse still, it would have misrepresented our sinless Substitute. The type chosen was in the likeness of a serpent; it wasn’t an actual serpent but, rather, a piece of brass made to look like one. The one who is the sinner’s Savior was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh (see Romans 8:3). The brazen serpent foreshadows Christ only to the point when He was lifted up on the Cross. The serpent was a reminder and an emblem of the curse. It was through the agency of that old serpent, the devil, that our first parents were seduced and brought under the curse of a Holy God. Never forget that on the Cross, the Holy One of God was made a curse for us.

Why a serpent of brass? This brings out, once more, the perfect accuracy of the type. In the Scriptures, brass symbolizes divine judgment.

The brazen altar illustrates this truth for on it the sacrificial animals were slain. Upon the brazen altar descended the consuming fire from heaven. When Christ is seen as judge inspecting the seven churches, we are told, in Revelation 1, that His feet were like fine brass. In our Numbers 21 passage, the serpent spoke of the curse that sin produced; and the brass spoke of God's judgment falling upon the One made sin for us. There is another thought suggested by the brass as well: Brass is harder than iron, silver, or gold. So it told of Christ's mighty strength. He was able to endure the awful judgments that fell upon Him.

Before we leave this chapter, let's note some things the Jews were not told to do:

- They were not told to manufacture ointments as a means of healing their wounds. Spiritual lotions do not cure the disease; only the Lord can do that.
- They were not told to minister to others who were wounded. What use would it be for one to jump into deep water to rescue a drowning man if he could not swim himself? How can one who is dying, and unable to deliver himself, help others in a similar state?
- They were not told to fight the serpents. What use would it be for those who had already been bitten to fight the serpents? They could all have killed a thousand serpents each, but they would still have died. Fighting against the serpents or fighting against sin will not solve a thing.
- They were not told to make an offering to the serpent on the pole. God did not ask any payment from them in return for their healing. Grace ceases to be grace if any price is paid for what it brings.
- They were not told to look at Moses. They had been looking to Moses, but God commanded them to look at the brazen serpent. In other words, they are depending on their own works or the works of men. Salvation is by grace through faith not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- They were not told to look at their wounds. Some think they need to be more occupied with examining their own wicked hearts. To be occupied with self is to be occupied with that which God has condemned! The devil is pleased when he gets an individual looking at human works like feelings, baptism, self, etc. rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look at the positive side:

- Moses was commanded by God to make a serpent of brass; it was something the Lord provided.
- Moses was commanded to fix this brazen serpent upon a pole. Therefore the divine remedy was publicly exhibited so that all Israel might look and thus be healed.
- The Lord's promise was that **“it shall come about that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, he will live” (Numbers 21:8).**
- He was to look away from himself to the divinely appointed object of faith. Here is our principle of look and live. It is the principle of Isaiah 45, **“Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).** After salvation, the Christian life continues by looking, **“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2).** At the end of the Christian life, we are still to be looking for Christ, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly look for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).** From the beginning to the end, it's looking.
- The brazen serpent was lifted up so that those who were too weak to crawl up to the pole itself simply could look and, thus, be healed. No matter how many times bitten, no matter how far the poison has advanced, if they looked, they could be healed. Please notice also that anyone could look.

It is interesting that man became a lost sinner with a look. **“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes” (Genesis 3:6a).** How wonderful that we may turn to the Lord Jesus Christ to interpret for us the meaning of this exceedingly strange incident of the brazen serpent. Our Lord looked upon it as a sign of His own suffering—His own death upon the Cross. Note the context in John 3 for the most sublime passage in the Gospel of John.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes

in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:14-18)

Nicodemus was familiar with Numbers 21, which gives us the story of the serpent. So in verse 14, what did our Lord mean when He said “**The son of man must be lifted up**”? He meant that life could only come out of death. In order for a new creation to begin, the old creation must end. When our Lord died on the Cross, He put an end to the Adamic race, and a new one began. Our Lord referred to His sacrificial death as a lifting up because the Jews were looking for a Messiah who should be lifted up. They wanted the Messiah to be elevated to the throne of David, but before this occurred, our Lord had to be lifted upon the Cross and put to shame. It was by this that the curse of the serpent was lifted from the human race. By the looking at the suffering Messiah with eyes of faith, one would live forever.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Unveiling the Horrors of the Infamous Cross (Deuteronomy 21:23)

A book on the Cross throughout the Scriptures would be incomplete without a look at Deuteronomy 21:23. In fact, the apostle Paul quoted this passage in Galatians 3:13 in connection with the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross. The Cross of Christ is something so amazing, wonderful, and great that it takes many different passages of Scripture to reveal to us its full meaning and purpose. This passage in Deuteronomy takes us far beyond the ordinary, to the deepest extent of its shame as well as to the utmost heights of its glory. The statement in this passage leaves no room for uncertainty as to the meaning of the Cross.

If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

In other words, such a disgraceful spectacle, a thing so degrading, must not be looked upon a moment longer than the law demands. The dead body on the cross was not permitted to remain through the night so that the sun would not rise on it, revealing more of its shame to the

eyes of men. If there is one word to describe what this passage reveals about the Cross, it is the word *shame*. That's why the writer of the book of Hebrews said, **“Fixing our eyes [or be concentrating] on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2).**

In Deuteronomy 21:23, not only do we have such a despicable thing as a body on a cross defiling the land, but also something even more disgraceful and unthinkable—the one whose body was placed on the cross was accursed of God. It leaves one in awe and amazement to find precisely that when we turn to the pages of the New Testament concerning the body of Jesus. We owe Joseph of Arimathea an infinite gratitude because he boldly entered into the presence of Pilate, begging that he take away the body of our Lord. The policy of the Romans was to take the dead bodies off the cross and unceremoniously throw them into the garbage dumps of Jerusalem. The body of our Lord would have been thrown into one of those same garbage dumps along with the criminals. Our Lord had come to save the criminals, but the shame did not extend past the disgrace of the cross.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given [to him]. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27:57-60)

We are not at the mercy of theological theories and speculations concerning the meaning of all this. The New Testament blesses us with this clear statement: **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13).** This was simply the fulfillment of another aspect of the Cross found in Deuteronomy 21. It is beyond human comprehension that God could be willing to leave His throne in heaven, take upon Himself the form of a man, and identify Himself with our sins by becoming the accursed thing that sin is on the Cross. He did all of this not simply to pay the price for sins, but to arise from the dead so that we might be identified with Him—now freed from guilt

and shame—to share the riches of His grace and the victories of His Ascension as one seated with Him in heavenly places.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

The next verse should have much more meaning now: **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9)**. This is such an amazing thing, yet it is hidden from many, the ones who don’t have time to serve the One who became a curse on the Cross for them. Many believers reject the doctrine of accountability; they refuse to gather together habitually with other believers to learn God’s word. They refuse to use their time, talent, and treasure to glorify God and to promote His doctrine throughout the world. They refuse to learn about their spiritual gift and operate in it. Yet our Lord became a despicable, disgraceful curse for them as He hung upon the Cross in shame. Perhaps that is why the Bible teaches that the loser believer will have shame at the judgment seat of Christ. Consider the following passages in this regard:

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is [their] appetite, and [whose] glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19)

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. (1 John 2:28)

“I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may

clothe yourself, and [that] the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed.” (Revelation 3:18)

The last time *shame* is mentioned in the Bible is in Revelation 16:15, **“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”** This is the gospel of the grace of God. Christ became a curse for us so that we could be blessed. The depth of His grace is all, in a sense, so unthinkable that we have no other access to it but the Word of God. People may find fault with all of this and stumble and doubt and indulge in theological speculations concerning their responsibility to God; but for those who have positive volition toward doctrine, this is a deep spiritual truth—the shame of Jesus Christ. We will either face some shame now, because of our relationship with Him, or we will face some shame later. The New Testament is crystal clear that this is part of the calling of the Church-age believer as the following passages demonstrate:

Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:20)

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16)

On the basis of my intense concentration and confident expectation [a personal sense of destiny] that I shall not be put to shame in anything. (Philippians 1:20)

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner; but join with [me] in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. (2Timothy 1:8)

Isaiah saw the shame of our Lord very clearly when He said: **“He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with**

grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being [fell] upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth” (Isaiah 53:3-7). We need these strong, clear statements of Scripture repeated to us over and over again because the message and the meaning of these verses will never truly be fully understood until we enter eternity.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Psalm of the Crucifixion (Psalm 22)

The Twenty-second Psalm has rightfully been called the Crucifixion Psalm. In fact, it begins with the phrase **“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”** It ends with the Hebrew phrase *kiy asah*, meaning it is finished. Translated, it means **“He has performed it.”** This psalm is a picture of our Lord’s darkest hours and includes a record of His dying words. In this psalm, David takes us deep into the horrors of the Cross while, at the same time, we see the fruits of the Lord Jesus Christ and His passion in the establishment of His kingdom among men. Even though the psalm was the expression of a personal anguish on the part of David, this, in no way, invalidates the claim that this was to be a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross. In fact, many of the Old Testament prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ have their roots in the historical circumstances of the Jewish people. So although David and his afflictions may be present here in a modified sense, he who sees the Lord Jesus Christ will neither see nor care to see David in this psalm. In all of the Scriptures, there is no more accurate expression of our Lord’s thoughts and feelings during the awful six hours on the Cross than what we have in Psalm 22.

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning” (Psalm 22:1). This was quoted from our Lord, in Matthew 27:46, while He hung on the Cross. It was a phrase that caused the Jews to mock while the elect angels rejoiced. Psalms 22:2 states the unanswered prayer of our Lord on the Cross, **“O**

my God, I cry out by day [first three hours, nine a.m. to twelve noon] and then by night there is no silence for me [the continued prayer of our Lord during the darkness that surrounded the Cross from twelve noon to three p.m. when He was being judged for our sins].”

Psalm 22:3 gives the reason why that prayer could not be answered in the one phrase, **“You are Holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.”** God the Father was imputing our sins to Christ and judging them from His holiness. Therefore, He couldn’t answer the prayer for deliverance. The Lord Jesus Christ knew that however things may look, there is neither injustice nor any unfairness with God the Father. Many people speak evil of God when they are under His afflicting hand but not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows His Father too well to let outward circumstances defame His character. In Psalm 22:4-5, Jesus even pointed out to the Father that He had previously delivered Israel under stringent conditions.

In You our fathers trusted [faith-rest]; they trusted, and You delivered them [You answered their prayers]. To You they cried out [in prayer] and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed. (Psalm 22:4-5)

God responded to Israel’s faith when they called for help, and He rescued them out of all their difficulties and miseries, but in the case of our Lord, His perfect faith brought no assistance from heaven. Of the ones who trusted God throughout their lifetime, He would be the only one to be forsaken by God. Of course, we will never be. **“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).**

So why couldn’t our Lord’s prayer be answered? The reason is given in Psalm 22:6, **“But I am a worm and not a man.”** The word *tola* refers to a certain worm that was crushed for its red dye and used to color the crimson robes of royalty. Our Lord was being crushed for our sins so that you and I, as members of the royal family of God, could wear the crimson robe of the royal family forever. Our Lord felt Himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, downtrodden worm—passive while crushed and unnoticed and despised by those who walk upon Him. The phrase **“and I am not a man”** means He no longer even appeared human. The very people who would have once crowned Him have now condemned Him. The very ones who benefited from His cures now despised Him. How

quickly people forget! Psalm 22:7 says He was being ridiculed by gesture as well as word, **“All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head [saying].”** These were gestures of contempt and hatred. Man made faces at Him, the very One whom angels adore. This prophecy was fulfilled in the Gospel of Matthew

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “You who [are going to] destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:39-40)

Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians hurled abuse at Him, to mock Him while He was dying for those very sins. Which makes you wonder the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the Savior? How can we ever complain of mockery and ridicule after this?

We see some of the verbal sarcastic abuses of the crowd in the Bible. **“Commit [yourself] to the Lord; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him” (Psalm 22:8).** Our Lord’s prayer was heard by all who were there, and they saw that it couldn’t be answered! They didn’t understand the reason. They didn’t understand that He was bearing the sins of the world on the Cross. The only unanswerable prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ could not be answered because it was the way of our so-great salvation. He was being judged for our sins, He was our substitute, and He was taking our place. During His time on the Cross, He could only be judged; and during His judgment, His prayer could not be answered.

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking [Him,] and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue [Him] now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matthew 27:41-43)

If you ever become tormented and mocked and judged and ridiculed by others, remember what our Lord went through. **“For consider Him**

who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:3).

Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother’s breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother’s womb. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. (Psalm 22:9-11)

Our Lord’s great sorrow was that God had forsaken Him; His great prayer is that He would be near Him.

Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion. (Psalm 22:12-13)

This prophecy was fulfilled, **“Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death” (Matthew 27:1). “Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find [any,] even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward” (Matthew 26:59-60).** Like hungry cannibals, they opened their blasphemous mouths as if they were about to devour the one they hated. They could not vomit forth their anger and jealousy fast enough.

Turning from His enemies, our Lord describes His own personal condition, **“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within me, My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws [In John 19:28 He cried out “I am thirsty”]; and You lay me in the dust of death” (Psalm 22:15).** This is a description of the burning afflictions we saw described under the physical sufferings of Christ. His strength was dried up in the tremendous flames of divine justice just as the Passover lamb was roasted in the fire.

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me. (Psalm 22:16-17)

The band of evildoers refers to the Jewish leaders in Luke 23:10-11. The piercing of His hands and feet is an astonishing prediction of the Cross, appearing as it did in this text hundreds of years before crucifixion was even invented. Right alongside this astonishing prophecy is a similar one in Zechariah 12:10 where the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will look upon the Lord **“whom they have pierced.”** Obviously, this psalm cannot ultimately refer to David even though he was the human author of it. The phrase **“I can count all my bones”** in verse 17 joins Isaiah 52:14 in prophesying yet another unmistakable mark of crucifixion. **“Just as many were astonished at you, [My people], so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14).** Verse 17 of this psalm ends with the phrase **“they look, they stare at me.”** Who are *they*? *They* are those found in Matthew 27:36: **“And [when they had crucified Him,] sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.”**

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But You, O Lord, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance. Deliver my soul from the sword, my only [life] from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth; from the horns of the wild oxen You answer me. (Psalm 22:18-21)

The lion’s mouth is a reference to Satan. **“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).** You can be sure that Satan closed in on the Lord Jesus Christ with a rage never seen before or since. Never was the devil so determined to destroy a soul, and without a doubt, he threw in all that the kingdom of darkness had. In fact, the Lord said that this was the hour of the power of darkness and that Satan would come but would find nothing in Him. **“While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours” (Luke 22:53).**

The afflicted will eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. For

**the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.
(Psalm 22:26-28)**

The truth of the matter is that where Satan did his worst, Jesus Christ did His best. The Cross is the place where the adversary was stripped of his authority. For the Lord Jesus Christ bore in His body, on the Cross, the sins of all men and therefore annulled the rights of the evil one to accuse and enslave them any longer.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night." And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Revelation 12:10-11)

The Twenty-second Psalm does not close without proclaiming this fact: **"They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it" (Psalm 22:31)**. It is declared that all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. In this way, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, links up His Cross and the victory won there with the glorious future and life that He promises to all of those who believe in Him.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Psalm that Takes Us to Calvary and Beyond (Psalm 2)

When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the disciples, we read that He opened their minds so that they might understand the Scriptures, how what was written of Him in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44-45). It is in the Psalms that the messianic promise is expressed so superbly. In his sermon at Antioch, Paul quoted Psalm 2:7, declaring that its fulfillment was found in the Lord Jesus Christ. **“That God has fulfilled this [promise] to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You.’”** (Acts 13:33). The Second Psalm is one of the most outstanding passages of the Old Testament concerning the Cross and the glory of our Lord. The psalm opens with the kings of the earth setting themselves against the Lord’s anointed.

“Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!’” (Psalm 2:1-3)

Centuries later, their cries would be “Crucify Him, crucify Him” and “Let his blood be upon us and upon our children.” These statements the

Jews made against the Lord have stood out as history's most emphatic denial of the One who would be king of all nations. It is because of their rejections that they have suffered like no other people in all of human history. This psalm not only spoke of the Messiah's rejection, nailed as He was to the shameful tree, but here we also have the Resurrection and the Messiah's Ascension faithfully foretold. David looked forward to the fact that someday, Israel's crucified King would be risen and glorified and have sovereign authority over all the earth.

“He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.’ I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’” (Psalm 2:4-9)

Then the psalmist takes upon himself the role of the preacher who proclaims the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says,

“Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son [show Him extreme respect especially in light of the Cross], that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” (Psalm 2:10-12)

The word for homage in Hebrew is *nashquw*, which means to kiss, to touch gently, to fasten up together, or to be equipped together. We are to have this type of closeness with the Lord Jesus Christ. The way we are to respect and honor Him is by rejoicing with happiness, that is inexpressible and full of glory. **“And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy [happiness] inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).** This type of closeness and gratitude to our Lord for what He did for

us on the Cross meant that the enemies of the Christians, in Paul's day, found that nothing could quench the fire of their enthusiasm and devotion. Neither threats nor imprisonments, stonings nor the lions of Nero's circus could quench that fire! The kiss of pardon and reconciliation offered to all men everywhere through the Cross gave the early Christians the ability to turn despair into joy. We have all been invited to kiss the Son.

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” (Psalm 2:12, NIV)

Why does it speak of wrath? Why do we read that, upon the occasion of Christ's return to earth to judge and reign (as He will), the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich men and the strong and every slave and free man shall all hide themselves in the caves and among the rocks? **“Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:15-17).**

The reason is to be found in our subject of the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the fountainhead not only of forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, and eternal life, but also of judgment and eternal loss. For if we reject the gift of God's love provided at so great a cost, Christ Himself having been willing to become our substitute so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, then we are saying that we will stand before God based upon our own merits. The point is that the Son is waiting, and He offers everyone His pardon. He can do no more; there is nothing beyond the Cross that He can do. **“What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done for it?” (Isaiah 5:4).** At the Cross, God revealed all His love, wisdom, and power for the liberation and freedom of the sinner who simply needs to kiss the Son to be saved. One way or the other, Psalm 2 teaches us that, eventually, Philippians 2:10-11 shall be true of each one of us: **“So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Cross in High Definition (Isaiah 53)

Nowhere in the entire realm of prophecy does the Cross appear in such clear definition as in Isaiah 53. Had Isaiah stood at the foot of the Cross, he could not have given us a more accurate account of what took place there. Isaiah 52:13-15 is actually the introduction to Isaiah 53. Originally, there were no chapter breaks in the Bible, and so there are times when one chapter actually belongs with the next one.

Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted. (Isaiah 52:13)

The phrase “**behold My servant**” means more than what it looks. This is a command for us to respond to His love, and His love is revealed in His sufferings for us. So it means we are to have doctrine in our soul, or we will not be able to respond to the love that God has for us! In the phrase “**He will be high,**” the Hebrew word for *high* is *gabah*, which refers to being seated in heavenly places. The phrase “**lifted up**” is the verb *nasah* in the passive voice, which means that He will receive a lifting up, referring to the Ascension into heaven. Satan and his demons did all they could to try to stop the resurrection of Christ from happening and to prevent Him from entering heaven. The phrase “**greatly exalted**” is the Hebrew word *ruwm*, which means to rise up. This is a reference to Resurrection, which was the first stage of glory for the humanity of Christ.

So we have the Resurrection, Ascension, and Session all mentioned in this verse!

Just as many were astonished at you, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. (Isaiah 52:14)

Just as many were astonished at the sufferings of the Jews, many were shocked at the appearance of our Lord on the Cross. Even those who were antagonistic toward Him were shocked by the unique sufferings of Christ. The Hebrew word for *marred* is *mimishchath*, which means to be completely disfigured. This is disfigurement without the breaking of any bones. The face of the Lord Jesus Christ was literally destroyed so much so that it was a shocking sight to see! Remember that He received this disfigurement from the abuse prior to the Cross! His face received disfigurement from His physical suffering, but His spiritual suffering also caused mental pain and showed on His face as well. He took more punishment in His body than anyone else who ever lived.

Thus He will sprinkle many nations [the unlimited atonement, Christ dying for the sins of the world], kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand. (Isaiah 52:15)

They will discern for themselves that He is the King of kings!

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? (Isaiah 53:1)

This is a reference to His work on the Cross! The message is the Gospel and then doctrines referring to the glory of Christ. The arm speaks of His power but also refers literally to Him hanging on the Cross! The next verse speaks of His incarnation, beginning with His childhood.

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no [stately] form or

majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. (Isaiah 53:2)

Tender shoot is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as a baby in a cradle. His deity was hidden, and His humanity was observable! Furthermore, verse 2 states that there was nothing dazzling about Him as a human being. The first human king of Israel was King Saul who came as a dazzling person. The last king of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared the first time without the associated glamour and majesty of a king. The Jews did not see the beauty of Christ because they were negative toward doctrine; they were religious and legalistic types. With religious people, things have to be obvious; so if someone is glamorous, they have to be obviously glamorous! The Jews did not take pleasure in the Lord Jesus Christ: **“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).**

What kind of suffering do we have here so far? First, in Isaiah 53:1, we see that the message of the Gospel is not believed and that gives our Lord suffering because of His love as John 3:16 reveals. Then, He is rejected in Isaiah 53:2 by the very people He was going to die for. But next, in verse 3, He becomes the object of mental-attitude sins!

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:3)

The Hebrew word for *despised* is *bazah*, which means to spit out hatred. He received hatred as He initiated love, and this forms another part of His sufferings. The Hebrew word for *forsaken* is *chadel*, which means to be rejected verbally. The Lord Jesus Christ is omniscient, so He knew whenever someone in His presence hated Him. In His humanity, He was a genius; and He was also a *tender plant*, meaning very sensitive. Therefore, another part of His suffering was the verbal rejection and hatred. The more He loved, the less He was loved! He healed people, fed people, and clothed people; but it did not matter. The Hebrew word for *sorrow* is *makob* and, in the plural, means many sorrows; and it literally means pains in the soul. He was thoroughly familiar with grief! He knew how it was to be maligned, hated, tortured, betrayed, deserted, rejected, and

slapped; but even worse, He knew how it was to be forsaken! The phrase “**from whom men hide their face**” includes the Hebrew word *sathath*, which means to cover the face in rejection and to discredit while covering it. Finally, in this verse, the Hebrew verb for *esteem* is *chashab*, which means to put all the facts together. The incredible facts regarding Christ were rejected. Unbelievers rejected His person while believers rejected His doctrine. In spite of all of this rejection, all of the mental-attitude sins, He still went to the Cross. What a display of grace this was!

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)

The Hebrew word for *grief* is *choliy*, referring to disease, sickness, eternal afflictions, and things that we will never have in the eternal state because of Him. The Hebrew word *cabal* means to carry a heavy burden (the moment our sins were poured on Him and judged He died spiritually). The Hebrew word *naga* means to be struck down with sin violently.

But [in spite of all His rejection] He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being [fell] upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

The Hebrew, in this verse, means that every sin was like a point of a spear as it stabbed His soul. He was crushed by the weight of our sins. The punishment, which brought us peace, was laid upon Him. The Hebrew word for *scourging* is *chabbuwrah*, meaning bruises, wounds, and black-and-blue marks. The Hebrew word *rapha* means to be sewn together or drawn together because of what Christ did on the Cross. Through Christ, man was drawn to God!

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. (Isaiah 53:6)

The whole human race was guilty. The Hebrew word for *have turned* is *panah*, which means we do it from our own free will. We are sinners by

our own choosing, even though we were born in sin, because we would have all sinned eventually. All of our perversity, punishment, and fault fell on Him.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)

Our Lord was harassed, abused, and humiliated; and yet, throughout all of this, He was completely and totally silent without complaint! He did not open His mouth. On the Cross, He did say some things, but they were not complaints. During that time, He was suffering excruciating pain! He said these three things in this extreme pain! Under great pain, He asked for forgiveness on behalf of those who were giving Him the pain. He uttered, **“Father forgive them” (Luke 23:34)**. He gives a promise to the dying thief (Luke 23:43). He made sure that His mother would be taken care of (John 19:26-27). Even under ordinary circumstances, these things are noble; but He did this under the most extreme suffering ever experienced. He was thoughtful, tender, and loving despite His sufferings!

By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? (Isaiah 53:8)

No one protested or complained about the way He was treated!

His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (Isaiah 53:9)

This verse contains prophecy that is remarkable because it is so detailed. Six hundred years before it happened, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be crucified between those two thieves. Two of the richest men in the country were the two men who buried Jesus, namely, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42; Matthew 27:57-60).

But the Lord [God the Father] was pleased to crush Him, putting [Him] to grief; if He would render Himself [as] a guilt offering, He will see [His] offspring, He will prolong [His] days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see [it] and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:10-12)

In this final passage, in Isaiah 53, we see our Lord's spiritual death serving as the payment for our sins. The Father was satisfied (propitiation) by the suffering of Christ's soul, a unique form of spiritual suffering rather than any physical suffering.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

What Are These Wounds? (Zechariah 13:6)

We are ready to note our final Old Testament passage in this examination of the Cross throughout the Scriptures. There are many other Old Testament passages that we could note concerning the foreshadowing of the Cross of Christ in the Old Testament, but we will not attempt to exhaust them all. However, there is a word in the book of the prophet Zechariah, which we must examine before we move into the New Testament. It appears in a messianic passage, which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke from His own lips, on the night of His betrayal, as He washed the disciples' feet and spoke of the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of sins.

**Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’”
(Matthew 26:31)**

Notice the word “strike”. Jesus is citing a passage from the prophet Zechariah that goes even further. The Father is speaking, in Zechariah 13:7, **“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate, declares the Lord of hosts. ‘Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the**

little ones.” This is a passage that many have misinterpreted; they have concluded that our Lord, through His bitter sufferings and death, appeased the wrath of God the Father and thereby brought deliverance and salvation for sinful man. However, this interpretation does not hold water when you examine the rest of the Scriptures. For one thing, the Bible never portrays this kind of a division as existing in the three persons of the Godhead. Also, remember that the Bible says, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16)**. The Savior did not appease the wrath of God by means of the Cross; rather, He revealed the wrath of God. Paul makes that crystal clear in the book of Romans: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18)**. There was wrath, but Hebrews 9:26 makes it clear that it was the wrath of God against sin not against the Son, **“But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”** So Zechariah 13:7—**“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate—**says that this is not the wrath of God against the Son but the wrath of God against the sin, or sin offering that the Son became on the Cross. **“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3)**.

In the previous verse, Zechariah 13:6, there is this heartbreaking question, which—we are told—God’s chosen people will utter upon the return of their rejected King, their crucified Messiah, **“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’”** In Zechariah 12:10, we read, **“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”** This will be fulfilled, **“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen” (Revelation 1:7)**. However, notice our Lord’s attitude in Zechariah toward who had pierced Him, wounded Him, and rejected Him for thousands of years. His attitude toward these people is simply one of forgiveness. **“In that day a fountain will be**

opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity” (Zechariah 13:1). The prophet comes to the heart of the matter—the Cross is the fountain of forgiveness.

Joseph Rabinowitz was a Russian Jew who traveled to distant lands in search of a place of security where persecuted Jews might find peace and happiness. Among the countries he visited was the Holy Land at a time when many of his people were still scattered over the face of the earth. One day, he sat on the Mount of Olives and opened his Bible (the Old Testament). His eyes fell upon this verse, **“And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10).** In that instant, it happened to him as it happened to another Jew many years before on the road to Damascus. Of course, I’m talking about Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul. The Lord spoke to this Russian Jew; and he realized, in that moment, that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the promised Messiah. He returned to Russia to spend the remainder of his days preaching the Gospel to his people. One approach he used was the following analogy:

We Jews are like a farmer on the way to market with the fruits of his land. A wheel has come off his wagon, and he is looking for the wheel up ahead on the road. He will never find it there. He must turn back to find the wheel. We Jews are looking ahead on life’s way for the Messiah who we think has not yet appeared. It is a great mistake. We must turn back to the One whom we rejected, to Jesus—He is the Christ, the Messiah. It is the One whom we pierced who alone can save us.

So as you can see, there are many passages in the Old Testament that speak of the Cross. We could have noted Psalm 34:20, **“He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken.”** This was fulfilled in John 19:34-36. We could have noted the prophecy of the false witnesses in Psalm 35:11, which was fulfilled in Mark 14:57-58. We could have noted the Old Testament prophecy of the betrayal of Judas Iscariot in Psalm 41:9, which reads, **“Even My close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.”** This was fulfilled in Luke 22:47-48. There are many others; but the point is that everywhere you look in the Old Testament there is some mention, reference, or implication concerning the Cross. Next, I will attempt to describe for you the Cross as it appeared in the mind of Jesus.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Behold, the Lamb of God (John 1:29)

We are now ready to move to the New Testament with our seventeenth passage dealing with the Cross throughout the Scriptures, and it appears in the Gospel of John.

When the Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry, John the Baptist could have said “Behold, your King” or “Behold, the promised Messiah.” He might have cried out, “Behold the Son of God.” Or he could have said, “Behold, the Prophet. For now, we shall be taught the way of God, the perfect law of the kingdom.” This would not, however, have expressed the true genius of the Scriptures. The supreme purpose of the plan of God for the human race would not have found its accurate expression. In Luke 7:28, the Lord said, **“I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.”** The Spirit of God put upon the lips of the last and greatest of the prophets the phrase found in John 1:29, **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** It was for this reason that the only begotten Son of the Father had come. All else was secondary. He had come to redeem mankind and to save mankind from eternal damnation.

It is true that as Israel’s King, He would eventually exercise authority. As a prophet, He would teach and declare God’s judgment and God’s Word. As the Son of God, He would perform miraculous works of love in healing the sick, but all this would be surpassed beyond measure. Our Lord’s matchless ministry was so beneficial for those who were sick and

diseased, such as the lepers; so wonderful for the oppressed who were groaning under Satan's bondage; and so magnificent for the poor, the blind, and the lame. Yet our Lord's great forerunner, John the Baptist, could not have announced the appearance of the world's only hope in any other term except the one that really mattered, the term of redemption: **"Behold the Lamb of God!"**

Stepping on the scene for the first time, to begin His earthly ministry, coming from thirty years of relative obscurity to meet the problems of the multitudes and to solve the problem of sin once and for all, the first title given to the Lord Jesus Christ was **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"** The Cross is revealed right here in this New Testament passage. There had been a powerful awakening among many of the Jews because John the Baptist had preached as none of Israel's prophets had ever done before. John was pointing to the power of sin in all its horrors, pointing a finger of condemnation and crying out to all the Jewish people such things as **"You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"** (Matthew 3:7). This was all a part of God's plan, to point out sin in the lives of the people so that they would see their need for the Lamb of God who would take away their sin. It was to be based around the principle of Romans 5:20: **"The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."** There was to come One after John, One whose sandals he was not fit to remove: **"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"** (Matthew 3:11). Many had been baptized in the water of the Jordan, confessing their sins; however, as great as John was, all he could do was tell them to repent! Now, the Son of God suddenly appears; there He stands in the midst of the multitudes. He too had asked for baptism, which overwhelmed John the Baptist with a sense of unworthiness. Of course, it wasn't that the Lord Jesus Christ needed to repent or needed to confess any sin. Instead, it was so that He might now declare His oneness with sinful man and reveal, in the waters of Jordan (which signified death), what would later take the form of an absolute identification with the sins of the world on the Cross.

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan [coming] to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do

You come to me?” But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit [it] at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)

There was only one thing that the Baptist could say as he saw the Spirit of God descend upon Him like a dove: **“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”** He must speak in terms of the Cross. No other term could be suitable or appropriate to describe the Savior. No other title would tell the story; any other would be to defraud the multitudes who followed the preaching of John the Baptist. And so they understood. They may not have known all of the glories concerning the Cross, but they were fully aware of the fact that John the Baptist was speaking of sacrifice. The highways leading to Jerusalem were filled with innocent lambs being driven to the temple for Levitical sacrifices for the customary Jewish worship. To the Jews, John’s method of honoring the Savior could have only one meaning: The Messiah was here!

John the Baptist, who was standing at the close of the Old Testament dispensation as the last of the prophets, begins to usher in a new dispensation—the dispensation of the hypostatic union. At this crucial moment, he gives the answer to the question that Isaac had asked his father, Abraham, in Genesis 22:7, **“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”** The Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced (John 8:56). This was the day to which He referred. In fact, seeing the messianic hope in the light of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, Abraham confidently replied, **“God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (Genesis 22:8).** Here, at last, was God’s provision for man’s problem with sin. This is not a popular doctrine today. The Church, who has been deceived by the father of lies, is turning away from the Cross. The Church has turned toward works and toward self but will never find victory in any other thing than the Cross.

The purpose of our study is to bring us back to the Cross. The Cross is the Bible’s central message. All biblical truth converges at and on the

Cross, and if we don't understand the Cross, we become enemies of the Cross—**“For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18).**

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:14-18)

If you understand the Cross and live in its principles, you will be persecuted for what you believe. **“Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12).** Satan loves to blind people from the truth of the Cross because that's where he was defeated. **“And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (Colossians 1:20).**

Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. (Colossians 2:14-15)

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His work is finished. His altar is the Cross, and the blood of His Cross is our ransom. The Spirit shines a light on the pages of Scripture, and we see His Cross again and again there. Look and live. See Him and be glad. God has provided for Himself the Lamb.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Destroy This Temple . . . (John 2:19)

We are now looking at the Cross in the mind of Jesus. There is a work of art that presents a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ at the age of twelve, with an armful of wood, on His way to Joseph's carpenter shop. The rays of sunlight that fall across His shoulders leave the shadow of a cross upon the earth beside Him. Of course, it's just an artist's impression, and yet how true it is. For the Cross was the Savior's supreme objective. He did not stumble upon the idea; He had seen it from a distance and walked forward to embrace it. For Him, it was a must. He had to be about His Father's business. It has been said that men are born to live, yet Jesus came into the world so that He might die. Let there be no mistake. We are told, in Revelation 13:8, that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. The Bible tells us of Simeon who, upon the occasion of the presentation of the baby Jesus to the Lord, took the Child in his arms and blessed God.

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this [Child] is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35)

How the sword must have pierced Mary's heart as, years later, she stood at the foot of that cross with Mary Magdalene and her sister, the

wife of Cleopas. The point is that in the early days of the Savior's public ministry, the Cross appeared before Him. In the second chapter of John's gospel, on the occasion of the cleansing of the Temple when the hostility of the Jews first became apparent, we have the Lord Jesus Christ saying, **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** Now the background to this passage begins in verse 12.

After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and [His] brothers, and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated [at their tables]. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove [them] all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables. (John 2:12-15)

The Amplified translation of this verse says, **"And having made a lash or a whip of cords He drove them all out of the Temple, both the sheep and the oxen spilling and scattering the brokers money and upsetting and tossing around their stands."** This is a very different picture of our Lord, isn't it? However, you have to take Him as He is in all facets.

And to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Thy house will consume me." (John 2:16-17)

Now, what is the message that we find here? It's a very radical message, a message that proclaims the only hope and the only way of salvation. In fact, what our Lord did here, at the beginning of His ministry, was exactly what our Lord did when He went up to the Passover feast at Jerusalem in the end of His ministry. By the way, can you imagine what His followers must have thought? He starts His ministry by turning water into wine! The disciples probably thought that this is a great guy to follow; this is going to be a blast! Then all of the sudden, He disrupts the Temple. He did it at the beginning of His earthly ministry and at the end. However,

this is one of the most significant and crucial incidents of His earthly life and ministry. What was He doing? What was He trying to say with His actions?

First of all, He was giving the Jewish people a final warning. He was giving them an indication that unless they change and do what He has come to tell them to do, they were finished! Remember that AD 70 was coming soon, and in AD 70, the Roman army came and captured the city of Jerusalem. They destroyed the Temple and threw out the Jews. So here, in John chapter 2, our Lord is showing them that the only way to avoid destruction is through Him. A great deal of His ministry was devoted to that purpose. He presented Himself to the Jews as their only hope, and as we know, He was rejected. At the end of His ministry, He stood and mourned over the city of Jerusalem.

Here is His message, and it is still His message today. It's not a message from Church leaders to the world, telling them what they've got to do! Rather, it is a basic message to Christians and their leaders, telling them what they've got to do in their own realm—the Church—and that is to magnify the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. That is the tragedy with God's people. Peter puts it like this: **“For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17)**. The current tragedy is the Church telling the world what to do. However, the question is whether the Church is in any condition to do so. It's not surprising that the world doesn't listen. So what is the message? Here's the first one: The supreme matter in the life of an individual or a nation is our relationship with God. All of this is typified, according to John 2:14, by the Temple. The Temple was the greatest and most fantastic building in all of Jerusalem; it was the center attraction for the people of God. It was where people went to worship and to meet with God. The Temple was the center of the life of the nation. That is why our Lord not only went to the Temple, but also behaved in the way that He did and said what He said. Here is the key to everything that happened in the Temple: When things go wrong in the Temple, they will go wrong everywhere. The key to everything is our relationship to God, and as goes the believer, so goes the nation. One of our greatest dangers today is to misunderstand the Bible or to abuse and misuse it. Many do just that to suit their own ends and purposes. The trouble with the Jews was that they were misusing and misappropriating what God had given to them. They abused the Temple, and this was the very thing our Lord was dealing with. Not only was this

their constant source of trouble, but it also became the cause of their ultimate and final tragedy. In Romans 11:13-23, the apostle Paul warns the Church of the very same thing.

So I'm suggesting to you that the trouble of the world can be explained by the trouble in the Church. The Temple needs cleansing; it needs to stop abusing and misappropriating the things that God has given. That's always the cause of the trouble. Eventually, it becomes evident that it is not only a wrong thing to do, but it's also a crazy thing to do. This is when people start to neglect their personal relationship with God and replace it with their relationship with their ministry. They ignore the ministry of God the Holy Spirit and turn the temple worship into something formal and external. There is nothing more terrible for an individual or a nation than a formal religion. The formalization and externalization of religion is the greatest of all curses.

And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables. (John 2:15)

Here, in verse 15, we need to look at some principles. These oxen, sheep, doves, and the changing of money—these things were not wrong in and of themselves. These things had to be done. There were people who came to these feasts from a great distance, and they had to purchase these animals for their sacrifices. People would come from different parts of the world with their foreign coinage, and so you had to have money changers. There was nothing wrong with all of this, in and of itself; but what was wrong was that it had come right into the Temple, the place of worship. So the problem was that the merchandizing had become the main attraction, and many men were becoming rich on this. It was the misuse of that which was right and appropriate, and we will see how this fits in with the Cross of Christ. Remember what the Bible tells us about the Church-age believer, **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).**

The danger is taking things that God has appointed and using them for our own ends. What I'm saying to you is that the sheep, the oxen, the doves, and the money changers were being used to serve man's own

ambition. Just like today, many have used the Church to serve their own ambition, for the advancement of their careers. This is one of the reasons why so many are outside the Church, looking in; in effect, they think that if that's Christianity, then we are not interested. The greatest need of this hour in the Church is the presence of the Lord and the knowledge of the Cross. What will He do when He comes? Well, He will cleanse the Temple. This is the manifestation of His glory, His authority, His zeal, and His power. Have you ever realized, when you read this incident, that this was a miracle? What happened in the Temple was as much a miracle as the changing of water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. Wealthy, clever businessmen are all trading in the temple, and yet this one defenseless person makes a whip out of cords, and with that alone, He drives them out. How could a thing like this happen? It was the manifestation of His glory. You see, His Word comes with power, and He is the Son of God! **“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as [one] having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).** Men felt the authority of His word when He spoke.

And to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Thy house will consume me.” (John 2:16-17)

Our Lord loved His Father's house, and He pronounced judgment upon it all. He was filled with a holy indignation and a sense of righteousness. He gets rid of all the evil that had accumulated: the paganism, legalism, personality rapport, human power, and so on. He gets rid of all the hypocrisy, lies, superstition, and moneymaking schemes. All the lies that make men great and important He wipes out. He restores the original simplicity of His doctrines, and this is the great need of the hour! We all need to turn back to Him and allow Him to speak to us, but we also need to allow Him to cleanse and to drive out. We need Him to come to His temple and to manifest His glory, to show us His power and to fill us with it.

The temple in Jerusalem was ordained by God to celebrate His person and His commands. However, what our Lord found was the place being abused to serve men's own selfish ends. God had given these things to

be used for serving, loving, and honoring Him. There was nothing wrong with the buying and selling of the cattle and the sheep and the doves, but this had become the whole show, the chief thing in the Temple itself. So our Lord summed it up by saying, **“Stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise” (John 2:16)**. The Greek word for *merchandise* is *emporium*, which means a commercialized center, a place of business or trade. The main problem in the Temple was that they were abusing and misusing the very things God had appointed to worship Him.

The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?” (John 2:18)

Apparently, some of the Jews whom our Lord had driven out had come back, and they wanted some proof of His authority to do what He had done. So they asked for a sign. Now, our Lord did something very interesting in that He didn’t give them a direct answer, choosing instead to answer them indirectly.

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews therefore said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:19-21)

At this time, everybody’s focus was squarely on the literal temple. Their minds were on the natural and not the spiritual. The Temple was really something that pointed to the body that the Son of God was to live in. However, because of ignorance, most people missed that point. The lesson the Lord taught here is that religion, ceremonialism, and ritualism must be replaced with understanding of His death on the Cross and the resultant resurrection. Understanding the Cross means getting rid of all the nonsense: no gimmicks, no games, and no making the Church a house of merchandise. In fact, God even cursed the nation of Israel because of turning the Temple into a big business—**“Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price, and her prophets divine for money” (Micah 3:11)**. When a ministry focuses on the finished work of Jesus Christ and understands the principle of the Cross, they will

not make God's house a house of merchandise. They will understand the principle that freely we have received, and freely we are to give. They will cry out, **“Come there, every one who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isaiah 55:1).**

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Jesus Points Nicodemus to the Cross (John 3)

The third chapter of the Gospel of John has always been a favorite passage of Christians throughout the world. In this chapter, we have the story of Jesus interviewing Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. The Lord Jesus Christ pushes aside all the formalities, telling the Jewish ruler that all of his strict religiosity is good for nothing as far as entering the kingdom of God is concerned; he must be born again.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God [as] a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:1-7)

There is no getting around this divine mandate as Nicodemus learns directly from the Savior's lips. The Lord speaks with the authority that was His as the Son of God, affirming that without a rebirth through the Spirit, Nicodemus could not even see the kingdom much less enter it. The Lord tells Nicodemus that the agent of this complete transformation of being born again is the Holy Spirit. This baffles Nicodemus who says to the Lord, **"How can a man be born when he is old?"** So our Lord tries to help Nicodemus by means of a simple illustration:

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

However, Nicodemus is still incredulous.

It is what our Lord does next that is of great significance in view of our study of the Cross throughout the Scriptures. He finally must take Nicodemus to the Cross and explain to him that it is the Cross that the Holy Spirit uses to bring about the second birth. The new birth is the direct consequence of the Cross. The Cross is where the new birth takes place. Though God the Holy Spirit brings the new birth about, He does not work on His own because the new birth originates in and through our Savior's work on the Cross. So we continue, in verse 9, where Nicodemus persists in his ignorance:

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." (John 3:9-15)

The next verse is really the Bible in miniature. If the believer is unable to recall anything else from the Bible, this is the verse that must be remembered:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

So here, our Lord links up the second birth with the Cross. Nicodemus, needing spiritual eyes to see, is taken to the Cross. It is when the Holy Spirit unveils the Cross that hard hearts begin to see their need for the Savior. You cannot honestly look upon the Lord Jesus Christ, pierced by the Roman soldier's spear and with blood and water gushing forth, and not experience infinite gratitude. Understanding the implications of the Cross is the beginning of your new birth. By believing in the One who died for you, you are born again for the Holy Spirit works through the Cross.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Following the Lord Jesus Christ Means Bearing Your Very Own Cross (Matthew 16:13-27)

Our Lord operated with a certain restraint toward His disciples regarding the sufferings on the Cross. He knew that His disciples would not be able to bear it. However, the time came when He knew that He had to begin to prepare them for what was about to happen.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some [say] John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Then He warned the disciples that they should

tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (Matthew 16:13-21)

The hour had come when the veil had to be drawn aside so that the disciples might see what was about to happen. As usual, the impulsive, self-asserting Peter put his foot in his mouth once again. *What in the world was the Lord thinking of?*, Peter thought. Peter felt that it was up to him to straighten the Lord out in His thinking.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid [it,] Lord! This shall never happen to You.” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” (Matthew 16:22-23)

This, of course, was the human viewpoint promoted by Satan; and notice how severe our Lord’s reply was. It was Peter who needed to be straightened out as well as all those to whom the Cross is an offense. Most Christians today prefer theology or doctrinal teaching minus any mention of a personal Cross. They want the blessings of God as they push the Cross aside to preserve their own life. They trust in their own good works, what they give, or some strict adherence to a system of legalism. They do not live in our Lord’s description of the Cross, which is found in the next few verses of Matthew 16:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26)

Here, the sinful nature of man is revealed as the height of selfishness in view of the paradox of the Cross. Life comes forth from death. Christ’s

selflessness in death brought new life to the selfish. Yet even after the new birth of salvation, the selfish self remains and, by its nature, is terrified by the selflessness of the Cross. But if we are unwilling to forsake that self and take up our cross in identification with the Crucified-Risen Son of God, however great our imagined virtue, we are on the road that leads to death. We shall eventually lose all no matter how much we may seem to gain. On the other hand, if like Paul, we are willing to bear in the body the marks of the Lord and go forth from self in the service of others, we shall find that all is ours. So many Scriptures in the New Testament bear this out. Here are several, the first four of which appear in Paul's letters:

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. (Galatians 6:17)

I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (1 Corinthians 15:31)

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Galatians 6:10)

And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

The Lord Jesus Christ said "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

The Cross not only assures us of forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with God, but also declares that we too must die and be raised up in newness of life—**"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3)**. Our Lord taught the principle that following Him means being willing to take up your very own cross, which has to do with denying self and living for others.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Disciples Follow the Lord, Fearing the Cross (Mark 10:28-34)

We continue to look at the Cross in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ during His first advent. Our next passage, in the Gospel of Mark, begins with impetuous Peter doing another “Ready, fire, aim” routine!

Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. But many [who are] first, will be last, and the last, first.” They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him. (Mark 10:28-32)

The Lord had spoken to His disciples before about the Cross, but now the time had come to speak much more clearly. Now the veil is drawn

aside more fully. Our Lord began to make mention of specific details, and this was a terrifying experience for the disciples. The disciples saw something in our Lord's face that told them He was speaking of a crisis. He was setting His face like a flint, as the prophet Isaiah said, **“I gave My back to those who strike [Me], and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed” (Isaiah 50:6-7).**

He was going to Jerusalem knowing full well all that awaited him there. Our Lord could have chosen an easier path. He could have bypassed the Cross. As a man, He could be tempted in all points like we are, yet He was without sin. Still, He had to make His decisions in the same way that all men must make them—in the exercise of His free will. What that cost would be to Him we will see later when we come to Gethsemane. So this was a moment of tremendous decision. It was reflected in our Lord's majestic manner, and it held overwhelming importance. That's why, continuing in the Mark's gospel, we read:

They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, [saying,] “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill [Him], and three days later He will rise again.” (Mark 10:32-34)

Our Lord knew every last detail of what was about to happen; nothing was hidden from Him. From eternity past, He had chosen to do His Father's will as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. However, while the choice was made by the Son of God in eternity past, the humanity of Christ still had to choose in time. This is something that man can never fully comprehend. To atone for the sins of the world, bear the chastisement due to our sins, satisfy the claims of a just and Holy God, and express God's love to the fullest for mankind who had gone astray, who could

ever grasp the meaning of such an achievement? Who would presume to know all that was in the cup that the Lord Jesus Christ had to drink on the Cross? Now, I want you to notice how Mark records what happened when, immediately, John and James—the sons of Zebedee—come to Jesus.

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on [Your] left, in Your glory.” (Mark 10:35-37)

This gave the Lord the opportunity to drive home a tremendous lesson with regard to the glory of the Cross: **“But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’” (Mark 10:38).** The cup here is a reference to His Cross, and the baptism He speaks of is His identification with our sins. So here it is; they said, “We would all like to come to glory and sit at the Savior’s right hand in His kingdom.” The condition for this, however, is the Cross! The Lord Himself came into His fullest glory by way of the Cross, **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23).** **“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You’” (John 17:1).** This was our Savior’s prayer before going to the Cross.

They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on My right or on [My] left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” (Mark 10:39-40)

In other words, if you want to be glorified, if you want to sit with Christ in heavenly places, the condition is the same as the one put before John and James; you must take up your own personal cross. Remember that only winner believers are allowed to sit on the throne with Christ in heaven: **“To the winner, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on**

My throne, as I also became a winner and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Let’s close this chapter with two more Scriptures that state this principle clearly:

“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:39)

And He was saying to [them] all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23)

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The “I Am” of Jesus Confirmed by the Cross (John 8:58)

The controversy in the Gospel of John between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Jewish authorities, regarding His claims to be the Messiah, comes to a climax in the eighth chapter where we have the Jews ready to stone the Lord.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets [also]; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out [to be]?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God;’ and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw [it] and was glad.” So Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:51-58)

He had dared to say, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”** This was too much. There had been a growing discontent among the Jewish rulers; the Lord had greatly offended the Pharisees, the scribes, and the Sadducees. He did it in the cleansing of the Temple, in healing the sick on the Sabbath, and in so severely condemning the Pharisees for their pride and hypocrisy. Their hatred now began to burst into the flames that enveloped our Lord at Calvary. They thought: *How dare this Jew, born in a stable, this ordinary carpenter, this companion of tax collectors and prostitutes, whose education was limited, how dare He take upon His lips the sacred name of Deity by which Israel’s God made Himself known to His people? Only Jehovah—Israel’s God, the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who appeared to Moses and secured the freedom of the sons of Israel—dared to say, “I am.”* Remember that it was God who had said to Moses, in Exodus 3:14, **“I AM WHO I AM.”** And He said, **“Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

To the Jews, nothing more monstrous had ever been done in all of Israel’s history. This was too much; He must be dealt with.

Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:59)

Remember what He said to them in John 8:24, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am [‘He’ is not in the original], you will die in your sins.”** In the midst of the controversy, our Lord makes the claim that He is the great I AM! The Master lets them have it full blast. Back in verse 28 of this chapter, we have the Lord staking all on His Cross.

So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man [the Cross], then you will know that I am, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.” (John 8:28)

The amazing thing is that, while the Jewish leaders and the high priest felt sure that such a disgraceful form of execution—reserved for the lowest of criminals and the form of execution reserved among Romans for slaves who had no rights—would be the end of all claims

on the part of Jesus to messiahship, our Lord, the Son of God and Son of Man, knew that the Cross would be the event that for all the ages would fully substantiate His claims. At the foot of the Cross, men would find complete assurance regarding the matter of the **“I am”** of Jesus. For the rulers of the Jews, it satisfied them to know that one put to death, hanged on a tree, was accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23) and that His body must be removed at once lest the very land be defiled. So could anything more unthinkable be conceived than a crucified Messiah?

However, our Lord confirmed His claim to messiahship by saying, **“Before Abraham was, I am.”** His claim that He was the Messiah would find its greatest validation once He was lifted up on a Cross. The Jewish rulers thought that if they could stone Him, then He would never be lifted up! They knew that being lifted up was a reference to the cross; Nicodemus had told them that. However, the Lord knew that the Cross would not only forever substantiate His claims, but also bring in the glorious age of the new creation. The old creation would be terminated on that awful tree. That’s what Paul said in the book of Galatians, **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).**

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Lord Jesus Christ Speaks to Moses and Elijah of His Death (Luke 9:28-35).

When we think of the Transfiguration, we tend not to automatically associate it with the Cross. Yet judging from a significant detail that Luke gives us, the most profound significance of the Mount of Transfiguration is found on Mount Calvary and at the Cross. It is the Cross that is at the heart of this overwhelming scene, which took place on the high mountain where Jesus had led Peter, James, and John for the purpose of revealing to them His glory. Moses and Elijah appeared to our Lord in His majestic splendor, and as they spoke, the theme of their conversation was the departure that He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. After all, this event came one week after our Lord starting telling His disciples that He must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes; be killed; and be raised up on the third day (Luke 9:22). Moses and Elijah came to the Son of God and communed with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration regarding His great work of redemption soon to be accomplished in Jerusalem.

Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing [became] white [and] gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were

Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31)

Actually, the word *departure* can also be translated as *exodus*. Peter uses the same word, in 2 Peter 1:15, to refer to his own impending death. Moses and Elijah spoke with our Lord of His exodus, which was to be accomplished shortly. It was a moment of glory when the Lord Christ was transfigured. The disciples fell on their faces; they could not bear all this glory.

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” When the disciples heard [this], they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to [them] and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone. (Matthew 17:4-8)

All of this is of enormous significance for Christians throughout the ages. When we realize that there, on the Mount of Transfiguration, our Lord’s face was shining as the sun; that His garments became white as light, which was His future uniform of glory; and that He spoke with Moses and Elijah of His exodus to be accomplished in Jerusalem, we should be left breathless with awe and amazement. Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the Prophets, and together they represented the entire testimony of the Old Testament to the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories to follow. When these two meet with our glorified Lord, we see another word used for the Cross—not simply suffering—but this time, the word in Luke 9:31 is *accomplish*. The Greek word for *accomplish* is the verb *pleroo*, which has four basic doctrinal definitions:

1. To fill up a deficiency. We were all deficient of righteousness, and our Lord filled that deficiency on the Cross. All of the sins of the world were paid for there.

2. To fully possess. The believer must be fully possessed by the work accomplished on the Cross before he can be fully possessed by the blessings of maturity. We are bought with a price; we are the Lord's possession.
3. To fully influence. The believer is fully influenced by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross so that he can have capacity for blessing.
4. To fill with a certain quality. The Cross is the basis for our perfect righteousness being the highest quality of righteousness with which the believer can be filled.

The Cross was achievement, the Cross was victory, and the Cross was the consummation. What was said between the Lord Jesus Christ, Moses, and Elijah, we really don't know. Yet in one sense, we know because what was revealed to us in the New Testament epistles was so much fantastic truth about what Christ accomplished at the Cross. What else could have passed between these three if not the things that Jesus showed His disciples as He appeared to them after His Resurrection, opening their minds that they might understand what was written of Him in the Law and the Psalms and the Prophets.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Lord Willingly Offers Himself (John 10)

This is another important passage that reveals the Cross in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, in the tenth chapter of John's gospel, we have the Savior speaking to the Jews regarding His great work of redemption in terms best fitted to their racial background. The Jewish people were, from their earliest origins, shepherds. So our Lord would say, with the authority that always characterized our Lord, such things as **“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have [it] abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep”** (John 10:7-11). And then he added, **“I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep”** (John 10:14-15).

Later in this chapter, we read: **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given [them] to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch [them] out of the Father's hand. I and the Father**

are one.’ The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out [to be] God.’” (John 10:27-33).

There could be no mistake about the implications of our Lord’s words. It is the voice of the One who had dared to say, **“Before Abraham was, I am.”** So more fuel is being added to the flame, which would soon reach the proportions manifested at Golgotha. However, there can be no toning it down; Jesus the Lord, who is the truth, must speak the truth concerning His Person. Here, in John’s gospel, He affirms with immeasurable assurance His claim: **“And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock [with] one shepherd [that’s Gentiles]” (John 10:16).** However, no one can come without the Cross. The Cross is the door by which the sheep must enter.

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. (John 10:17-18)

Now, this passage teaches that the Father and the Son are one. They are one as far as the Cross is concerned as well even though the Father had to forsake the Son. We speak of the divine victim of the Cross, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. However, symbols are of value only up to a certain point. The lambs sacrificed by the Jewish priests in the temple did not know what was about to happen to them. They went blindly to the slaughter, having made no choice nor having any understanding regarding their involvement. This is not so with the Son of God who had all the insight and understanding. He freely chose and willingly embraced the Cross, setting His face like flint to go to Jerusalem. It was not the high priest, Pontius Pilate, Judas, the Pharisees, the soldiers, not even Satan nor any other entity, which caused the Cross, though they were used; rather it was His own initiative. Peter put it like this: **“This [Man], delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge**

of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put [Him] to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:23-24). It is this that gives the Cross its redeeming power before God and man. The life of a victim would have had no redeeming virtue. Had the Savior been taken to the Cross by force, we would still be with our sins. It is true that He fell from the weight of the Cross, but every step the Master took along the stony walkway was a willing step. Our great High Priest mounted the altar, and He Himself was willing to become our sacrifice: **“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).**

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Corn of Wheat Which Falls into the Ground (John 12)

The visit of the Greeks, recorded in the twelfth chapter of John's gospel, opens another window to peek through for a deeper insight into the thoughts and purposes of the Cross in the mind of Christ.

Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and [began to] ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came, and they told Jesus. (John 12:21-22)

Our Lord's response, at least from the purely human viewpoint, is strange and altogether impossible to understand unless we view it from the Cross. Keep in mind that most people were treating Him in a hostile way; His life was being threatened. It might have been good news that there were those who sympathized, and they were representatives of the Greek culture. However, instead of being pleased or finding any ground for satisfaction, our Lord expresses a cry of pain. His heart is pressed; grief is in His soul. Notice what He says:

And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a

grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour.” (John 12:23-27)

So strange is our Lord’s behavior that we might not be able to grasp the meaning of it all were it not for the fact that the Lord Himself opens it all up to us and gives us the key. We see from His words that the request of the Greeks suddenly focused His attention upon the Cross. What was in the deepest depth of His soul was to be the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb’s sacrifice that would put away the sin of the world. It comes rushing to the surface. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was confined and restricted to this principle until it is accomplished.

So that there would not be any doubt as to the meaning of His words, our Lord draws the veil aside even more: **“Father, glorify Thy name.’ There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again’” (John 12:28).** Notice next that the people said that it thundered; others said an angel had spoken. But the real thunder was the words that followed: **“The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, ‘An angel has spoken to Him.’ Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die” (John 12:29-33).**

So there we have it. We have apostle John’s authoritative affirmation that the request of the Greeks had brought the Cross sharply before our Lord’s eye. But why? It could have been a flash of light in the midst of a storm at night to show the way. However, our Lord knew that people were going to respond everywhere. Our Lord was personally aware of the verses we read:

**Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals;
for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy**

blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Revelation 5:9)

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see [it] and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

The Lord was governed by a great supernatural purpose, which embraced the entire world throughout all the ages. He is the great Atlas carrying the world upon His shoulders. This is why He is called the Savior of the world: **“He is the Savior of all men, especially of believers” (1Titus 4:10)**. There was no one better than the Lord Himself to know that only at the foot of the Cross would mankind find the deepest needs of their souls satisfied. The Son of God had a baptism to be baptized with, and now He set His mind on it until it would be accomplished. Satan, the prince of this world—holding domination over the children of men—must be cast out, his authority destroyed, and his rights annulled; but this could only be done on legal grounds.

Day and night, Satan accused mankind before God, pointing to their sins and the broken law. The accuser of the brethren must be silenced and his hold on the souls of men broken. This could only be accomplished by the blotting out of sin and guilt (which gave the evil one more ground to attack man before God). Through the Cross, victory was accomplished. That is why our Lord said, **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32)**.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Gethsemane's Garden (Luke 22)

We now come to Gethsemane's Garden where, in a real sense, we have no right to enter. As the Lord said to Moses **"Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground"** (Exodus 3:5), He could say this, in effect, to us concerning this garden. The three disciples who were chosen to accompany our Lord on the great occasion of His public ministry—Peter, James, and John—were not allowed to enter. They were brought close, in fact, closer than the other disciples; but they were also to stay behind. Luke tells us that He was about a stone's throw from them: **"And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and [began] to pray"** (Luke 22:39-41).

The truth of the matter is that we really are not allowed to enter here. In fact, it is all wrapped in a dark mystery. Many attempts have been made to decipher the mystery, but the darkness is still there. For example, what did our Lord mean when He said, **"Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done"** (Luke 22:42)? Didn't He know that He was going to the Cross? There have been many speculations as to why He said this. Some teach that He was being pressured by demons, but there are no passages that directly state that. One thing we can be sure of is that He was not suffering the ordinary

fear of death. Something was going on within Him that is impossible for us to understand.

And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:42)

It wasn't fear of death that caused this agony. Christians have gone to the stake singing, and our Lord is greater than them all. The martyrs of the early Church have embraced death without a shadow of fear, rejoicing over the privilege that was theirs, and He is greater than them. So it wasn't fear of death. Our Lord had left the Upper Room with His disciples singing a hymn; He knew that His hour had come. He gave the traitor an opportunity to repent when he washed his feet, and then He said, **"What you do, do quickly" (John 13:27)**. Then, in His priestly prayer, he said, **"These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee'" (John 17:10)**. He said to Peter, James, and John, **"My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.' And He went a little beyond [them,] and fell to the ground, and [began] to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt'" (Mark 14:34-36)**. What was going on?

We read that as the Lord returned to them, He found them sleeping, **"And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow" (Luke 22:45)**. The shame of it. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ, with the burden of the world's sin upon Him, crushed by its awful horror; and the disciples are sleeping. Three times He goes; three times He returns and, each time, finds no comfort in His sleeping disciples. Why? The answer is He must bear the anguish alone. However, an angel from heaven comes to comfort Him.

Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. (Luke 22:43)

The Father could not spare His beloved Son and sinful men too, so the cup is not taken away. Luke, the physician (strange that it should have

been he), tells us that our Lord's anguish causes His sweat to become like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:44)

In the Epistle to the Hebrews—which has, as its theme, the priesthood of Christ interceding for the people of God and making atonement for their sins—we are given the privilege of looking upon the scene that commemorated the Garden of Gethsemane. We are told, **“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8)**. We really can't grab a hold of the meaning of it all. We can reverently turn to the Scriptures, which reveal the Savior's wondrous work of redemption, and find what they so graciously reveal to us by faith; but that's all we really can do. We can't identify with what He was going through.

Every theologian has difficulty in comprehending the depths of Gethsemane. The sinner who has found peace at the foot of the Cross can't really understand. So the Lord had warned His disciples that the prince of this world would come; this was the hour of the power of darkness: **“Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners’” (Matthew 26:45)**. Satan had entered into Judas, Peter would not heed the warning, and the adversary sifted him as wheat. All hell was moving against the Son of God. The devil would find nothing in Him, but he would throw in all he had in an effort to do so. Some of us may have to face the enemy some day for we wrestle not with flesh and blood. However, in dealing with the Son of Man who had come to destroy his works (1 John 3:15), the devil mobilized the entire forces of his dark kingdom and brought them down upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The agony of that hour was revealed by the strong crying and tears the Son of God made through supplication; that's why an angel from heaven comes to His aid. His cry was heard. He was delivered. Our Lord comes forth victorious from Gethsemane whose ground had drunk His sweat.

I want you to notice something very important. In Luke 22:42, the Lord said, **“Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done.”** Only a few moments prior, the Lord Jesus Christ had spoken in these terms, in the Upper Room, when He took the cup and gave thanks and said, **“This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20).** In other words, Gethsemane can only be understood in light of Calvary. The riches of grace springing from the Cross might never have been revealed to us were it not for the apostle Paul. No one has ever looked so deeply into the wonders of Calvary’s cross as the apostle to the Gentiles. It is he who dares to say that our Lord was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In the Galatians epistle, he goes so far as to say that He was made a curse that we might be freed from the curse that the law pronounces. Here is where Gethsemane’s awful mysteries are resolved. The Son of God might cringe and, in the agony of the sweat of blood, cry out for the cup to pass; but in the cup were the sins of the world, the cup which He must drink to the very last drop.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Six Trials for the Lord Jesus Christ

With the exception of one short interrogation, all of these trials were unfair and unjust in every way. One of the greatest systems of jurisprudence was used to condemn the One who was not only innocent, but who, in His humanity, was also absolutely perfect. Of the six trials recorded throughout the Gospels, two were held before Pontius Pilate where 1 Timothy 6:13 declares that Jesus witnessed or testified an honorable confession. The first trial was before Annas who was father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest that same year. We last left the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, so let's continue in John 18:

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples. Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. Judas then, having received the [Roman] cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am [He]." And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, "I am [He]," they drew back, and

fell to the ground. Again therefore He asked them, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am [He]; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,” that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, “Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one.” Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. (John 18:1-10)

By the way, don’t worry about his ear because Luke 22:51 tells us our Lord put it back. Continuing, verse 11 says, “**Jesus therefore said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?’ So the [Roman] cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people**” (John 18:11-14).

Annas was not a judge; therefore this was an illegal trial. Annas was a former high priest, but now he was the political boss of Jerusalem. He was a very wealthy and powerful man. Annas was also engaged in gangster activities connected with every system of corruption in Jerusalem as well as with the bands of robbers in the Negev who owed their protection to him. Remember, the people who brought the Lord to Annas and to the trial were all self-righteous religious people—the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees. Covered by their veneer of piety, these self-righteous, legalistic religious individuals proudly and efficiently plotted and secured the death of Jesus Christ. These are people who would put most of us to shame when it comes to prayer activities, Temple attendance, and almsgiving. At least three times a day, every day, they prayed in the Temple and seven times a day at home. They were very religious, very self-righteous, and also very lost. So Annas was no longer the high priest—he was not a judge—but as the political boss, all matters were cleared with him before going to court. Therefore, Annas, the most religious of them all, approved this case; and following the counsel of Caiaphas, he said, in effect, take Him in and kill Him! So much for the first trial.

From the palace of Annas, our Lord was taken to the palace of Caiaphas who was the legitimate high priest at the time. The second trial is

described for us in Matthew: **“And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together” (Matthew 26:57)**. This was the first trial that was supposed to be legal. This was after the preliminary hearing with Annas. Now, think of how fair this trial must have been. Caiaphas was the one who had said, **“It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation do not perish” (John 11:50)**. Caiaphas was a man who recognized the need of finding a scapegoat for all the anti-Roman activities that were being performed in Israel. He knew Rome would demand that the lawlessness in Palestine be rectified by the death of a culprit. Therefore, he wanted the Romans to think that the Jews were cleaning house without Roman help or interference. So in his policy of expediency, he contended that it was better for one man to die than they all lose their power and wealth. The Sanhedrin, therefore, would try to pass off Jesus as the culprit; and once again, here we see the satanic schemes of religion. The perfect Son of God is to be presented as a master criminal by the master criminals themselves.

In the second trial, Jesus was already considered guilty for Annas had given Him the thumbs-down vote. From now on, all we will see is the wheels of injustice grinding away at our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the assemblage of religious people, **“And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together” (Matthew 26:57)**. Next, they sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death: **“Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death” (Matthew 26:59)**. Deuteronomy 19:15 says that it took at least two eyewitnesses of the same act, event, or sin to convict. All they needed to draw an indictment against the Lord was to get at least two people who will agree to their lies. We do not know exactly how many there were; but there were many, perhaps twenty or thirty people, who got up and lied about the Lord Jesus Christ—the One who had never done any wrong! The One who was sinless! The One who had done so much divine good! The One who had helped so many! The One who gave eternal life to all who believed in Him! All the liars were gathered together, but they dressed up their lies in such a way that not even two of them were able to agree.

Before we go on, notice some of the illegal points of this trial: First of all, it was held at night, which was contrary to Jewish jurisprudence

(see Matthew 26:31-34). However, they were in a hurry to get all their dirty work out of the way because the next day was the Passover; they had to partake of it with clean hands. The fact that the Passover spoke of Jesus Christ dying for their sins was a point that, even if they had understood, would have mattered little in their evil calculations. They were anxious to bring about the destruction of the One who had not only upset their religious applecart, but who also was the perfect patsy for their evil activities. Therefore, it had to be held at night. Secondly, there was no defense attorney provided, which was illegal. Thirdly, the court also sought false witnesses, obviously illegal. Fourth, the court was prejudiced, and there was violence in the court. So not one aspect of this trial conformed to Jewish law.

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death; and they did not find [any,] even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, “This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.” (Matthew 26:59-61)

One after another, witnesses stood up and told their lies; and although the court tried desperately to get two of them to agree, it was practically impossible. Finally, two agreed in one area; and out of this, they tried to form an indictment. I want you to notice what they are accusing Jesus Christ of. Do you remember when Jesus discussed the Temple in John 2? **“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’” (John 2:19).** Our Lord was actually prophesying how they would succeed in bringing about His death; but that their triumph would be short-lived for, on the third day, He would rise from the dead! So when two false witnesses finally agreed and made the statement that the Lord said **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,”** immediately the high priest—who had been waiting, perhaps for hours, for this collaboration—rose up and said, **“Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” (Matthew 26:62).** The Lord did not answer back; not one word did He speak. This is a marvelous manifestation of the fact that He did not possess a sin nature, and He knew that the Cross was rapidly approaching. As lie after lie was

spoken against Him, the uniqueness of Christ should have been apparent to all who watched this blatant injustice. In fact, from their own Bible, they should have been reminded of Isaiah 53:7: **“And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.”**

Many of these men were scribes who studied the Old Testament, on a daily basis, where hundreds and hundreds of passages point to the person of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Yet they did not see; they were blinded by religion. Religion itself is blind, and these people were blind to the person of Christ. How could the high priest, Caiaphas, watch these people lie about the Lord Jesus Christ, the royal high priest, and not get up and say, “He is the Son of God!” Why must we wait for Pontius Pilate to say, “He is a just man”? Why must we wait until a Roman centurion looks up at the Cross and says, “Truly, this is the Son of God”? What is the matter with this high priest? Here, in his court, is the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchisedek. What was the matter with this supposed servant of God? The problem was he was so loaded with religion that he could not see the Son of God. So the Lord held His peace.

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said it [yourself]; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:63-64)

Think of it, the living God was standing in his presence, and the high priest was commanding Him to speak up! Once again, notice the arrogance of religion. Our Lord was asked, in verse 63, **“Tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”** His answer, in the Greek, was **“Su eipas”**; and it is the strongest of all affirmatives, meaning an emphatic yes. That was all He said concerning His person; but He added, and this was grace, the next few items on the agenda: Resurrection, Ascension, Session, and the Second Advent. This all came from the statement **“Nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** He gave them a short course in the doctrine of Christology right there in the courtroom.

Now, what was the response of the high priest? Well, it should have been “Thou art the Son of God. I believe in Thee.” And then, he should

have fallen down on his knees and worshipped Him. Of course, that is not what happened. In fact, by this time, he was downright angry.

Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.” (Matthew 26:65)

Imagine a judge, sitting on the bench, suddenly beginning to tear off his clothes. Here is the attitude of religion! The judge certainly should have known that before he could have an indictment written up, there must be two witnesses who agreed on the accusation. Yet he declares that no witnesses are needed. By the way, something else in Jewish jurisprudence says no one can condemn himself by his own statements apart from a confession of guilt. Actually, if our Lord’s own statements—which would condemn Him—were not true, they would be ruled out. The Lord did not speak blasphemy. He did not make a confession of guilt but, rather, a clear statement of fact. Caiaphas took a clear statement of fact and said it was a confession of guilt, which it was not.

“What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death!” (Matthew 26:66)

The penalty of blasphemy was death. Remember, this was a courtroom under one of the best systems of court procedures that has ever been—procedures which God Himself set up in the Mosaic Law.

Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him. (Matthew 26:67)

Now the violence begins. They were spitting in the face of the One who would hang on Calvary’s Cross and judged for every sin that had ever been or will ever be committed—every sin that they ever committed including spitting and punching Him in His face. Now I submit to you; is this not a little unusual for a trial? The results of it were shocking! Is it any wonder why we read, in Isaiah 52:14, that **“His appearance was disfigured more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”** When they were through with this second trial, Jesus no longer looked human. They kept punching Him until His face was destroyed.

They closed His eyes, His face was swollen, and yet still He stood there. If you know anything about boxing, you know that no one just stands still while someone makes a punching bag out of him—and survives. The ordinary man would suffer anything from a cerebral hemorrhage to a quick knockout. This was another prophecy fulfilled, **“I gave My back to those who strike [Me,] And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6).**

Notice their sarcasm, **“Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?” (Matthew 26:68).** Notice the evil of these religious people! Religion makes people vicious, evil, cruel, corrupt, spiteful, malicious, and violent. Very few of the artists who have painted Jesus Christ on the Cross have understood what the Bible describes of His cruel treatment. Most have portrayed a skinny figure with ribs sticking out, scrawny shoulders, and bony frame, looking like a weak, half-starved person. However, in reality, Jesus Christ was a very powerful man. To receive those severe blows and still survive, the humanity of Christ had to be very strong. How did Jesus Christ stay on His feet? How did He live through such punishment? The humbling answer is that HE HAD YOU IN MIND! He was thinking of you and me because He had to get to the Cross!

You and I will never be able to comprehend the terrible punishment Jesus took—and this was only the second trial! Probably, the most amazing thing is that He did not fight back. All He would have had to do was snap His fingers, and ten thousand legions of angels would have cleaned up that courtroom in a hurry. That’s why our Lord said to Peter after he had used his sword, **“Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53).** Our Lord’s restraint was very significant for if He had lost His temper, there would be no salvation. He remained sinless in spite of the most intense temptations. If you have a sin nature (and you do), enough slapping and insults will make you lose your temper. However, if He had lost His temper, we might just as well close up all the churches because there could be no salvation if Jesus Christ had committed one single sin. He took all of the punching; He took all of the spitting and slapping. However, that did not satisfy them. Again, note the evil and viciousness of religion. The devil himself was present that day, so we have everything from unparalleled violence to utmost sarcasm. Remember also that all of the disciples had left him and fled.

But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left Him and fled. (Matthew 26:56)

So much for the second trial. The third trial was held early the next morning by the Jews.

And when it was day [morning], the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council [chamber,] saying, “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” And they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.” (Luke 22:66-71)

The first two trials, the one before Annas and the one before Caiaphas, were held at night, which made them illegal. This trial was held early the next morning by the Jews. The religious leaders, called here the Council of Elders, realized that the trial at night was illegal. So they gathered together and decided to make it a legal trial. The Greek word for *led away* is the verb *apegagon*, meaning to lead someone to prison or punishment. In other words, in their minds, He’s already guilty; they just have to find some legality to have Him crucified. Now, you may wonder why the Jews didn’t do it themselves. Well, they couldn’t; the Romans wouldn’t let the Jews practice capital punishment.

“If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer.” (Luke 22:67-68)

The Lord would not reveal His claims to those who seek to hear them in order to reject them and not examine them. Silence is His answer to these prejudiced Jews. This is what He meant when He said, **“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest**

they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:6). It is at this trial that Jesus gives them the supreme sign of His messiahship:

“But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God” And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” And they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.” (Luke 22:67-71)

Realizing that it was a feast period (Passover and Unleavened Bread) and they could not sentence someone on a holy day according to their law, they passed Him off to the Romans. So much for the third trial. The fourth trial was the first trial before Pontius Pilate where Scripture declares that Jesus witnessed or testified an honorable confession in 1 Timothy 6:13.

The fourth trial is covered in all four Gospels, but there are certain things in John 18 that emphasize its importance:

They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium [hall of judgment], and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. (John 18:28)

This was the day the memorial supper, the Passover, would be eaten. These self-righteous religious leaders wanted to keep their hands clean in order to eat the Passover that night—the Passover that spoke of the death of Christ on the Cross. Eating the lamb was a picture of believing in the Messiah, yet they had rejected Him. So the Jews took Jesus to the Roman governor in an attempt to avoid Jewish law concerning the holy days because the Law stated that they were not to try someone in court on a Sabbath or holy day. Just like most religious people, they pick and choose what to follow and find ways of getting around certain things.

Next, we read that Pilate went out to them. Pilate had to go out because the Jews could not come inside a Gentile dwelling on a holy day: **“Pilate therefore *went out to them, and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’ (John 18:29).*** The entire procedure is very interesting. Pilate was keeping very cool; he wanted to know what the indictment was.

He undoubtedly had observed the majestic person of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the commotion and shouting. They answered and said to him, **“If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you” (John 18:30)**. The Jews were very upset by Pilate’s question because they had been unable to frame an indictment. There was no evidence to establish a charge against Jesus. They wanted to condemn Him without a trial. So with characteristic hypocrisy, they are insulted that Pilate is even asking the question. They posed as righteous men who would never think of arresting an innocent man. What they said to Pilate is found in Luke’s account, **“And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’” (Luke 23:2)**. Remember that in the first two trials, they accused our Lord of blasphemy, claiming that He was God. However, notice that they do not mention blasphemy.

I want you to see just how shrewd and sly these Jews were. Why do you suppose they did not mention blasphemy? This was a theological problem that would never hold up before a Roman governor. You see, the Romans had only one type of worship—Caesar worship! Caesar is *kurios* (Lord), they said. Had blasphemy been included in the accusation, the first thing Pilate would have done would have been to accuse them of not accepting Caesar as God. That would have put them all on the spot, and Pilate could have hauled them all into court. So needing to get around that possibility, they invented lies. Religious people are the worst type of liars. Their lies generally try to destroy others with their tongue. So nothing was said about tribute to Caesar in the first trials. However, now they said that He is forbidding them to give tribute to Caesar, which is, of course, a deliberate lie. We know that because of what Jesus said when these same religious people brought Him a gold piece to try to trap Him, **“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21)**. We also know from history that the high priests and other religious leaders were the ones always trying to get around paying their taxes to Rome. They were early-day professional tax evaders. So in their accusation to Pilate, they added what they hoped would be the clincher, saying that the Lord claimed to be a king. In other words, they were implying that He was, in reality, setting Himself up as a king and trying to lead a revolt against Rome. To refuse to pay tribute to Caesar was tantamount to refusing to pay your income tax to Rome and would be considered insurrection and rebellion.

Do you see the picture they were painting before Pilate? Here was a rival to Caesar and a dangerous revolutionary. You can understand that after so many agreed to this collection of fabrications, a man in Pilate's position might become pretty upset. Pilate could have been thinking that he had a revolt on his hands and that he had better kill this revolutionary. I want you to notice what a great man Pilate was in his own right. He remained calm and completely in control of himself to the very end, and this is a very important point. The full impact of this is brought out when the Bible tells us, "**Christ Jesus, who has testified the honorable confession before Pontius Pilate**" (1 Timothy 6:13). The Holy Spirit mentions only the trial before Pontius Pilate because Pilate was the only person who gave Jesus Christ an honest, objective hearing and cross-examination.

Pilate therefore said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (John 18:31)

Pilate tried to evade the issue. Here was the weakness in his armor. Pilate thought more of expediency than principle; and it was no accident that a just, but weak, man was the governor of Judea at this time. Pilate had the discernment to observe the innocence of Jesus, but he did not have the character to free Him. The Jews used the law; but they did not execute the law, just like there are people today who use, and even abuse, the Word of God. This is exactly what happened here. The reply of the Jews was an admission that they did not desire a fair trial for Jesus but only His death.

That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die. Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?" (John 18:32-35).

Now, the first question by Pilate implied both ignorance and distress when he asked, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" Pilate, through

ignorance, expressed his frustration in coming to grips with the real issue. Pilate further denied any personal interest or association with the situation. This second question was one that was searching for information: **“I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?”** We have only a part of what our Lord said, but it is very important: **“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm’” (John 18:36).**

Remember that at this time, Satan is the ruler of this world. It would be impossible for Jesus to have a kingdom of this world until Satan’s defeat, which was about to happen at the Cross. This does not mean that Christ will not have an earthly kingdom, but it was not established on earth at that time. The kingdom of Christ on earth still awaits the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. In the meantime, He has a kingdom of regenerate people known as the Church or body of Christ. At present, the rulership of Christ is invisible and spiritual. Jesus did not say that His kingdom was not in this world; He said it was not of this world. John 17:16 tells us that believers are in this world but not of this world. Our Lord’s kingdom now fights with the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, rather than the sword of men.

Pilate therefore said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say [correctly] that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him.” (John 18:37-38)

When Pilate asked about truth, Jesus had no doubt explained that He Himself is Truth. This famous sneer of Pilate indicates the state of the natural mind. Spiritual blindness, and lack of a human spirit, make spiritual phenomena impossible to absorb (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit can change this. The Spirit makes the Gospel understandable in the mind of the unbeliever, but here is a case of negative volition. Pilate did not really desire an answer to the question he had asked, and so indicated it by leaving immediately

before an answer could be given. What was Pilate's verdict? Here is the importance of the fourth trial: **"I find in Him [Jesus] no fault!"** Here was the first unbiased, unprejudiced examination. Here was the only impartial judge. The conclusion was that He was completely innocent. However, let's note the reaction of the Jews found in Luke's account:

But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place." (Luke 23:5)

The Jews then began to put the heat on Pilate. Finally, the pressure became too great for Pilate; and realizing that Jesus was a Galilean, notice what he does next.

But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. (Luke 23:6-7)

Pilate sought to avoid the pressure from the religious crowd to kill an innocent man and, instead, let Herod deal with the situation. So under Herod's jurisdiction, Jesus underwent His fifth trial. This fifth trial was before Herod and is found in Luke 23:8-12.

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been at enmity with each other. (Luke 23:8-12)

Herod was excited to see Jesus because he had heard of His reputation for performing miracles. So hoping for some entertainment, he attempted

to persuade Jesus to perform one of His miracles. However, when Jesus refused, Herod angrily ordered Him to be tortured. This was another unfair trial. So Jesus was now sent back to Pilate for the sixth and final trial.

And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. I will therefore punish Him and release Him.” [He was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.] But they cried out all together, saying, “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!” [He had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection made in the city and for murder]. And Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify Him!” And he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt [demanding] death; I will therefore punish Him and release Him.” But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices [began] to prevail. And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand should be granted. And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will. (Luke 23:13-25)

Notice that Pilate was obliged to release to them one prisoner. This is not found in all of the manuscripts, so let’s go John 18:39, **“But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”** Before Pilate once again, Jesus was subjected to one more trial. Remember, and I want to emphasize this fact, Pilate had said—not once but several times—that Jesus Christ was innocent. So we pick up from the trial where Pilate was examining Jesus again. Pilate called Him the King of the Jews. Jesus had convinced Pilate of His birth, His status, and the facts concerning Himself; and Pilate made an ingenious attempt to gain the release of Jesus on the

basis of the custom of the Passover. Realizing that Jesus was innocent, Pilate would make it possible to release an innocent person, get himself off the hook, and help the religious leaders save face. However, these Jewish leaders, under the control of Satan, would not let up until Jesus was removed from the scene. So here is a judge at a trial and he now has pronounced Jesus innocent and he has tried three times to get the Lord Jesus Christ released. It was obvious to him that the Jews wanted Him executed and that they are using a Roman court to do so.

In his first attempt, here's what he tried. Pilate was a good Roman governor in many ways, and he was actually an excellent student of Jewish custom, so he knew that it was the custom of the Passover for the Roman government to release to the Jews a prisoner who had already been condemned to death. Pilate sought this means of releasing our Lord Jesus Christ. However, it backfired when the crowd demanded the release of Barabbas, one of the worst gangsters in Jerusalem: **“Therefore they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas’” (John 18:40)**. Their position was to not release the most wonderful person who ever lived but, instead, release public enemy number one, Barabbas. This man, Barabbas, was not a petty thief; in the Greek, we see that he was a habitual professional criminal, possibly the number one man of the crime syndicate in that area. He was vile all the way through, yet the religious crowd was asking for his release. Religion became the champion of a despicable criminal rather than the perfect, matchless Son of God.

Matthew's account of this event interjects an interesting sidelight: **“And while he [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him’” (Matthew 27:19)**. This dream was probably of satanic origin as Satan did not want Christ on the Cross to bear the sins of the world but wanted him stoned to death as prescribed by the Jewish law, thereby frustrating the plan of God. However, Pilate's wife gave a correct account of Him by calling Him the righteous one. Convinced of the innocence of Jesus, Pilate attempted to release him. Here is the judge who is hamstrung by political pressure, but he was trying his best to get Jesus off the hook. His second attempt is actually recorded in Matthew's account: **“And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of this Man's blood; see [to that] yourselves.’ And**

all the people answered and said, ‘His blood [be] on us and on our children!’” (Matthew 27:24-25).

Pilate had just declared, once again, the innocence of our Lord under Roman law; and by a symbolic act, he called his servant to bring in a bowl of water and washed his hands publicly in front of the entire crowd. The custom of washing the hands indicated that this person was innocent. The Roman governor had just indicated that if they kill this man, it is judicial murder, and they are killing an innocent person. The Jews must have been shocked when Pilate stood there and washed his hands in front of the crowd, declaring again this man’s innocence. In fact, even under Jewish law, this washing of the hands meant innocence (Deuteronomy 21:6-9).

Pilate had cast a vote that all could see; if they couldn’t hear his voice, they could see him wash his hands, and they all knew the meaning. Some thirty years later, on that very spot on which Pilate washed his hands, the Romans crucified thirty-six thousand Jews. Josephus describes the horrors of what happened there. He said that first of all, they took the hide off those thirty-six thousand Jews, and then they crucified their mangled bodies right there, on that very spot. That very spot where Pontius Pilate washed his hands became one of the bloodiest spots in all of the lands of the Middle East. Little did the Jews realize what they were saying when they said, in Matthew 27:25, **“His blood [be] on us and on our children!”**

In his third attempt, Pontius Pilate stepped out on the balcony. He knew our Lord was innocent, and so once again, he discussed the matter:

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they [began] to come up to Him, and say, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and to give Him blows [in the face.] And Pilate came out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And [Pilate] said to them, “Behold, the Man!” When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out [to be] the

Son of God.” When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has [the] greater sin.” As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out [to be] a king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” They therefore cried out, “Away with [Him], away with [Him,] crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified. (John 19:1-16)

Pilate hoped that perhaps the horrors of scourging would work, that it might appeal to their sympathy, and so he sent the Lord Jesus Christ down into the basement with the Praetorian guards. This gave the Roman soldiers a chance for a little amusement. They stripped Him, and they scourged Him, which means they took all the skin off His back. Then He returned, and He was very badly disfigured; His back was raw and bleeding. They brought Him back out on the balcony with the Roman governor and put Him out before the crowd and said, “Here is your king.” Pilate thought that the scourging would somehow bring the Jews to their senses, but it didn’t! All he heard from that balcony was “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”

Now, a Roman, at this point, has the chance to go down in history as a Roman leader or as a simple coward. However, Pontius Pilate chose expediency and cowardice, and he goes down in history just that way. In fact, to the Romans, the voice of the people didn’t mean a thing; the

Romans had a saying that said, in effect, “The voice of the people is idiocy.” What the people think is usually the incorrect attitude, and Pilate was a Roman governor, and he knew this. Pilate should have raised his hands for silence and told them what they were, religious liars, and then sent them on their way. However, that wasn’t the plan of God; and God knew billions of years ago that Pontius Pilate, although he was a very excellent Roman governor, had a weakness.

The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord, and against His Christ. For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:26-28)

Pilate’s weakness had to do with the fact that he could succumb to popular pressure.

They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, [and] in Greek. And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.” (John 19:17-22)

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

The Sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ while on the Cross

The first statement from the Cross is “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

The first cry from the Cross is found in Luke 23:34. The Lord Jesus Christ has now been delivered to the Romans to be crucified on the cross after the unfair trials and the unjust treatment.

Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. (Luke 23:32-34)

At this moment, our Lord was enduring the first pains of crucifixion; the executioners had just driven the nails through His hands and feet. He must have been greatly distressed by the agony of the night in Gethsemane and extremely weak from the scourging and cruel mocking that he had endured all through the evening and morning from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past

nor the pain of the present could prevent Him from continuing in prayer. The Lamb of God was silent to men, but He was not silent to God. As a sheep before the shearers is silent, He had not said a word in His own defense to man; but in His heart, He continues calling unto His Father. No pain, no weakness, could silence His prayers to His Father.

What an example our Lord presents to us! In the midst of unjust treatment and great unfairness, He still continues in prayer as long as His heart beats. He would not let any form of undeserved suffering drive Him away from the throne of grace. Actually, all of it drove Him closer. To cease from prayer in time of suffering is to abandon the comfort that our circumstance requires.

The Lord Jesus Christ persevered in prayer even through the pain of crucifixion. He was so accustomed to praying that He could not cease from it. This should be our example; never—under any circumstances, no matter how severe the trial or depressing the difficulty, no matter what the adversity—are we to cease our prayer life. Also, observe that in His prayer, our Lord remains in the position of His sonship. The extreme suffering to which He now submitted Himself could not prevent Him from still being a son.

Our Lord's prayer begins in verse 34 with "Father," and that is how He taught us to pray. We should address God as our father because our assurance in prayer depends upon our confidence in our relationship with God. Under undeserved suffering or picking up our cross, we may be inclined to think that God is not dealing with us as a father would with a child but, rather, as a judge with a condemned criminal. Of course, this is not true. The prayer of our Lord, while He is under the ultimate of pain and suffering on the Cross, is still addressed to the Father. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, when blood fell from His face to the ground, His cry was **"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will"** (Matthew 26:39).

What is even more remarkable is the fact that our Lord's prayer to His Father was not for Himself. He did pray for Himself on the Cross when He said, **"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"** that is, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** (Matthew 27:46). However, the first of His seven great cries on the Cross had no direct reference to Himself. It was **"Father, forgive them."** You will recall how Isaiah 53:12 says, **"Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."** This first saying was a petition for others, and though there was an implication concerning the cruelties that they were executing upon Him, notice that He did not say, "I forgive them." His forgiveness is to be taken

for granted. He didn't focus on the fact that they were doing any wrong to Him; instead, He focused on the wrong being done to His Father. They were insulting the Father by not honoring His son.

**So that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.
He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father
who sent Him. (John 5:23)**

The cry—“**Father, forgive them**”—is an unselfish cry, as though He was not even suffering Himself. If there had ever been a time in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ when He might have confined His prayer to Himself, it would seem like it would be now, while on the Cross. However, the Lord Jesus Christ began His prayer on the cross by pleading for others, and so we see His compassion even as He was being crucified! This unselfishness is something we are to have as well.

**Do not merely be regarding your own personal interests, but
also for the personal interests of others. Keep on thinking
this [doctrine] within yourselves which was also resident in
Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:4-5; author's translation)**

Not only was He praying for others, but, in fact, He was also praying for His cruelest enemies. It was a prayer for those who were there murdering Him. In fact, it was a prayer that included the scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, the Jews and Gentiles, and in a sense, the whole human race. If we knew nothing more about Him than the fact that He prayed this one prayer, we should honor and respect Him just for that.

The first thing our Lord reveals on the Cross, in the character of His intercession, is graciousness. Those people whom our Lord prayed for did not deserve His prayer. They had done nothing that was worthy of their being prayed for. In fact, on the contrary, they were undeserving individuals who had conspired to put Him to death. They had lied about Him, accused Him falsely, and now were crucifying Him. They were utterly undeserving of a single good word from the Savior. What's more is they didn't even ask Him to pray for them; in fact, it was the last thought in their minds—to ask Him to intercede for them! They even mocked Him while He was praying for them. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for those who did not deserve the prayer but deserved a curse. It's

interesting that we are told that, in heaven, He is still doing this today: interceding for the undeserving.

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

He is the great High Priest who pleads for guilty men and, notice, even for the unbeliever.

No one on earth deserves His intercession. He pleads for none on the assumption that they deserve it. He stands there and pleads as the One who is just on behalf of those who are unjust. Notice, it doesn't say, "If anyone is righteous, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It says, "**If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**" Our great Intercessor pleads for those who, through ignorance or arrogance, have never even asked Him to plead for them. Since He prays for those who reject Him and His Word, therefore think how much more He prays for those who love Him and His Word.

I want you to notice another principle in His prayer. Back in Luke 23:34, when He said "**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing,**" He actually found something good to say about His enemies! It is as if our Lord recognized that they were all simply pawns of the devil. He has the same attitude today. He knows our exact condition at this moment and the exact state of our heart with regard to the suffering and the temptation that we may be facing. Even more than that, He foresees the trials and the temptations that are awaiting us; and in His intercession, He prays for us.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded [permission] to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32)

He knows us better than we know ourselves. He understands every secret form of grief and sorrow. In fact, we don't have to be so concerned with how we word our prayers because He will put the wording right.

In Luke 23:34, when He said **“They do not know what they are doing,”** He was pointing out willful ignorance. They could have known that He was the Lord of glory. There was enough proof that He was the Messiah. The point is that on the Cross, He still cared for those who were rejecting Him. Also, notice, in this first saying on the Cross, that the Lord Jesus Christ sought what is important for those around the Cross. He said, **“Father, forgive them.”** He didn’t say, “Father, enlighten them for they do not know what they are doing.” Enlightenment would have created torture in their conscience. What they all needed, at this point, was forgiveness. The first thing that the guilty need is forgiveness for sin, and the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for that very thing. In fact, many of those for whom He prayed became saved. Do you remember what He said to His disciples after He rose from the dead?

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45-47)

On the day when Peter stood up with the eleven apostles and convicted the people that, with their wicked hands, they had crucified and slain the Savior, three thousand of them—who were justly accused of His crucifixion—became believers in Christ; and they were baptized in His name. We read, **“So then, those who had received His word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).** That was an answer to our Lord’s prayer. Even many of the priests who were responsible for His murder believed: **“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).** Here was another answer to the prayer.

Since all men shared in His mistreatment, Gentiles as well as Jews, the Gospel was preached to all of them. This was an answer to our Lord’s first saying on the Cross, **“Father, forgive them!”** As He was, so His Church is to be in this world. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world not to be ministered to but to minister, to save others: **“For even the Son**

of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). When believers understand this, they will perceive that they are not here to gather for themselves wealth and honor or to seek some temporal position; rather, they are here to live unselfishly and to serve those whom the Lord Jesus Christ died for.

Our Lord’s prayer also teaches us that we should be unselfish and concerned with the spiritual in an unlimited way. Remember that He prayed for the wicked, those who had surrounded His Cross! He prayed for the ignorant; He prayed for the arrogant. He said, “They don’t know what they’re doing!” He prayed for His persecutors, the very ones who lied about Him and mistreated Him. This teaches us that our duty is not just to those who treat us respectably but also to those who mock and criticize our words and pass judgment upon our teaching. Our duty is not only to those who treat us kindly and generously, but also to those who despise us and reject us. This is the mind of Christ. The Gospel is meant also for those who persecute it.

The first saying of the Cross, therefore, teaches us that we must not live for ourselves. We are not to live for the accumulation of money, children, or houses; all this we may indeed have, but there must be a greater objective than this if we are to live the Christian way of life. We are to live for others. Paul put it like this:

Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? (2 Corinthians 12:14-15)

So the one word that describes the first saying on the Cross is *forgiveness*. Forgiveness means to give up resentment, to excuse a guilty party, to release from payment, to forget an offense, never bringing it up again and not even discussing it. If you desire to know how many times you should forgive someone, we are told, **“If he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Luke 17:4).**

The greatest illustration of forgiveness is the Cross itself where all the personal sins of the human race were imputed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

By His work on the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ opened up the way for God the Father to forgive us! **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).** Your sins have been paid for by the blood or saving work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Ultimately, when people sin, they sin against God. This is why David said, **“Against Thee, Thee only I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight” (Psalms 51:4).**

We do not have the right to remain angry or bitter toward someone who has legitimately wronged us because Christ paid for that sin. So when they do this, they have really sinned against God even though it may have been directed toward us! This is why to not forgive others is actually to sin against God. This pattern of forgiveness is applied to the believer as part of the royal family honor code:

Bearing with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you [forgive others]. (Colossians 3:13)

You do this because it’s for your own benefit! You can bear with people, put up with them, tolerate them, and have patience with them; and that may not benefit them at all! However, it will benefit you! You will not let them get to you! Therefore, you will avoid mental-attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and overt sins!

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

This attitude describes the winner in the spiritual life. He is tenderhearted and forgives others on the basis of the fact that God has forgiven him. Forgiving others also allows God to handle the situation rather than self: **“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath [of God], for it is written [in Deuteronomy 32:35], ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).** Another reason why we are benefited by forgiving others is because failure to forgive means no production of divine good. This means that all of our works are unprofitable if we hold resentment or if we don’t forgive. This is one of the principles behind Matthew 5:23-24, **“Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your**

brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Notice that if you have anything against your fellow believer, leave your gift, or your offering, at the altar and go and be reconciled first. Why? Because if you do not forgive others, you cannot be filled with the Spirit, and therefore everything that you do will be rejected by the Lord no matter how good it may appear overtly. So if we don't forgive, we will not experience fellowship with God. In other words, if you make others suffer and pay for what they've done to you, you will be the one who suffers and pays!

Another reason why we are benefited by forgiving others is so that our prayers will be heard: **“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14-15).** Many believers get out of fellowship through resentment and, thus, never have their prayers answered: **“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions” (Mark 11:25).** As believers, we must have an unlimited attitude of forgiveness—not an “I'll give you one more chance” attitude but an unlimited attitude! The Greek word for *forgive* in this passage is *aphiemi*, which means to completely cancel, to send something away without even discussing it, never bringing it up again!

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” (Matthew 18:21)

This question illustrates Peter's ignorance toward true forgiveness because to forgive someone up to seven times means that you must keep count! To keep a count means that you do not forget, and you bring up the situation again. Therefore, you did not really forgive! When Peter used seven as the number of times that an offending brother should be forgiven, he may have thought he was doing some great thing. Actually, what Peter did in suggesting a limit to our forgiveness was to imply the notion that a man, in forgiving, *gave up a right*, which he might under certain circumstances exercise. Peter makes it sound like he was giving

up the right to take vengeance on someone for what he did, and that is not a right! The purpose of this parable is to make clear that when God calls on a member of His kingdom to forgive, He is not calling on him to renounce or *give up* a right because, in reality, he has *no right* in the matter at all!

Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:22)

This represents the unlimited amount of forgiveness that comes from God! Then our Lord begins the parable:

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle [them], one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have [the means] to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. (Matthew 18:23-25)

It was customary in the ancient world that if someone could not pay you what they owed, you could not only take all of their property and attach it, but you could also even take them and their family and sell them as slaves (see 2 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:8).

So the slave fell [to the ground] and prostrated himself before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.” And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. (Matthew 18:26-27)

This statement simply shows the extreme fear in the moment, which made him promise impossible things, for he could never repay what he owed his lord. Now, how much did his lord forgive him? Ten million dollars worth! And notice the word *compassion* because compassion motivates forgiveness.

But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii [twenty dollars]; and he

seized him and [began] to choke [him], saying, “Pay back what you owe.” (Matthew 18:28)

This is a picture of believers who want unlimited forgiveness from God but will not forgive others! Notice the phrase “he went out” because it is one of the key words in the parable! He went out from the presence of the lord and found someone who had owed him something. It is because we go out from the presence of the Lord that we are in danger of acting like this servant, with an unforgiving heart! He has forgotten the benefits that he received from his lord. The small sum is mentioned to show how little man can offend his fellow man compared with the amount in which every one of us has offended God.

So his fellow slave fell [to the ground] and [began] to plead with him, saying, “Have patience with me and I will repay you.” But he was unwilling, and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, “You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?” (Matthew 18:29-33)

Notice, the guilt laid upon him is the fact that after having received mercy and forgiveness, he remains unmerciful and unforgiving toward others.

And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (Matthew 18:34)

This is divine discipline on the believer who is unforgiving. The torturers represent the three enemies of the believer: the flesh, the world, and the devil.

My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35)

In other words, it's not just saying that you forgive; it's what you really think! If someone has wronged you and you do not forgive him in your heart, you have had it! However, this is where the principle behind Daniel 9:9 comes into focus, **"To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness."** To have forgiveness toward others, we've got to *know* God! You will discover that when people harbor bitterness, anger, resentment, indignation, or implacability, they do not know God; and that is the real problem! It is through occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ that we develop a capacity to forgive. This means the ability to forgive yourself for the things you do and forgive others for the things they've done to you!

The second statement from the Cross is "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

One of the criminals who were hanged [there] was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed [are suffering] justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

The salvation of the dying thief reveals the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to save mankind, and His willingness to receive all that come to Him in spite of their predicament. Remember, the Lord, at the time that He saved this thief, was at the lowest moment of His life. Stripped of His clothing and nailed to the cross, mocked by the crowd and dying in agony, in that condition, He still achieved this gracious act of reaching out and saving someone. The writer of Hebrews puts it like this, **"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).**

What makes the salvation of the thief so extraordinary is not only the weak condition our Lord was in, but also the fact that the dying thief recognized the Savior. He talked about fearing God (Luke 23:40), and he knew that Jesus had a kingdom (Luke 23:42). I wonder how many of us

would be willing to believe that the one hanging on the Cross, in agony, is the Son of God? This thief was also in great pain, and yet in the midst of that pain and of being almost dead, he exercises a faith and a confidence in the Messiah. In fact, there is a passage that teaches that even he had mocked the Lord in the beginning, but then, he repented and changed his mind, **“And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words” (Matthew 27:44).**

There are certain principles that are brought out in our Lord’s second saying on the Cross. The crucified thief was our Lord’s last companion before His physical death on earth: **“For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one [Father]; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11).** Our Lord was a friend of the tax collectors and sinners, and He came to call sinners not the righteous. So it was a convicted felon that our Lord associated with last while alive. Another reason that these words were recorded is that we might know how quickly someone can be saved and have their entire life changed for eternity. That we might know that salvation is by grace through faith: **“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).** This thief could do absolutely nothing for salvation except believe on the Lord. This thief also reminds us of the doctrine of eternal security, **“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).**

The third statement from the Cross is one of compassion (John 19:2-27).

The Bible records that there seem to have been only five people around the Cross in favor of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only male disciple was John who, apparently, came back after running away when Jesus was first captured; the rest were all women. The first one was His mother who was now seeing the fulfillment of what Simeon, the prophet, had said:

And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this [Child] is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35)

The second woman, the wife of Cleopas was Mary's sister-in-law. The third was Mary Magdalene. Then the fourth woman was the mother of John, and her name was Mary. It's interesting that each one of them was named Mary because the name means bitterness.

When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own [household]. (John 19:26-27)

This passage teaches the affection and tenderness that our Lord had for both John and His mother. Joseph, her husband, was dead; and the Lord Jesus Christ had supported her, and now that He was dying, what would become of her? He saw her standing by and knew her cares and grief, and He saw John standing nearby, and therefore He confirmed a new relationship between His mother and the apostle John.

The point that I want you to focus on is, once again, the affection and care that the Lord showed others while going through the tremendous suffering of the Cross. This can be something we learn to do when we go through some suffering: **"For each one shall bear his own load" (Galatians 6:5)**. Also notice something else; He calls her woman, not mother, not out of any disrespect to her but because *mother* would have brought in some of the heretical doctrine that we have today such as Mary being called the mother of God. So we have a manifestation of His feeling of parental duty. If children have the ability to do so, they should provide for their parents. This was actually an honor put upon John and a testimony both to his wisdom and to his loyalty. The Lord knew that John loved Him and that he would be loyal and faithful to His mother. This was actually a blessing to John because it is a great honor to be utilized by Christ and to be entrusted with any of that which is His interest in the world.

We should also admire Mary's marvelous fortitude and courage. She was not hysterical or demonstrating sorrow. There was no show of weakness, no wild outcry of uncontrollable anguish, no falling to the ground and collapsing from what she saw. There's not a word that she said on this occasion that has been recorded by any of the four Gospels. Apparently, she suffered in unbroken silence, but she didn't fall or faint.

She just stood by the cross. Here is our Lord, occupied with the most strenuous work ever done not only on earth, but also in the entire universe and under a burden that no one else could possibly have sustained, still caring for others. Here He is the object of Satan's ruthless treatment! About to drink the awful cup, which meant separation from God Himself for three hours. Nevertheless, even at such a time, the Lord Jesus Christ did not consider natural ties as unworthy of recognition. To the very end, He showed Himself both the perfect Son of God and the perfect Son of Man.

It is also interesting to note our Lord's treatment of John who is being honored and being treated very graciously. Why was that needed? We read, in Matthew 26:56, "**Then all the disciples left Him and fled.**" He had said to them, in Matthew 26:31, "**You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.'**" You can bet that they were ashamed to be found in His company after forsaking Him. With the responsibility given to John, it was as if our Lord was telling Him that He had been forgiven. One word can describe this saying on the Cross, and that is *compassion*. Compassion is defined as a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another's suffering or misfortune accompanied by a desire to alleviate the pain and remove its cause.

We have all experienced the compassion of God toward us, and we are to share that same compassion with those around us. This is why there is no place for revenge or rejoicing when you see your enemy fall. Your attitude of compassion should always aspire to see an unbeliever become saved, or a believer restored to fellowship. Compassion also motivates long-suffering and patience. We are told that the Lord will never fail to be compassionate toward us.

The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

The Fourth statement from the Cross deals with anguish.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

**that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
(Matthew 27:45-46)**

These words, found in Matthew and Mark as well as in Psalm 22, were literally screamed. In this cry, Jesus Christ made it clear that God the Father, with whom He had eternal and unbroken fellowship, had to break fellowship at that moment. Therefore, we know immediately that this is the time when Jesus Christ **“bore our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24)**. This was the unspeakable agony of the Cross, the spiritual death prophesied in Psalm 22:1. The fourth cry indicated that He was being judged for us. God the Father had to pour out all of His wrath, as a matter of justice, upon God the Son while the humanity of Jesus Christ bore the sins of the world. This is why the Father had to turn His back upon Him.

These words were screamed by the humanity of Christ. Some call this the saddest cry from the Cross. In fact, during the time that Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, he came to the mountain of God called Horeb. There he saw a very unusual sight, a bush that burned with fire and, yet, was not consumed. As Moses drew near in order to examine this phenomenon, he heard God’s voice say to him: **“Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5)**.

I am going to deal with this statement in a personal way not in a theological way. **“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”** is a tremendous statement that no man will ever be able to really understand. First of all, the Lord Jesus Christ was accustomed to address God as His Father. If you look at His prayers, you will find Him speaking to God as His Father. However, in this instance, He does not say “Father” but “My God, My God.” Was it that He had any doubt about his sonship? Absolutely not! He was simply speaking from His humanity, and that this is the reason why he cried “My God, My God” rather than “My Father.” This statement shows us how truly human the Lord was, that He could be forsaken by His God. It is hard for us to comprehend that the Lord Jesus Christ, being Emmanuel (God with us) and His deity and humanity being permanently united in one person, could have been forsaken by God. However, this is holy ground, and we must believe it by faith because God says it. This is such a sacred statement that it is one of the only verses given in all three languages the Bible was originally written in.

He was and is the God-Man who has been scourged, who has been spit upon, and who has died. All these things were made not only possible, but also sacredly certain in order to complete the redemption of His people. It was necessary for Him to be both God's beloved Son and to be forsaken by his Father. This forsaking was something personal to Him. It was a personal grief that came from a personal cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" The Lord Jesus Christ made no mistake about this, for God had truly forsaken Him. He knew what He was saying, and He was right in what He said, for His Father had forsaken Him for the time being. God did forsake His Son, but He loved Him as much when He forsook Him as at any other period. In fact, if it had been possible for God's love toward His Son to be increased, He would have delighted in Him even more when He was being judged for the sins of the entire world. God was not angry with Him personally. God did not look upon Him as unworthy of His love. God did not regard Him as unworthy of being the One who was His beloved Son and the One in whom He was well pleased.

Imagine the misery of a lost soul in hell, one who is forsaken by God and who cries out in bitterness. Can you picture that dejected state? Well, if you can, you have not, even then, gotten anywhere near the position of Christ on the Cross because that soul in hell does not seek for God or ask God for help. That lost soul is so hardened that it never thinks about whether God would receive it even if it repented; the truth is that it does not want to repent. The misery that men will suffer in the world to come will be a self-created misery, arising out of the fact that they loved self so much that they brought eternal sorrow upon themselves. It is an awful thing for a person in hell to be without God; but, as far as their own consciousness is concerned, they are so hardened to be without God that they are incapable of knowing the beauty of a relationship with God from whom they are separated forever. How different was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross! He knew, as no man could ever know, what separation from God meant.

None of us knows the presence of God as Christ knew it. No believer has ever enjoyed the love of God as Christ enjoyed it. Never did any human being know so much and enjoy so much of the love of God as Christ had done. He had lived in it, and there had never been any interruption to it: **"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"** (John 8:29). The point

is that our Lord Jesus Christ had enjoyed the love of God to the fullest. So think what it must have been for Him to lose the conscious enjoyment of it. For the light of His Father's face to be taken away from Him, this was a dark and terrible thing to him.

It is important to remember also the absolute purity of Christ's nature. In Him, there was no sin, **“You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). “He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).** Think then of the perfectly holy Son of God fully agreeing with His Father in everything and finding out that the Father had, for good and sufficient reasons, turned away His face from Him. Jesus Christ was forsaken by God because we deserved to be forsaken by God. He was there, on the Cross, in our place. As the sinner, by reason of his sin, does not deserve to enjoy the favor of God; so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner, had to come under the judgment just as the sinner would have come if Christ had not taken his place. He was forsaken so that you and I would never be.

The Fifth statement on the Cross can be identified by the word *suffering*.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28)

It is wonderful to realize how Jesus Christ loved the Scriptures as they then existed and how His life, in His humanity, centered in them. The first great lesson from the fifth phrase is the importance of the Word of God. The thirst of Jesus indicates His humanity for deity does not thirst. Again, it focuses our attention on the importance of the humanity of Christ for deity alone could not suffer the penalty of sin. This fifth statement from the Savior—“I thirst”—followed the three hours of darkness during which the light of God's countenance had been withdrawn from Him. This cry, then, tells of the intensity of what He had suffered, the awful severity of the conflict through which He had just passed. However, even though His sufferings were like no other and as great as His thirst was, it was not desire for the relief of His body that now opened His lips. Far different, far higher, was the motive that prompted Him.

The very fact that He did thirst evidences His perfect submission. He, who had caused water to flow from the smitten rock for the refreshment of Israel in the wilderness, had the same infinite resources at His disposal now that He was on the Cross. He, who turned the water into wine by a word from His lips, could have spoken the same word of power here and, instantly, met His own need. Why, then, did He hang there with parched lips? It was because, in the volume of that book that expressed the will of God, it was written that He should thirst! He came here to do God's will and ever did He perfectly perform it. In death, as in life, Scripture was—for the Lord Jesus—the authoritative Word of the living God. In the temptation in the wilderness, He had refused to minister to His own need apart from that Word by which He lived, so now He makes known His need not that it might be relieved, but that **“the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”** The terrible thirst of crucifixion is upon Him, but that is not enough to force His parched lips to speak; but “it is written” is what caused Him to speak.

They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (Psalm 69:21)

Here again, He shows Himself in active obedience to the will of God, which He came to accomplish. He simply says “I thirst”; the vinegar is extended, and the prophecy is fulfilled. How completely self-possessed the Savior was! He had hung on that cross for six hours and had passed through suffering unparalleled; nevertheless, His mind was perfectly clear and His memory entirely unimpaired. He had before Him, with perfect distinctness, the whole truth of God. He knew the entire scope of the messianic prophecies; He overlooked nothing. What a proof this was that He was superior to all circumstances!

A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon [a branch of] hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth. (John 19:29)

The first drink of vinegar and gall, commonly given to criminals to deaden their pains, the Lord refused. The drink of vinegar or sour wine He here accepts is in obedience to His Father's will. The ones who gave it to Him were probably the Roman soldiers who carried out the details of

the crucifixion. Little did they think that they were executing the counsels of God! I want you to consider the phrase “I thirst!” Have you ever been hungry or thirsty and literally had nothing to eat or drink? Yet here is our Lord on the Cross, suffering for the sins of the world and thirsty! What right do we ever have to complain? So the One who said, in John 7:37, “**If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink**” was now Himself thirsty. If our Lord had not thirsted for us, every one of us would have an eternal thirst, forever separated from God.

The sixth statement from the Cross can be described by the word *victory*.

When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. (John 19:30)

When the Lord Jesus Christ uttered the words “It is finished,” He evidenced the fact that salvation was complete. Nothing could be taken away from it, and perhaps above all, nothing could be added to it. It was purely a matter of grace. No one has ever deserved this salvation, and there never will be any member of the human race who deserves something as wonderful and as marvelous and as precious as the blood of Jesus Christ, which—as a representative analogy of His spiritual death—cleanses from all sin. Consequently, when He said “It is finished,” He made it very clear that to add anything to the finished work of salvation is sheer blasphemy! That is why the Scripture reiterates over and over, “**He that believeth on the Son has eternal life.**”

The phrase “**It is finished**” comes from a single word in the Greek, *tetelestai*. It was the shortest and yet the fullest of our Lord’s seven statements from the Cross. Eternity will be needed to make manifest all that it contains. All things had been done that the law of God required; all things had been established that prophecy predicted. All things were brought to pass that the types foreshadowed; all things were accomplished that the Father had given Him to do. All things were performed that were needed for our redemption. Nothing was left undone. The costly ransom was given, the great conflict had been endured, sin’s wages had been paid, and divine justice satisfied. True, there was the committal of His spirit into the hands of the Father, which immediately followed His word here.

There was His resurrection, ascension, and session on high; but these are the fruit and reward of this work that He completed. Nothing more remained for Him to do; nothing more awaited its fulfillment. His work on earth was consummated.

“It is finished” was not the despairing cry of a helpless martyr. It was not an expression of satisfaction that the end of His sufferings was now reached. It was not the last gasp of a worn-out life. It was the declaration, on the part of the Divine Redeemer, that all for which He came from heaven to earth to do was now done. That all that was needful to reveal the glorious character of God had now been accomplished. That everything necessary for the putting away of the sins of His people, providing for them a perfect standing before God, securing for them an eternal inheritance, and fitting them for it had all been done.

The seventh and final statement from the Cross can be described by the word *contentment*.

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, it was voluntary: **“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:17-18).** Upon His physical death, His human spirit went into the presence of the Father; His soul went into Hades, to a compartment known as Paradise; and His body went into the grave to wait for that glorious moment, some three days later, when the body would be rejoined by the soul and the spirit; and Jesus Christ would rise from the dead. The seventh cry was the beginning of the end; and yet the end was now a new beginning. Jesus Christ would arise from the grave in His resurrected body, walk among men for a short time, then ascend into the presence of the Father to sit at His right hand as our great High Priest and make intercession for us forever.

Note that there is a change in the vocative from the “My God” of the previous phrase to “Father.” In addressing Himself to the Father, it

is obvious that His work has been completed and that He is no longer paying the penalty of sin, the act that elicited the vocative “My God.” The Father has been propitiated by the spiritual death of His Son. Jesus, through spiritual death, fulfilled an analogy to the blood sacrifice of the Old Testament; He was then ready to dismiss His Spirit. All references to the blood of Christ refer to His spiritual, rather than to His physical, death. However, note again how the Lord Jesus Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God. The last word He uttered was doctrine! He was the great original thinker, **“Never did a man speak the way this man speaks” (John 7:46)**. He never lacked suitable language, yet you will notice how continually he quoted Scripture; the great majority of his expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into scriptural shape and form. You can see that the Bible had been His one book.

In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of thought, He was not unconscious, and He did not die of weakness. He was strong even while He was dying. It is true that He said, “I thirst”; but after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as a strong man only could, **“It is finished.”** Now, as He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!”** Our Lord might have made an original speech as His dying declaration; His mind was clear and calm and undisturbed. In fact, He was perfectly happy for He had said **“It is finished.”** His sufferings were over, and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of victory. Yet with all that clearness of mind and freshness of intellect and the fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence; but He went to the book of Psalms and took, from the Holy Spirit, this expression, **“Into Your hands I commit My spirit.”**

How instructive to us is this great truth that the incarnate Word lived on the inspired Word! It was food to Him as it is to us, and if He lived upon the Word of God, should you and I not do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture, and He went to it and studied it and used its expressions continually.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Apostle Paul Discovers the Cross

After our Lord died on the Cross and rose again three days later, He appeared to the disciples. He didn't tell them that it was all over, that they should go home and forget about what happened on the Cross. On the contrary, He said in effect, "Let's remember it forever, and let's proclaim the Cross throughout all of the world and place it before the eyes of men everywhere and forever." We read in the New Testament that our Lord appeared to His disciples for forty days with many infallible proofs:

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over [a period of] forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

Our Lord showed the disciples His hands and His side, and He identified Himself by means of His Cross. He revealed Himself as the Crucified-Risen Lord. Thomas, because of his doubts, was told to reach forth his hand and put it into the wounded side of his Lord. So there is no thought of hiding or forgetting the shame of the Cross. Rather, it is to be the basis and theme of the disciples' preaching for Jesus says to them, "**Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?**" (Luke 24:26).

There is no thought of hiding or forgetting the shame. The Lord opens their minds so that they might understand the Scriptures, saying

that what was written in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms regarding Him was now fulfilled: **“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem’”** (Luke 24:45-47). In speaking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He takes them through the Bible to show them that these things concerning Him were all written centuries before His coming. These men—who for years had read the Old Testament and had heard it expounded by the rabbis—now see, for the first time, its deepest meaning and its true intent. They see their Risen Lord as the crucified One throughout the pages of the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask His disciples to forget what took place at the shameful, disgraceful, degrading Golgotha. On the contrary, He commands them never to forget. This is why we are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

They now see the Cross in the light of the Resurrection. No more disgrace, dishonor, and shame! They realize that there was never a victory such as our Lord’s victory on the Cross. At the Cross, the head of that old serpent, the devil, was bruised. At the Cross, the rights and authority of man’s greatest enemy were forever annulled, **“Through death, the Redeemer destroyed him who had the power of death, that is to say, the devil”** (Hebrews 2:14; author’s translation). So with that, the early Church went forward, proclaiming the Cross of Jesus Christ.

No one has ever gloried in the Cross of Christ as did Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Others have gloried in the Cross; but Paul’s cry was **“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”** (Galatians 6:14). It was the alpha and the omega of the apostle’s life, the dynamics of his missionary teachings, the very heart of his epistles, and the essence of his preaching. How did he arrive at such devotion so that the supreme passion of his life became the Cross? The question takes us to the ninth chapter of the book of Acts where we have the story of Paul’s conversion.

He is the one who, as a Christian, said that he counted all else but dung so that he might win Christ. He was just as fervent and passionate in the days of his unbelief when, as a Jew and a Pharisee, he persecuted the Church. He was determined to uproot and destroy this fast-growing

movement that threatened to spread over the earth. He felt it was his duty to drag Christians to prison, to make them blaspheme the name of Christ, and if necessary, to see to their stoning as in the case of Stephen, the Church's first martyr. Saul of Tarsus, as he was then called, was an absolute vicious tiger who was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. However, on the road to Damascus, he met with his destiny. As he ran proudly toward that great city, in order to take more Christians to prison, one of the greatest events of history took place. We can say that because Paul is one of the greatest men in history. Here is where Saul meets Jesus! The Risen Christ appears to him, and he falls to the earth, stricken with blindness by a glory that he couldn't bear:

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He [said,] "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:1-5)

Saul, trembling with astonishment, takes at once the attitude that characterized him the rest of his eventful Christian life—namely, that of a soldier—and says in effect, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" However, of prime interest for us at this point is the fact that the Lord says to this enraged persecutor, "**I am Jesus.**" Why didn't He say what He said most of the time, "**I am Christ**"? For that is the name appropriate for our Savior as Paul saw Him. He is the Christ of God. To His divine nature, He is the Christ; to His human nature, He is Jesus. Paul is blinded by a glory he cannot look upon; it is all divine. The glory is that of God. Yet the voice is that of a Man, "**I am Jesus.**" How very strange, but it is exactly right. Had the Lord said "**I am Christ,**" the effect would not have been the same. Saul might have gone on his hateful way, persecuting Christians and destroying the Church, for he believed in the Christ as all true Jews did. This was not the point of controversy. He could have said

what the Samaritan said: **“I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us” (John 4:25).**

What Saul had not believed was that Jesus, rejected and crucified as though a blasphemous impostor, was indeed the Christ. Now Saul knew, and never again did he harbor a doubt. In that instant, Paul’s theology was formed. He knew that the glory that had knocked him to the ground was none other than the glory of God. And yet the voice was that of Jesus, and that meant that Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh! **“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).** Here we have the great apostle’s Christology. The most emphatic teachings in the Scriptures regarding the deity of Jesus Christ are found in the Epistles of Paul.

However, how did Paul come to construct such a Cross-centered theology? Many of the disciples wouldn’t accept Paul in the beginning. How did he ever arrive at the position expressed in his Galatian epistle where he declares that he will glory in nothing but the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying that there he too had been crucified unto the world and the world unto him? To find the answer, we will have to follow him to the Arabian Desert where he went right after this experience on the Damascus road.

But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. (Galatians 1:15-17)

Paul desperately needed time for meditation and prayer. His world had been demolished. Moses and the Law were gone. Phariseism was dead, and he was no longer a Jew; he was a Christian. Paul must form a new world with the Lord Jesus Christ as the center. Paul withdraws to the Arabian Desert with a burden that would have crushed the average person, with an agony that might well have taken him to his grave. It was the Cross.

He needed to reconcile the glory of the vision on the road to Damascus with Golgotha's shame, and Paul knew his Bible. He knew that awful word in Deuteronomy about the one being hanged on the cross, that he was accursed of God. In fact, he mentions it in Galatians: **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13).** Could such disgrace and shame ever be brought into harmony with such glory and majesty as was the Christ's? Or must it forever be the terrible stumbling block that it was to the Jews? Would the offense of the Cross, which to the Greeks was foolishness, never cease?

Paul found out because Paul did not go to Arabia alone; the Lord Jesus Christ went with him: **“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12).** Paul tells us, in this Epistle to the Galatians, that there, in the desert lands of Arabia, the Lord Jesus Christ was not only revealed to him, but also *in* him. He tells us that he received his Gospel straight from Jesus Christ without any human intervention. Knowing as we do the outcome of it all, as found in his epistles, we can, with perfect confidence, confirm that he was taught more about the Cross than the others, the ones who walked with Christ. It was revealed to him that although wicked hands had slain the Lord Jesus Christ, it was all in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Paul comes to see, at last, that the Cross was the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Old Testament. His eyes became open to the fact that the Messiah would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. Think of what a joy it must have been for him when he learned that the sinner's justification was consummated by the Savior on the Cross. In fact, when he returned from his three years of retreat, he came forth with the message that would be proclaimed in all of the world.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

He realized that it was through grace that the crucified and Risen Lord had met Saul, the sinner, and that this grace was for the entire world. Paul would say, **“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,**

among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Timothy 1:15). Then he would say, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).** This man, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, would become the master builder of the Church, constructing her doctrines, extending her borders as no other has ever done, and establishing the principles that should govern her to the end of time. Even though his apostleship was contested by many in his day, no other apostle was ever so worthy to be called an apostle as was Paul. He would begin his fantastic ministry by focusing on the Cross of Christ. He would begin by pointing to the forgiveness and grace of God. Until a man realizes that all of his sins have been completely wiped out and paid for, that man really has no hope! He bears the burden of his own sins, and having violated God’s holy laws constantly, he comes under His righteous judgment with no means whatever of justification. He slips away in shame to hide from God as Adam and the woman did. The apostle tells us “Christ died for our sins,” and he says this is the good news; this is the Gospel.

Of course, in a sense, Paul is not telling us anything new. The Lord Jesus Christ said it all in the Upper Room. However, it needed to be reaffirmed, and here is the interesting point: It would be reaffirmed by that one who was the number one enemy of the early Church. He tells us why beginning with 1 Timothy 1:12:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:12-16)

Here is a man who went from being the most notorious enemy of the Church to being the master builder of it. No justifying circumstances,

no merits of any kind (he was out to destroy Christians and the Church, therefore, attacking Christ Himself), no sign of a change of heart (he was on the road to Damascus getting ready to murder more Christians when he was called by God)—all he had was just sheer hatred, of the deepest kind, for Christians. But Paul was forgiven because of the Cross where Another, the very One whom he had hated, had borne his guilt. Paul must have seen this truth, this mystery concerning the Cross, many times as he spent those months in the Arabian Desert in solitude with His Lord, the One who now taught him these incredible mysteries of doctrine that Paul would soon share with the world.

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12-14)

No wonder why he said, **“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Philippians 3:13).**

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

A false teacher was known to say: “Of course, God forgives. It’s His business.” However, he didn’t understand the payment for forgiveness. A cheap forgiveness is of no value. A father whose business it is to forgive everything his children do, who establishes no authority and who enforces no law, is not worthy of being a father. Inevitably, his home will be filled with chaos and grief and shame. There can be no authority, no government, no divine order—whether in heaven or upon earth—without law; and law has no meaning if there is no punishment for those who break it. If the demands of the law are violated and ridiculed, and there is just forgiveness or an overlooking of the rebellion, there is no authority, no government, no divine order! It collapses, and anarchy takes over.

Yes, God is love. Yet with all His love, which can never be measured, He could not pass over man’s sin because He is also just and righteous. If

He merely overlooked sin, He would cease to be holy. If He ceased to be just and righteous, He would cease to be God; heaven would be hellish, and God's throne would be defiled. The spiritual death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross allows God to be in the business of forgiveness. God's righteousness approves of the perfect God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness approves of His perfect work on the Cross in payment for the sins of the world, the entire human race. Therefore, justice is satisfied and is free to bless anyone who believes in Christ. God loves the sinner even while hating the sin, and He solved the problem of sin through the Cross of His Son. That was a vital part of Paul's message. That is why, from the beginning of human history, when man fell into sin, a Redeemer was promised (the seed of a woman) who would undo the work of Satan and free the human race from the devil's bondage and sin's guilt. That is the good news Paul constantly proclaimed, being, as he was, such a supreme example of the grace and forgiveness of God. Many misinterpret our Lord's sufferings as an appeasement of the wrath of the Father, but this is completely off base. Jesus Christ did not die on the cross to appease the wrath of an angry God. He satisfied the perfect justice of a holy and loving God. John 3:16 says that God so *loved* the world that He gave His uniquely born Son. Everything in God's nature, every fiber of His justice and righteousness, cries out against sin. The wages of sin is spiritual death, and so the Lord Jesus Christ paid those wages in the saving act of His death. The resulting propitiation is the basis for God being gracious and merciful toward us. At the Cross, the character and nature of God was *revealed* to mankind and to angels in all its glory; and that includes His justice, His righteousness, and His love. We should all join the countless grateful souls around the throne of God to sing to the Lord as redeemed worshippers:

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

Being forgiven so much, the apostle Paul loved much (Luke 7:47). This is why Paul would say such things as **“He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions” (Colossians 2:13)**. Paul constantly gloried in the Cross because he realized that Christ's work there restored everything that had been lost in the fall of man. Man desperately

needed to be redeemed from the slave market of sin, be reconciled to God, and have the justice of God satisfied on his behalf. Though the crime was great and the depravity complete, there is a Savior who gave the deliverance that will satisfy, for both time and eternity, the righteous demands of God, leaving nothing to be desired. The Cross demolished the barrier that had existed between man and God.

Paul would teach that on the merits of Christ's work on the Cross, the believer of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only forgiven, but also is the beneficiary of fantastic grace gifts at the moment of salvation. Because the Cross wiped out the sin problem forever, no obstacle remains to God declaring the believer perfectly righteous! **"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).** The Amplified Bible presents the fact in stronger terms that really drive home Paul's insight: **"Therefore, since we are justified [acquitted, declared righteous, and given a right standing with God] through faith, let us grasp the fact that we have the peace of reconciliation to hold and to enjoy" (Romans 5:1).**

The sinner who believes in Christ is declared righteous, acquitted, and given a right standing before God. When a person realizes that this was the work of redemption consummated on the Cross, it leaves one with amazement and an inexpressible happiness. By reason of the efficacy of the work of Christ on the Cross, God can declare a man righteous and free from all guilt. If only more believers could comprehend this marvelous fact, they would be delivered from all guilt, fear, worry, and anxieties. They would be a manifestation of **"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).** Paul expounds on this principle in his Epistle to the Romans where he puts the whole world under conviction of sin, both Jews and Gentiles, declaring that there is not one righteous—not even one in the entire world—according to God's standards. Paul analyzes man and states the case of the sinner before God. He removes the mask and reveals the scars of fallen man's true condition.

As it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep

deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of [respect for] God before their eyes.” (Romans 3:10-18)

Paul states the total depravity of man and the wickedness of sin. If you have any doubts, take a good look at the Cross where we have not only the ultimate revelation of God’s love, but also the horrible results of man’s sin. God was at His best, and sinful man was at his worst. Crucifixion was the sinner’s answer to God’s invitation of love. As in the parable, mankind said to God, **“This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance” (Matthew 21:38)**. The sinner’s attitude toward God has been portrayed for all time at the Cross. Paul goes on to face the problem of God’s righteousness in view of man’s horrific rebellion against God. He explains that God can’t pass over man’s wickedness when there is such a profound antagonism between the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man. Moses had said that it was not possible for God to justify the ungodly. Were He to do so, He would cease to be just. For example, a judge who, for bribes or other considerations, justifies the wrongdoer ceases to be a real judge. He descends to the level of the criminal he acquits. So it is with God. Were He to declare man free from guilt and shame by overlooking sin, He would stoop to the level of the wicked and become sinful Himself. So Paul would teach that the Lord cannot justify the unredeemed sinner. However, God found a way—a way so wonderful, so glorious—which would reveal the glory of the Godhead. Nothing more sacred, more worthy of praise, will ever be known throughout all eternity. God found a way whereby He could pardon the sinner who constantly trampled underfoot His laws, mocked His sovereignty, and resisted His kingship. Paul would teach that this pardon and forgiveness could never be broken either by man or angel.

Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,

or sword? Just as it is written, **“For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:33-39)**

Because of the Cross, no flaw will ever be found. Because of the Cross, no blemish will ever appear on believers. Because of the Cross, God’s throne will forever be that of a Holy God whose righteousness will stand uncompromised before millions of angelic beings and redeemed souls. Because of the Cross, Paul would say that though your sins are as scarlet, **“yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Colossians 1:22)**. Paul would teach that at the Cross, man’s sin was dealt with. Man’s crimes were given what they deserved: the penalty of separation from God. Man’s rebellion and his wickedness were judged: **“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out” (John 12:31)**. The Lord Jesus Christ would say that as He set His face to go to Jerusalem, it was the sin of the world receiving its just due so that mankind could be saved without the throne of God compromising its righteousness: **“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25)**. It was the world’s sin being punished as the righteousness of God demanded so that God could begin to deal with sinners on the ground of mercy rather than judgment. Therefore, Paul would write:

For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him

are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:32-36).

God found a way to justify the sinner and yet remain just:

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; *for the demonstration*, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26; emphasis added)

The Cross demonstrated God's righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. This remarkable work of grace gives the believer such a standing before God that God declares him righteous without the possibility of the declaration ever being challenged. Once God justifies a man, he is justified forever. God declares the believer righteous and totally free from guilt. No wonder why Paul was determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified! He loved teaching this message.

So Paul begins by emphasizing forgiveness, as we have seen, and the wonder of the believer being declared righteous in view of the Cross. But Paul would also focus in on the principle of reconciliation.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated

and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. (Colossians 1:16-22)

The Cross is the ground for our reconciliation with the Father. For what good is forgiveness for our sins, and what value is justification, if mankind is not also brought back into fellowship with God. Thankfully, the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ has also reconciled us to the Father to present us holy and blameless and beyond reproach. Paul puts it like this:

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:13-16)

Notice what Paul keeps focusing on in the books of Galatians, Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians: the Cross, the Cross, the Cross! **“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14)**. Notice, in Ephesians 2, that not only was man reconciled to God, but man was also reconciled to men (Jews and Gentiles); the wall of separation is broken down. At the Cross, all of our racial distinctions are done away with. You cannot stand at the foot of the Cross and hate your fellow man for whom Christ died as He did for you. The walls of separation between man and God, as well as between man and man, have been broken down through the Cross. They were all abolished at Calvary. This is why we need the Spirit of God to give us the grace to embrace the Cross of Christ so that, in our life, any enmity we have—whether it be in our relationship with God or with other people—might be completely destroyed.

Paul would go on in his understanding of the Cross and also teach something else that the others did not teach. The sinner has not only been forgiven, justified, declared righteous, freed from guilt, and reconciled to

both God and man, in view of the efficacy of the Cross; but something more is also there. Paul finds, in the Cross of Christ, another advantage no less essential to our happiness, namely, freedom from the old sin nature and its inherent power to enslave and master us. The sin nature not only produces sin and guilt, but it also becomes a tyrant over those it commands and controls when it is obeyed. We need forgiveness for what we have done in the flesh, but we also need freedom from what we are in the flesh.

In Romans 6, Paul immediately raises the question of sin's power over man: **“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Romans 6:1)**. At the moment of salvation, the believer is justified in a legal sense, declared righteous, which is the real implication of Romans 5:20. **“And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20)**. Does this mean that man is righteous before God but still under the power of the sin nature? Is he left to the mercy of the sin nature, which is the destructive, God-defying force in the life of one declared righteous legally but still unrighteous? This is where many Christians are today, justified before God but in bondage to their old nature, and they end up either in antinomianism or legalism. Many think that if sin is still dominant in their life, all that matters is that they have believed and are, consequently, justified by faith; and therefore they have peace with God. However, this does violence to the Cross of Christ, which is not only the ground of a right standing before God legally—having been freed from all guilt—but also the ground of a spiritual transformation in which the believer is freed from the sin nature as a governing principle and is able to live in the very righteousness of Christ. In other words, we are saved not only to be declared righteous, but also to be made righteous.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized [identified] into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (Romans 6:1-3)

Then comes the great declaration regarding the Cross of Christ that he makes in Romans 6.

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)

The old man, or the sinful self, was crucified together with Christ so that the body of sin might be destroyed and that we should not serve sin. With the phrase “Christ died for the sinner,” we must also add “with Christ, the believer died also.” The Cross was not only used to put away the sinner’s guilt and to give him a right standing before God, but also to break the backbone of this monster called the old sin nature and to set man free from its dominion. That’s why Paul goes on to say, **“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11)**. As we do this, we are guaranteed that the sin nature shall no longer have dominion over us: **“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14)**. Here we have God’s answer to the believer’s struggles and bondage! Here we can have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sadly and tragically, for most believers, it all comes to nothing. They are either living in the weakness of their flesh, in sin, or the strength of their flesh, in self-righteousness. They are either living in the weakness or the strength of their old sin nature, and they can’t please God with their self-effort! Dealing with the very same subject, Paul says, **“And those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8)**. Self-effort cannot achieve what only Christ crucified could bring to pass. Here is God’s answer: On Calvary’s cross, a cosmic blow was dealt to the monster. The sin nature was stripped of its governing principle over the life of the believer as it was taken down into death with Christ. This is only true for the believer! **“Therefore if any man is in Christ, [he is a] new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17)**. The old creation—with its life, pride, bigotry, and self-centeredness—has ended when the Lord Jesus Christ said, **“It is finished.”**

The curtain went down on history, and it was the dawn of a new age. In the power of His Resurrection, the Son of God, the Son of Man, brought to light the new man. All this is just as important, and as much of a gift, as forgiveness and justification. It springs from the same Cross.

We do not attain it by effort. We must rest upon an accomplished fact, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ not only dealt with our sins on

the accursed tree, but also with the sin nature that governs man's way and life. Our old self was nailed to the Cross with Him; it is an accomplished fact. Nothing can be added to it. If we learn to rest in all that the Cross signifies, victory will be the result.

There's something else that Paul emphasized as he pointed to the Cross—that is, the Cross also puts an end to legalism. Legalism is defined as man's futile attempt to gain salvation, or to continue in God's plan, by way of some system of dos and don'ts. This is human good for the purpose of gaining God's approbation! There are at least eight systems of legalism, or asceticism, that the believer must be aware of:

1. Prohibitions and taboos is the viewpoint that an individual is spiritual because he doesn't do certain things. Certain prohibitions may exist when a believer is in fellowship with God, but they are the result of spiritual growth not the means.
2. Personality imitation is manifested by dressing a certain way, mannerisms, and even vocabulary.
3. Comparativeness is a system of relativity, thinking along the lines that your sins are worse than mine; therefore I'm more spiritual.
4. Emotionalism is similar to getting involved with tongues, slaying in the spirit, manipulating through weeping, and the fire-and-brimstone presentation.
5. Asceticism is a strict denial of self or self-sacrifice. This is when an individual tries to give up normal activities and necessities of life in order to please or impress God.
6. Ritual is thinking one is spiritual because he goes through various forms of ritual. The Jews used circumcision; today many use baptism, dedication services, even communion.
7. Confusing the means with the results is also a system of legalism that the believer must be aware of. It is like thinking you are spiritual if you pray, give, witness, etc. All of these things must be done from the power of God not the power or the energy of the flesh.
8. Self-crucifixion is a misunderstanding of Romans 6, of being crucified with Christ. You can't get rid of self! Self does not crucify self! The fact of that matter is that it runs all through Paul's epistles that the Cross of Christ was the end of legalism.

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

It took Paul, our Lord's chosen vessel, to bear His name before kings and to fully expound this fact and to show how this came to pass. In his Epistle to the Colossians, Paul says, **"Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14)**. Not only did He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, not only did He judicially put an end to the old creation, but he also terminated the old Jewish legal system, which was so vitally related to both. Our Lord said, **"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17)**. The law was given to the old man, the old Adamic nature. Where sin has been cancelled and the old Adamic nature crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ taking it to the Cross, the legal system stemming from Moses no longer applies. Its reason for existence has gone. Our Lord gave some insight into this many times.

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." [He is quoting Exodus 21:24.] But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy." [He is quoting Deuteronomy 23:6 and 25:17.] But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:43-44)

The great passage regarding this principle is Romans 7. Here we are told that by means of the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ took us out, in the most drastic fashion conceivable, from the old Mosaic system with its legal demands, its decrees, and its ordinances. It is declared, with the authority God had given to the apostle Paul, that Christians have died to the Law by the body of Christ, that they might be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead:

Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. (Romans 7:1-4)

So the decree has gone forth, from the very throne of God, that Christians are to consider themselves dead to the Law. The Lord Jesus Christ took that which was contrary to us and nailed it to His cross. Therefore, we are free to marry another, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of God. This places us on ground so high that there shouldn't be any wrongdoing, because we have the freedom from being in bondage to a legal system. In Romans chapter 7, Paul explains all of this as he describes himself as being under the Law, and finding his absolute moral bankruptcy apart from grace, and coming to the end of himself. There was a command that really bothered him, which he could not overcome. In Romans 7:8, he says, **“But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.”** The command **“Thou shalt not covet”** drove him crazy. It tormented him because he realized that no matter how much he struggled with it, it was not within his power and moral capacities to fulfill the command. Even when he tried to do good, he found he could not because evil was present and he was carnal, sold under sin: **“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (Romans 7:14).**

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is

in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:21-25)

So if the Law could not be followed, what value was the Law? If the Law awakens in me that which it prohibits, is it good? Paul says, **“But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died” (Romans 7:8-9)**. Here he says that all the Law did was to stimulate the sin nature within him! Is there something wrong with the Law? Absolutely not! **“So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12)**. The trouble doesn’t lie with the Law. The trouble lies in the fact that when he tries to do good, evil is present with him. The reason for the Law is found in Romans 7:13, **“Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.”**

Here we have the heart of the whole matter, and to what a tremendous conclusion we are brought. The Law is impotent, powerless to do anything for us but kill us! **“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and [as an offering] for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3)**. The only thing that the Law does is to aggravate the whole matter. It was never given to be kept but to be broken. That sounds like heresy, but it happens to be pure biblical truth: **“Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so” (Romans 8:7)**. Then why was the Law given? It was given to show sin for what it is. Some diseases have to be brought to a head; the physician must provoke a crisis before he can effect a cure. The Law provokes the crisis, and the cure is in the Cross: **“Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24)**. That’s why, in Colossians 2:14, we read, **“Having canceled out the certificate**

of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” It is not surprising that in the very next verse, Paul declares that the Lord Jesus Christ spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphed over them by means of the Cross, **“When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him” (Colossians 2:15).** Satan loves to drive us to Mount Sinai, where the Law was given, to put us under the Law. Why? **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56).** On the other hand, the Holy Spirit takes us to Calvary, to the Cross, where “the accuser of the brethren” was silenced: **“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death” (Revelation 12:11).**

Here are some principles concerning legalism and the Law:

- The believer has died to the Law (Galatians 2:19).
- The believer has received all the benefits of the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:1-5).
- The Law brings nothing but condemnation (Galatians 3:10-14).
- The Law has no power to give life or to sustain life (Galatians 3:21).
- The Law is a bondage to the believer (Galatians 4:9).
- Law and grace are mutually exclusive principles; therefore choose one or the other (Galatians 4:21-31).
- The believer has an abiding freedom in Christ and, therefore, cannot be under the Law (Galatians 5:1).
- The believer must keep all the Law if he would attempt to keep even part of it (Galatians 5:2-4).
- The persuasion to put the believer under the Law is not from God (Galatians 5:8).
- Legalism of the believer does away with the offense of the cross (Galatians 5:11).
- The believer’s proneness to sin calls for dealing with him according to grace, not dealing according to the Law (Galatians 6:1-5).
- All who advocate the Law for the believer cannot keep it themselves, and their intention is ultimate glory in the flesh (Galatians 6:13).

Paul taught another important principle we need to note, and that is the Church was born crucified. The Church was taken out of the wounded side of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, just as Eve was taken out of the first Adam's ribs. This is why the Church is called the Bride of Christ. Unfortunately, the Church in general does not understand this intimate relationship, and this explains her spiritual impotence and apathy. The world looks at the Church and sees her divisions, rivalries, and jealousies; it shakes its head and, therefore, is not convinced that Christianity is the truth. Carnality, strife, rivalry, jealousy, and worldly ambition are the same stuff that the world is made of. You will recall, in John 12:21, how certain Greeks came to Philip and asked him, "**Sir, we wish to see Jesus.**" Remember that our Lord did not consent to their wishes because first was to come the Cross (John 12:20-23). So it is with the Church. Many would like to see Jesus, but the Church can only show forth His glory by means of the Cross. The Church must realize that she was born crucified; and that apart from the Cross, as we have seen it in Romans 6, she becomes impotent and filled with pride and rivalries. This is why Paul emphasized that the Church is the body of Christ, that Christ is the Head, and that Christians are the members.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our

more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:21-27)

This unity can only exist when the Cross is taken up among believers. How can this unity, love, and respect exist in the body of Christ? **“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). “Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him thus] no longer” (2 Corinthians 5:16).** There is only one remedy for that which, even within the Church, causes divisions and separations; and that is understanding the application of the Cross to our relationships with one another. James tells us that war does not come primarily from economic, commercial, ideological, or national problems, but from the wickedness, which he calls lust, in the hearts of men: **“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures [lusts] that wage war in your members?” (James 4:1).** Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he said that the heart of man was desperately wicked and deceitful above all things in Jeremiah 17:9. Isaiah knew it when he said, **“From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts, and raw wounds; not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil” (Isaiah 1:6).**

So what is the solution? There is only one hope. Pride, jealousy, and denominational bigotry give way before one, and only one, power; and that is the Cross. The Church must realize that she was born not Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, nor any other thing. She was born crucified. Take the Cross out of her heart, and the spirit of the world takes over. Christ is no longer the head, the subtle workings of the flesh took over, and there is little or no spirituality left:

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all

stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. (Romans 14:10-15)

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off [Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ [cross]. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups [Jews and Gentiles] into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. (Ephesians 2:13-14)

There was never such a wall of separation as there was between the Jews and the Gentiles. To the Jew, the Gentile was a dog, a stranger to the Law. To the Gentile, the Jew was even more detestable. The antagonism could never be removed by human power. Paul tells us that the wall was broken down at the Cross, **“By abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace” (Ephesians 2:15).** The Lord had to take religion from the Jew in order to bring him into oneness with the Gentile. Nothing separates people, causes conflicts, divisions, and separations like “religion.” Here, in Ephesians, Paul is as bold as a lion. He faces the two camps, Jews and Gentiles; and he tells them to lay down their arms in view of the fact that both have been reconciled to God on the same ground, the ground of the Cross! If more believers understood the Cross and really believed our Lord, **“To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40)**—we would not see so much bickering and so many divisions among believers. The world would know that we are truly disciples of the Lord: **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).**

It was at the Cross where the Lord terminated the old creation, which generates divisions, strife, jealousy, and pride. In the power of the Resurrection, the new man, the new creation was brought into being: **“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him thus] no longer. Therefore if any man is in Christ, [he is] a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”** (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul says something else that is very interesting: **“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”** (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). The Cross is the power of God. The Cross has the power to change men’s lives! One would not naturally associate power with the Cross. God’s power is revealed in the creation and the maintenance of this and every other universe in existence. However, there was a much greater power released in the redemption of man, at the Cross, when God judged the sins of the entire world. Never was there such a display of the power, wisdom, love, and righteousness of God as there was in that hour. Nothing was withheld. The glory of God was revealed in its most complete, most exalted, maximum illumination! There, on the Cross, was the eternal Christ who, by the word of His power, holds the universes together (Hebrews 1:3). On the Cross, the One who knew no sin was made to be a sin offering on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21), that we might be free from sin’s awful guilt and condemnation. When you really perceive, through the power of the Holy Spirit, what the wisdom and love of God did for you on the Cross, you will say, with the apostle Paul, **“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Galatians 6:14).

In 1 Corinthians, the word for *power* in the Greek is *dunamis* from which we derive our word *dynamite*. **“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”** (1 Corinthians 1:18). Truly, the word of the

Cross is the dynamite of God. No other power can break down the proud hearts of men like the word, or the doctrine, of the Cross. When the Holy Spirit reveals and teaches us of the Cross of Christ, it changes people's lives; it sets people free. Do you remember what happened after the Lord said, **"It is finished"**? The power of God was manifested.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up [His] spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:50-54)

The veil was almost a foot thick; only God Himself could rip it. Furthermore, it stood forty feet high, and it was ripped from top to bottom. God Himself ripped that veil to show that entrance into heaven was now available not only for Old Testament believers, but also for any believer who dies now. The resuscitation of these Old Testament believers was a part of the leading of the captives in Hades out of their captivity and transferring them to the third heaven. It conveys some idea of how the Old Testament saints were transferred to the third heaven after our Lord's efficacious spiritual death on the Cross. However, what I wanted you to notice was the power of the Cross! Dynamite is used to remove great barriers. It is used to remove great barriers, powerful granite blockades, when a highway is being opened up or a building being built. However, there's never been such an insurmountable blockade like that which man's sin had raised against God. However, the dynamite of the Cross broke through it! The power of God opened a door that all of the demons of hell, with their prince, the roaring lion Satan, can never close. It is the door of mercy opened at the Cross for anyone who believes.

Dynamite also destroys, and there is a stronghold in the heart of every man called pride. Even the fear of hell cannot remove pride from the heart of man. Law cannot move it. The mightiest angel is powerless before

pride's strength. Prisons, torture, and even death cannot remove pride! It is the very strength of the sinner in revolt against God, but there is a power that destroys this mountain called pride. We saw it in Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus. There wasn't a prouder Pharisee than Paul. However, it was the Cross, through the blinding vision on the road to Damascus, that did the work so that we could hear him say, "**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**" (**Galatians 2:20**). Now Christ is on the throne in Paul's life; the power of the Cross wiped his pride away. Paul is willing to be nothing so that Christ may be glorified. The dynamite of the Cross did it.

The very first promise in all the Scripture gave out this power. The Seed of the woman (the Lord Jesus Christ) would bruise the head of that old serpent, the devil (Genesis 3:15). The blow was struck on the Cross. The dynamite was released through the Cross. The power of God removed the authority that the kingdom of darkness had over man. That is why the preaching of the Cross is the wisdom of God:

But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night." And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. (Revelation 12:10-11)

We must now face a word in Revelation that a lot of people pass over concerning the Cross. We are told that upon our Lord's return, according to the promise, many shall seek to hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.

And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth

made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:12-17)

It is not the blood of the Lamb but the wrath of the Lamb. The Lord Jesus Christ is so gracious and infinitely merciful but not without wrath. If He could look upon the wickedness of man without experiencing a righteous, holy indignation, He would be less than the people we know who could not look upon injustice, abuses, the mistreatment of innocent children, or the infamous crimes of a tyrant such as Hitler without disgust and legitimate anger. This is the One who could say to the Pharisees who made long prayers and yet devoured widows’ houses: **“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?” (Matthew 23:33)**. The wrath of the Lamb is love that has been rejected. Here is the One who was moved with compassion as He looked upon the multitudes—“sheep without a shepherd”—who drew to Himself prostitutes, lepers, and publicans; sat with sinners at banquets; and said to the thief on a cross by His side, **“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43)**. This is the One who offered forgiveness as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and now we see His wrath. However, they have willfully chosen to reject the cost of the sacrifice, which could have made them free from guilt and condemnation; and therefore, standing on their own merits, they are now under His wrath. They have spurned and rejected God’s infinitely gracious offer of salvation made through His Son. They have rejected infinite love and, now, will face the wrath of the Lamb. Infinite love was willing to redeem the sinners with such a passionate willingness to bear all their shame, guilt, and sin; but they have said no to it! This infinite

love becomes, as it rightfully should, wrath. What would you say of a son who rejected his father's love after the father died in his place? Wouldn't everyone cry "shame" at such a thing and be moved by legitimate anger? Wrath is as right and needful as love. If they will not embrace the Savior, then they shall be compelled to meet the Judge.

As we move to the last days, there is a great revelation of our Lord, given in Revelation 19, where the Son of God goes forth to war. Many do not like to hear about these types of principles as found in the Bible, but they are there. They wonder how going forth to war represents the meek and humble Son of God who stooped to wash the feet of fishermen. However, that's because they have failed to fully comprehend the Son of God, and they've failed to understand the angelic conflict. One of the tricks of Communism is to talk peace as if war was not on their minds and to try to disarm the free nations if possible. Satan, as the god of this world, believes this; and he is on the warpath, as never before in all of human history, because he knows his time is short.

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:11-16)

This is the amazing revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we come to the closing chapters of the book of Revelation. What does it mean? It means that the One—who died on Calvary's Cross and, on the third day, rose again—will have the last word in the great struggle with the evil ones. It is true that the enemy has been judged and stripped of the legal rights man's sin had given him, but the roaring lion of 1 Peter

5:8 stalks the earth for one final battle. The armies of heaven follow the Great Captain; so do we. We follow the One who has never lost a battle. All authority has been given unto Him in heaven and upon earth. The Scriptures never let us lose sight of the Cross for it was victory. However, we must remember that our Prince won through death. The Cross was His weapon as it must be ours. That is the meaning of His robe dipped in blood. He is still the Crucified One though He has risen. We are defeated apart from a never-ending identification with the Cross. If Satan can get us away from the Cross, the old self life lifts its ugly head and puts us back in bondage once again.

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

The Bible comes to a close with the most extraordinary hope of all ages. It opens with man, fresh from the hands of God, in a garden crowned with unspeakable glory and riches but then falling into sin and death. It closes with redeemed man reunited with the One he had so offended, his Father and his God, in what is called the marriage supper of the Lamb. **"Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9)**. It is the union of God's redeemed people with the Lamb for all eternity. Man owes it all to the Lamb that was slain. Man is in the midst of the splendors of heaven because of the virtue of the Cross. Man has not come by any merit of his own; his robes, as we have already seen, have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Heaven knows of nothing greater than earth's greatest moment, which is the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are placed in union with our crucified and Risen Lord and become His bride by embracing His Person and the work of His Cross through faith. Then we see with Paul, that as we came into a

vital, indissoluble, ever-perfect union with the Lord Jesus Christ—who is forever the Crucified-Risen Lord—we should also be willing to share His Cross, and with Paul, say, **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20)**. It is the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is, in a word, the Cross that forever secures heaven and guards the Holy City of God against any further appearance of evil.

It should surprise no one that the Bible should close, as it does in the twenty-second chapter of the book of Revelation, with a vision of the stream of blessing that the apostle John describes in this way:

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1)

Through sin came death, but through the Lamb comes life. The Lord Jesus Christ abolished the awful reign of death, bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel: **“But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10)**. Life, life, life—this was the Redeemer’s object as He came to restore what man had lost through sin. That’s why He said, **“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38)**. The invitation seems to be more emphatic, free from all conditions except a willingness to come, as it is found on the lips of the Risen Lord here in the closing words of the Scriptures:

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:16-17)

Here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, blasting away all the barriers, tearing down all ecclesiastical walls, and annihilating all that the law and sin have put in the sinner’s way. Our Lord declares that

there is but one condition, one and only one prerequisite, a willingness to come. The river flows freely. It flows everlastingly for all who will come. In fact, the last word in the Bible is the Greek word *pas* meaning *all!*

So the river of the water of life proceeds from the Lamb. This was the goal God was marching to all through the ages. History finds here the key to unlock its mysteries. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. It is the Lamb Slain who invites us to come. The moment you approach the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, you are acknowledging your sin and need for the river flows from the cross where Christ was slain to put away the sins of the world. This life is very pure (a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal), and as you drink, you are made pure. It is the life of the Crucified, and as you partake, you “eat of the flesh and drink of the blood” as John 6:54 teaches. It is the life of the Son of God, and this is the life of the ages in which there is no pride nor love of self nor unholy thing. God cannot say it more emphatically or more tenderly than this:

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17)

God has swept away all barriers and says, **“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”** The psalmist could not find a more expressive manner with which to make known his joy:

How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Thy house; And Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights. (Psalm 36:7-8)

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. (Psalm 46:4)

Ezekiel, the prophet, saw a river flowing from beneath the altar. In the Bible, the only legitimate altar is the Cross of Christ; all the others were types: **“And it will come about that every living creature which**

swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there, and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes” (Ezekiel 47:9). The Lord’s hope is that all the members of the human race might plunge in and live. The Cross of Christ has removed all the barriers of sin and pride, and guilt and shame, so that we can come and drink freely of the water of life and, having drunk, drink again forevermore. It is a one-shot decision away from any member of the human race:

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)