

**THE CROSS AND
RESURRECTION
OF CHRIST**

The Fellowship of His Sufferings

Version 1.1
by **Dr. Brian J. Bailey**

“The Cross and Resurrection of Christ”

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PREFACE

This is a study of one of the holiest happenings in the whole history of mankind. We have tried to approach it with tenderness and awe, for it is an event that displays the love, wisdom, and humility of our Lord in a way that is beyond human comprehension.

Through Jesus, God was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit, was seen of angels, was preached unto the Gentiles, was believed on in the world, and was received up into glory. I want to stress a particular truth from the beginning as we seek to contemplate this mystery of godliness.

The cross, which made all things possible, was foreordained before the foundation of the world. Jesus was the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world, as we are told in Revelation 13:8: *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

Therefore, the cross was not an afterthought. In essence, the cross is the central truth in God’s plan and purpose for us, His creation. For this reason, the cross is revealed in several prophecies and types in the Old Testament to foreshadow Christ’s sacrifice upon that cross. All of these types were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. However, in contemplating the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross, we must see that they were the end of a life devoted to suffering. He died not of His

physical wounds, for the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate marveled that He had died so soon. Rather, we are told that He died of a heart that was broken by reproach (Ps. 69:20).

Therefore, we have given a subtitle to this book: *The Fellowship of His Sufferings*. Throughout this book we will examine and contemplate the sufferings of Christ. The Apostle Paul declared in Philippians 3:10, “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*”

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*” We should follow Paul’s example as he followed Christ’s example. Paul was chosen to be a pattern of longsuffering. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:16, “*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*”

The Lord spoke to Ananias concerning Paul in Acts 9:15-16: “*Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.*” God told Ananias that He was going to show Paul the great things that Paul would suffer for the name of Christ.

Every Christian wants to reign with Christ, but only those who experience His sufferings are qualified to do so. We are told in 2 Timothy 2:12, “*If we suffer, we shall also reign with*

him.” As the apostles, let us not complain when we suffer, but rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). Let us take up our cross daily so that we may be true disciples of the Crucified One—the Lord Jesus Christ!

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INTRODUCTION

The cross of Christ is the central message of the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. Without the cross, there is no salvation and no hope for mankind. It is important for us to understand that the cross was in the heart of God the Father before the foundation of the world.

Previous to the creation of the world, there had been a rebellion in heaven. Lucifer and his angels rebelled against God. Approximately one third of the angels rebelled with Satan (Lucifer). Christ tells us in Matthew 25:41 that hell was created for Satan and his angels. There is no possibility for them to repent and return to their former glory, since Jesus *“took not on Him the nature of angels”* (Heb. 2:16). Therefore, there is no sacrifice for their sins because they sinned in light.

It is evident that Satan, knowing that he was doomed, accused God of not being a God of love. He was obviously challenging the wisdom of God, plainly declaring that he could have organised and run God’s kingdom better than the Lord.

To counter these accusations and attacks by Satan, God created this creation to manifest His love, wisdom, and kindness. We are called to repopulate heaven, which was denuded by the angels that followed Satan in his rebellion. We now have in this world the battle between the two wisdoms: the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. The wisdom of this world

reflects the wisdom of Satan, as defined in James 3:14-16: *“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”* The wisdom of Satan is revealed through Mystery Babylon the Great, the summation of all wickedness and confusion, for “Babel” means “confusion.”

There also exists the wonderful and marvellous wisdom of God, which is described in James 3:17-18: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”* The wisdom of God is the virtue of making right choices that bring peace and prosperity. Being wise people means that we are guided by Christ who is wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24).

To conclude this introduction, I would like to reiterate the truth that the cross was in the heart of the Father before the foundation of the world. He knew that redeeming mankind would cost Him His Son Jesus. John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

The fact that this was determined before the foundation of the world is demonstrated in Revelation 13:8: *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship [the Beast], whose names*

are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

John had a vision of the throne in heaven, as he says in Revelation 5:6: “*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*” Therefore, in heaven all glory is given to the Crucified One.

PART ONE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS

CHAPTER 1

THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the cross was a curse. We read in Deuteronomy 21:22-23, *“And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”*

This refers to criminals who had already been put to death. If the executed person had committed a heinous crime, his body was suspended from a tree as a sign of shame. However, by law, the body had to be removed from the tree before nightfall. The Jews never executed people by crucifixion.

Death by crucifixion was a curse. This statement is supported by Galatians 3:13: *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”* Here the Apostle Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 21:22 almost verbatim. God the Father had determined that His dear Son would carry the curse of the law, being accursed by His death upon the cross.

Another aspect of the cross was the intense shame that came with that method of execution. Paul says in Hebrews 12:2, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;*

who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hanging upon a cross is shameful, but Jesus endured it so that we might have eternal life.

Basically, the curse is the judgement of God upon the person who hangs upon the cross. By His death upon the cross, Jesus was, in effect, rejected by God and subject to His punishments. This was evident when Jesus cried out upon the cross, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Mt. 27:46). Jesus endured terrible sufferings upon the cross in His spirit, soul, and body. These sufferings were the result of God the Father’s punishment upon sin. When Jesus drank the contents of that cup in the Garden of Gethsemane, He who knew no sin became sin for mankind.

The shame that He endured came from men as they despised the One upon the cross, mocking and shooting out their lips in derision. We read in Psalm 22:7-8, *“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”*

We are exhorted by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:13, *“Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore”* (NIV). Nevertheless, few Christians are willing to be associated with the reproach and shame of the Cross of Christ, preferring the garment of religious respectability. However, as Christians, we are all called to bear our cross in whatsoever form it takes.

In Genesis, the Book of Beginnings, virtually all the great purposes of God for His creation are revealed in types. As we read in Genesis 1:26, “...*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*” Man, therefore, is made like God. We have a similar character to God’s, and our physical beings reflect the image of God. If you have seen the Lord, you know that we look like Him. Therefore, we are made like the Father and the Son, and we are very precious in His sight.

Adam and Eve

When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were in the state of innocence. Adam had such profound knowledge that he was able to name over 500,000 different specimens of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, according to their nature. However, Adam and Eve did not have knowledge of good and evil.

Man was created in a state of innocence. In what way was he not like God? Which part of Himself did God not reproduce in the act of creation? He made a physical body that would be like His own. He gave man character; but there was something that He could not give man at that time. What was it? God could not give man His holiness. Man was created in the state of innocence, but he was not a holy being. Holiness is different from innocence. A holy person is one that has been tried and separated from evil.

God provided a test that would enable man to be holy. Man was given the opportunity to choose between obedience and

disobedience. Satan was allowed to beguile man through the serpent. Adam knew exactly what was taking place. However, because of his love for Eve and his desire to save her, Adam elected to take of the forbidden fruit to become like Eve. Adam did that in disobedience to God. The last Adam, or the Second Adam, Jesus Christ did the same thing, but in obedience to God. He became sin to save His bride, the Church.

Adam tried to cover himself and Eve with fig leaves, but this was not God's method. He covered them with the skins of animals. The only way you can get the skin of an animal is to kill the animal. Therefore, God was showing that He was going to clothe and cover the sin of mankind; but the only way to do it was through death. Somebody had to die on man's behalf.

This truth is also seen in the prophetic predictions about the cross. The whole of the Old Testament prefigures the cross, and the New Testament looks back to the cross. In Genesis 3:15, after the fall of man, we read the words God spoke to the serpent, representing Satan: *"And I will put enmity between thee and the women, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."*

In these words, God the Father alluded to the cross. Jesus Christ's death is prefigured in verse 21, which says, *"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."* By the death of an animal, which provided a covering for Adam and Eve's sin, God indicated

from the beginning exactly what He was going to do to resolve the sin issue. There we have again, right at the beginning, a type of the death of Christ. God was not caught off guard at the crucifixion of Jesus. The cross was preplanned and preordained by God. It was obvious from the beginning that the cross was going to be the central message of the Word of God and of this dispensation.

Abraham and Isaac

The cross is also revealed in the life of Abraham and his beloved son Isaac. Abraham said to God in Genesis 15:2-3, *“Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”*

God responded in Genesis 15:4-6, saying: *“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

As a token of the promise, Abraham was commanded to offer up certain sacrifices. We read in Genesis 15:9, *“And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and*

a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Abraham was told by God to offer the following sacrifices: a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon. The heifer was the offering for the purification of sin. The she goat was the offering for the sin of ignorance. The ram was the offering for consecration. The turtledove and young pigeon were the free will voluntary offering of the poor to express their love and devotion to God. In one sense, we are all poor in His sight, and compared to Him, we are less than nothing.

The story continues in Genesis 15:10-12: *“And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.”*

The horror of great darkness came upon Abraham. That is an experience we sometimes have when God is about to do something extraordinary and of eternal significance in our lives. We feel a complete darkness coming upon us. The purpose of this experience is so that we realise our own helplessness and nothingness, causing us to know of a surety that what God does in our lives is totally divine and has nothing to do with us.

Genesis 15:17 says, *“It came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.”* When

a covenant was made in the Old Testament, the two people making the covenant walked together between the pieces of flesh. In this unusual incident, it was not Abraham who walked between the pieces, but God the Father and God the Son.

Here we have the thought of the Father and Son walking together between those pieces and confirming the covenant to Abraham. For this reason, it is the Father and Son who are going to bring to pass all the purposes that God has for Abraham's descendants.

Isaac was the son of promise through whom God's purposes for Abraham would be fulfilled, as we read in Genesis 17:19: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”*

The life of Abraham was also a type of the life of God the Father, since Abraham was required to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac. We read in Genesis 22:1-2, *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*

In obedience to God, Abraham journeyed to the mountain early the next day and bound Isaac there. While Abraham

was preparing to kill Isaac, the angel of the Lord stopped him. *“The angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me”* (Gen. 22:11-12).

Then the Lord said to Abraham, *“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies”* (Gen. 22:16-17). Thus Abraham was called to be like God, who is also called the Lord of the Harvest—Baalhamon. God purposed for Abraham to be exceedingly fruitful and bring forth fruit unto a ripe old age.

In the New Testament, we have an understanding of what was going on in the heart of Abraham at that time, for we read in Hebrews 11:17-19: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”*

In the offering up of his only begotten son through Sarah, Abraham was portraying in type the loving and willing

sacrifice of the Heavenly Father of His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. These types are only of value because God is all powerful and able to bring to pass the things that He declares.

The prophet Isaiah enlightens us concerning God's counsel in Isaiah 46:10: *"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."* Only God can do that. Isaiah also challenged those who worshipped idols by asking them if their idols were able to foretell the future and had power to bring their predictions to pass. Why can God declare what is going to happen? It is because He has the power to bring things to pass.

The Old Testament Sacrifices and Feasts Foretell the Cross

In the time of the Law, God had ordained for sacrifices (or offerings) to be offered at certain set times and for specified occasions. These directions given to Moses on Mount Sinai prefigured the supreme sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. They are described in great detail in the Book of Leviticus, which has been called the handbook of the Priests.

They all, with the exception of the Meal Offering, involve the shedding of blood. In fact, Hebrews 9:22 states, *"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."* The life is in the blood, and therefore only by the giving of life can sins be atoned for and covered.

These Old Testament sacrifices (or offerings) are as follows:

1. The Voluntary Offering (Leviticus 1) is spiritually fulfilled in the first commandment, which is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt. 22:37).

2. The Meal Offering (Leviticus 2) reflects the Second Commandment, “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mt. 22:39).

3. The Peace Offering (Leviticus 3) speaks of the work of Christ. Ephesians 2:14 tells us, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.”

4. The Sin Offering (Leviticus 4) typifies Christ as our offering for sin, as we see in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

5. The Trespass Offering (Leviticus 5) speaks of Christ as our trespass offering, as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:19: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

The Feasts of the Lord

Leviticus 23 describes the seven Feasts of the Lord, which were fulfilled in the death of Christ.

1. The Passover – Jesus is our Passover Lamb. First Corinthians 5:7 says, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread – Jesus is the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35).

3. The Feast of the Firstfruits – First Corinthians 15:20 says, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

4. The Feast of Pentecost – Pentecost was only possible because of the death of Christ. The outpouring of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost was the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). Isaiah 44:3 says, “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” Isaiah 53:10 tells us that the Lord would see His seed when He had made an offering for sin upon the cross. In other words, the spiritual seed of Christ would come after His crucifixion.

5. The Feast of Trumpets – The sound from heaven—God’s announcement that He was doing a new thing. The Lord

Jesus Himself brought in a new order by bringing in the New Covenant.

6. The Day of Atonement – Leviticus 16:29-30 says, “On the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls for on that day the priest shall make an atonement for you, to cleanse you.” Two goats were to be presented before the Lord.

Leviticus 16:7-10 says, “*And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.*”

This was fulfilled when Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, presented Barabbas and Jesus before the people. Jesus was slain, while Barabbas was released by the wishes of the multitude.

7. The Feast of Tabernacles – This is the feast of harvest and glory. The Lord is called Baalhamon, the Lord of the Harvest (Song. 8:11). Jesus manifested the glory of God upon the Mountain of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:2 says, “And [Jesus] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”

The whole purpose of the Law, the Apostle Paul tells us, is to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). It is to help us understand

who Christ is and what He did on the cross. Because no one sacrifice could have fully portrayed the full meaning of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God ordained several sacrifices to give us a picture of Christ's ultimate sacrifice at Calvary.

(Please refer to our book entitled "Feasts and Offerings" for further study.)

The Sufferings of Christ Portrayed in the Prophecies of Isaiah

Isaiah speaks of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son in the realm of Christ's sacrifice. Isaiah 6:8 says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" God the Father desired to save the world. Paul assured Timothy that God does not desire anyone to be lost and go to hell (1 Tim. 2:4).

The whole of heaven agreed with Him, saying: "Who will go for us?" Who will save mankind? Isaiah replied, "Here am I; send me," but actually these were the words of Jesus Christ to His Father before He left heaven.

Those who have had visions of that scene in heaven say that there was an awesome silence when the Father asked, "Whom shall I send?" Everyone there was willing to go, but no one could go because only God could save mankind. God the Father said, "Whom shall I send?" This is a revelation of the sovereignty of God. Everything must start with God the Father.

Those who have witnessed this in visions tell us that the Son, who stood at the Father's right hand, said "*Here am I; send me.*" Then God said, "*Go.*" John 3:16 declares, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*" Before creating this world, God knew that He would eventually have to sacrifice His Son for the salvation of mankind. What a tremendous price He paid for our salvation!

We need to understand the price that God paid for our salvation by sending His Son to the cross. Isaiah chapter 53 explains something of what was going to happen to Jesus Christ on the cross. Isaiah had a revelation of the crucifixion, and it was formidable. We read in Isaiah 53:3-4, "*He is despised and rejected of man; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*" That is exactly what happened.

Jesus Christ was smitten for us by God the Father before the foundation of the world. A clear understanding of this is essential in order to understand the truth of the cross. God knew the price that He would have to pay for the redemption of man; He knew that the price was His one and only Son. In order for God to redeem mankind, He had to smite His own Son. It was God who smote Jesus, not the Roman Empire or the Jews. They were but instruments used by God the Father.

Further confirmation of this is found in Isaiah 53:10: "*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; he hath put Him to grief:*

when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” God the Father orchestrated everything. The cross came from the heart of the Father. The cross was the wisdom and love of the Father. It was God’s way of saving and redeeming mankind. What I marvel at is that God created this world, knowing that He would have to send His Son to die on the cross for the salvation of mankind. Oh, what love God has shown to the world by sacrificing His Son Jesus for our sins!

The Sufferings of Christ in the Lives of the Prophets

The prophets in the Old Testament prophesied, or portrayed by their lives, concerning the sufferings of Christ upon the cross.

Isaiah, who had a tremendous revelation of Jesus’ birth and sufferings upon the cross, was martyred by King Manasseh of Judah. Jesus was martyred by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was imprisoned. Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41), was also imprisoned by the Roman soldiers, being tormented and mocked as well.

Ezekiel, who was called over seventy times “the son of man,” was rejected by his people. Jesus, whose favourite title for Himself was “the Son of Man,” was likewise rejected by His people, Israel.

Daniel, the righteous one, was falsely accused by the leaders of the nation. Jesus, our Jehovah-Tsidkenu (The Lord our Righteousness), was falsely accused by the leaders of the nation of Israel.

Hosea was married to a wife who was unfaithful. This typified Israel's unfaithfulness to their Messiah and Heavenly Bridegroom. Jesus knows the sorrow of His bride, His people, being unfaithful to Him.

Joel lived in a time of spiritual barrenness comparable to the condition of Israel at the time when Jesus ministered. In Isaiah 53:2, Jesus is called "the root out of a dry ground."

Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, an experience which served as a sign of Jesus' death and resurrection (Mt. 12:40).

Zechariah, the post-exilic prophet, had a revelation of the wounds in Jesus' hands, as we read in Zechariah 13:6, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Thus we see that the Lord has fulfilled prophecies that related to His sufferings, as portrayed in this selection from the Old Testament prophets.

CHAPTER 2

THE CROSS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

During the time of the Roman Empire, death by crucifixion was the sentence imposed upon criminals. It was practiced first by two nations, the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians. It was an extremely cruel heathen practice. It was not a Jewish practice.

Even in the Roman Empire crucifixion was considered so degrading that only slaves and provincials (people ruled over by Rome) could be crucified. Roman citizens could not be crucified. In Church history, the tradition concerning the deaths of Peter and Paul confirms this fact—Peter was crucified, but Paul, a Roman citizen, was beheaded.

The Process of Crucifixion

Let me now describe the process of crucifixion. The condemned person was first hung by his wrists with his feet just barely touching the ground. This also was the method used by the Romans to secure Jesus while scourging Him, according to those who have had visions of this event.

Then the person was beaten with a whip made of leather thongs with sharp flints embedded in them. This instrument was dragged in the filth of the floor, thus adding to the torture. With each stroke, Jesus recoiled like a spring, His

whole body curling up under this merciless torment. His feet and legs were drawn up towards His body with each blow.

The Roman soldier who administered the stripes did so with fiendish delight. This treatment ensured that the person's back became a bleeding mass, tearing off the skin to reveal the victim's bones. Many did not survive the severity of scourging. Those who did went to the cross in a very weakened condition, undoubtedly hastening death. It speaks volumes of Christ that He could retain His dignity and posture after such terrible wounds had been inflicted upon His back. This scourging fulfilled Psalm 129:3, which says, "*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*"

The intensity of Jesus' wounds is revealed prophetically by the psalmist. Yet all the time the Lord could have withdrawn from these sufferings, for it is written in Isaiah 50:6, "*I gave my back to the smiters.*" Jesus made a conscious decision to submit Himself to these beatings in order to secure our salvation.

Then the criminal was led away by a band of four soldiers who formed a square, in the centre of which the criminal walked. The condemned carried the cross bar, and generally wore around his neck a board on which was written the nature of his crime.

He was also led through the streets of the city by the longest route possible to the place of crucifixion. This was done to ensure that a large number of people would know of the

punishment and would be warned of the consequences of taking part in such a crime. By doing so, the authorities hoped to instil law and order in the populace and inflict as much shame as possible upon the condemned man himself.

When the criminal was not able to carry his cross any more, the Roman soldiers would tap the shoulder of a Jewish bystander with their spear and compel him to carry the crossbeam. In the case of Jesus, Simon of Cyrene carried His cross (Mt. 27:32).

Upon arrival at the place of crucifixion, the criminal was forced to lie down upon the cross. After his hands and feet had been nailed to the cross, the cross was thrust into the hole that had been prepared beforehand. The jolt of that shock would cause the bones to come out of joint, as we read about Jesus in Psalm 22:14: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.”*

The condemned man was then left to hang upon the cross until he expired from hunger, thirst, and exposure, being tortured all the while by flies and other insects that would naturally gather where blood was shed. The Roman writer Cicero called it the most terrible and horrible form of torture, while Tacitus spoke of it as being a torture fit only for slaves. Often those crucified were denied the rites of burial.

PART TWO

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

CHAPTER 3

THE WAY TO THE CROSS

The Birth of Jesus

As with all the events in the life of Jesus, there is an important principle seen in the birth of Jesus that we must recognise. Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy by His birth. His birth fulfilled the scripture that says, *“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (Isa. 7:14).

This scripture is quoted in Matthew 1:18-23: *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”*

The Place of His Birth

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”* Bethlehem was the birthplace of David; therefore, it was commonly believed that the Messiah, called the Son of David, would be born in Bethlehem. Jesus was of the kingly Davidic line, and was rightfully declared the King of the Jews. Bethlehem also means “the House of Bread;” and Jesus was “the Bread of Life” that came from heaven to earth (Jn. 6:33).

The birth of Jesus was announced to the Shepherds in Luke 2:8-16: *“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see*

this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.” Jesus was the Good Shepherd (Jn.10:11). Thus it was to the shepherds that His birth was revealed. The message of the angels was also one of peace, since Jesus was the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

The Temple Appearance

Joseph and Mary went to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer the required sacrifice for a newborn son (Ex. 13:2, Num. 3:13). *“And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons”* (Lk. 2:24). Their offering was the offering of the poor (Lev. 12:6-8).

This illustrates the fact that although He was rich, He became poor for our sakes. This is brought out in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”*

Luke 2:25 says, *“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”* Luke 2:34-35 continues, *“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother; Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts*

of many hearts may be revealed.” Herein is an interesting truth—the basis of revelation and comfort is based upon sorrow and suffering. We have to pay a great price in order to receive the truth of God.

Simeon, a righteous man, introduced the One who is our Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6). Anna, an aged prophetess, then met Jesus (Lk. 2:36-38). Jesus was also a Prophet, which fulfilled the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18: *“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”*

The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-2 says, *“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”* The wise men were worshipping Jesus, who is the personification of wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24).

Jesus was born in a stable, but His family moved into a house. The wise men were directed to the house where Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus now lived. Matthew 2:11 says, *“When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: And when they opened their treasures, they presented unto him*

gifts: gold and frankincense, and myrrh.” These very costly gifts have symbolic meaning, representing spiritual truths about Jesus. The first gift was gold, which symbolises the divine nature of God. By giving this gift of gold to the baby Lord Jesus, they were acknowledging His deity. In effect, they were saying that He was God.

The next treasure they presented to Jesus was frankincense, which symbolises faith tested by fire. In order to release its fragrance, frankincense must be placed upon the fire. This gift, therefore, signified that this divine child was born to suffer.

The wise men then presented myrrh, an embalming ingredient used principally by the Egyptians. Myrrh is a symbol of meekness. This spoke of the Lamb of God that would not open His mouth when He was put to death, as Isaiah had declared some 800 years before. Isaiah 53:7 says, *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*

These gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—bore witness that Jesus was God who was born to suffer and die meekly. Therefore, even at His birth, signs were given concerning His death.

Also, an attempt to kill Him was made at the very time of His birth by King Herod. That wicked ruler had ordered all children in Bethlehem under the age of two to be slaughtered,

seeking to kill Jesus, the King of the Jews. However, God preserved Jesus by giving a dream to Joseph that prompted him to take the young babe and His mother to Egypt. They remained there until the angel of the Lord alerted him that Herod was dead.

The Second Temple Appearance

In Luke 2:43-50, we have the record of Joseph and Mary returning from their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As was their custom, they were returning to Nazareth with family and friends, and assumed that Jesus was with the group. Jesus was now 12 years old, the age when a male Jew was recognised as a man and could attend synagogue services. Mary and Joseph had journeyed about a day when they discovered that Jesus was missing. They quickly returned to Jerusalem to look for Him.

Luke 2:46-50 says, *“And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? And they understood it not...”* This experience in Jesus’ life at the age of 12 gives us insight into His understanding of God’s will for His life. One reason for His strength and understanding is that He fed upon the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Speaking prophetically of Jesus, the prophet tells us in Isaiah 7:15, *“Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”* Butter is the abundance of the Word, and honey, in this case, typifies the enlightening of the blessed Holy Spirit.

The character of God was formed in Jesus because He constantly fed upon the Word of God. It was that character which preserved Him on the way to the cross. In this life, we have to constantly make choices. We are what we are, morally and spiritually, because of choices we have made.

It is by the grace of God, the knowledge of His Word, and the infilling of His Spirit that we are enabled to make right choices. Therefore, it is very important to spend time meditating upon and studying the Word of God in order to rightly divide the Word of truth.

Colossians 1:11 reads, *“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”* We must be strengthened with power from on high in order to fulfil God’s will. As you study the Word of God, you will discover that everything God asks you to do is only possible by the anointing and grace of God. Never try to enter the ministry in your own ability.

We cannot achieve anything for the Lord in our own strength. We are dependent upon the anointing of the Spirit of God to accomplish His will for our lives. We should remember the words of Romans 9:11, which says, *“That the purpose of*

God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth.” This was the key to the life of Jesus, who offered Himself without spot to God through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan River

Before Jesus came to the Jordan River, John the Baptist had been baptising people unto repentance. When John saw Jesus coming to be baptised, *“John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?”* (Mt. 3:14).

What was the purpose of Jesus’ baptism? Jesus said to John the Baptist that it was to fulfil all righteousness (Mt. 3:15). What does water baptism symbolise? Romans 6:3-4 says, *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

Water baptism is a symbol of death. When Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptised, not only was He fulfilling all righteousness, but it was also an act of personal dedication. In effect, by being water baptised, Jesus was saying to His Father that He was dedicating Himself to die for the salvation of mankind.

Water baptism represents death to self and being raised together with Christ to walk in the will of God. This is a

consecration to God's will. Some people "baptise" by sprinkling with a little water, but dead bodies are not just sprinkled with a little earth, they are completely buried. Thus true Scriptural water baptism is by complete immersion. Jesus Christ dedicated Himself to do God's will, and the Father responded immediately, "...*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Mt. 3:17).

His Anointing

At that moment of Jesus' consecration, the anointing of the Spirit of God came upon Him. That anointing was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit as we know it today in the New Testament Church. John tells us that Jesus had the Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34). This was the anointing foreseen by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 11:2, where he tells us that Jesus was anointed with the seven Spirits of the Lord.

"And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2). The seven Spirits of the Lord correspond to the seven lamps of the candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of Moses.

Why was the Son of God anointed with the Spirit? There are three aspects of the anointing. First, it is the anointing to preach (Isa. 61:1). Second, the anointing is power (Acts 10:38). The third aspect of the anointing is that it enables us to fulfil God's will for our lives, as it enabled Christ to go to the cross (Heb. 9:14).

In Hebrews 9:14, we see how Jesus went to the cross: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God...”* At His incarnation, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. Being truly human, He could not fulfil the will of God without the ability given to Him by the Holy Spirit.

At His baptism in the Jordan River, in a sense, Jesus began His purpose and mission in life. Figuratively speaking, He was placed as an arrow into the bow to fly towards His target, the cross. To hit that objective, Jesus had to be strengthened and anointed with power from on high. This brings us to another illustration of the life of Jesus—Christ, the Arrow of God.

The Arrow of God

One of the servant songs in Isaiah begins with these words: *“Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name”* (Isa. 49:1). The prophet was not speaking primarily about Israel. The isles were always associated with the Gentiles; therefore, by implication, the Gentile Church is addressed. *“...And hearken, ye people, from far...”* This was not merely referring to those living in a distant geographical place; it also refers to time.

Isaiah 49:1 says prophetically of Christ, *“The Lord hath called me from the womb.”* Likewise, God said to Jeremiah that when he (Jeremiah) was in his mother’s womb He knew him and sanctified him (Jer. 1:5). Just as God called Jesus

and Jeremiah from the womb, He has also called each and every one of us before we were born.

Reading this, you might think that this does not apply to you because your early life was not very good. The Apostle Paul could have said the same thing. Before his conversion Paul severely persecuted the Church, even killing Christians. Paul truthfully called himself the chiefest of sinners.

Paul acknowledged in Galatians 1:15 that God knew him before he was born: *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace.”* God knew Paul when he was still in his mother’s womb, and He knew what He had ultimately planned for Paul’s life. Beloved, even if you had a shaky start, be assured that God has called you and has a great plan for your life—only believe and turn to God with all of your heart!

God planned for Jesus to go to the cross and become the Saviour of the world. Jesus was called by name before He was born. Isaiah 49:1-2 says, *“And he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.”*

An arrow has two main parts—a point (or arrowhead) and a shaft. The shaft is designed to carry the point to the mark, and the purpose of the point is to stick into the mark. The two-edged sword with a sharpened point, like the sharp point of the arrow, symbolises the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 declares, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* This picture shows us the divine nature of Jesus as the Son of God.

The shaft of an arrow is made from wood, and must be straightened and polished. This speaks to us of Christ’s humanity, for trees are a type of mankind. In Hebrews 5:8-9 we read, *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*

Jesus, as the Son of Man, learned obedience by the things He suffered. As the Son of Man, it was possible for Jesus to fail, but as the Son of God, He could not fail. He has two natures—He is the eternal Son of God as well as the Son of Man. The nature that Jesus received from His mother had to be prepared and polished.

The shaft of an arrow must not be bent or unpolished; otherwise, when it is aimed correctly and shot from the bow, the aerodynamic forces pressing upon it will deflect it off its course as it flies through the air.

There are two aspects of preparation. Jesus was filled with the Spirit, and He knew the Scriptures, but that was not enough. Character is also essential, and it is formed in the

school of discipline. So it was with the Lord Jesus. We do not know the sufferings He experienced during the formative years of His life, but we can be assured that those disciplines were tenderly administered by His loving Heavenly Father to make sure Jesus the Arrow hit the mark of the cross!

If you do not learn obedience, when it comes time for God to appoint you, you will turn from the course and miss the mark of His purpose for your life. May we be like Jesus—a well prepared and polished arrow that hits the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

The Temptations

Immediately after His baptism by John, Jesus was tempted of the devil. These temptations were ordained by God because it was the Holy Spirit who took Jesus into the wilderness. As we read in Matthew 4:1, “*Jesus was led up of the Spirit.*” Mark uses a stronger word than “led” in Mark 1:12: “*The Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.*” Therefore, testing was an integral part of the life of Christ. In the purpose and plan of God, Jesus had to be tested.

In Matthew 4:1 we read, “*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*” Everything is ordered by God. It is very clear who was in command here. It was not the devil; he was simply being used by God for a purpose. God was in complete control. The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus and led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The First Temptation

We read in Matthew 4:2, “*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.*” After fasting for 40 days, Jesus became hungry and was totally weak. The sense of hunger eventually goes away when you fast, but it usually returns near the end of a 40-day fast.

Matthew 4:3 says, “*And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God...*” This was one of the great battles that Jesus had with Satan. It was the same kind of battle that Eve had in the Garden of Eden. The tempter said to Eve, “*Hath God said?*” The Devil tried to sow doubt in Jesus’ heart. Satan knew full well who Jesus was. We are told in Ezekiel 28:3 that “*he is wiser than Daniel, and that there is no secret hid from him.*”

Do not forget, Satan was the archangel in heaven called Lucifer, the son of light, so he knew exactly who Jesus was. Satan fully understood what was happening. He was trying to bring Jesus down. Satan knew that if he could cause Jesus to fall into his temptations he would eventually be defeated on the cross. Therefore, these temptations were based upon his evil wisdom.

What is the greatest problem we have? It is doubt. Jesus had to believe that He was the Son of God. Do not forget, He was very hungry. His body was crying out for food. Then Satan came to test Jesus with his most powerful weapon, doubt—*“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be*

made bread” (Mt. 4:3). Satan was really asking Jesus to assure Himself that He really was the Son of God. Likewise, we are afflicted with doubt. Satan often causes us to wonder—*Am I in the will of God? Is God with me? Is this what I should be doing?* The Devil will try to convince us to use these doubts as opportunities to prove that we really are the children of God. We will be tempted to use the power of God to satisfy our own needs. We must believe that we are sons of God.

Jesus replied by quoting the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 8:3 in particular: *“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Mt. 4:4). Christ refused to satisfy Himself and His own physical needs for food by performing a miracle with the power of the Holy Spirit. He had the discipline and character to perform miracles only in complete submission to the will of His Father. The first temptation was to prove whether or not His flesh was under control.

Before leaving this passage, we should comment on the fact that we as Christians should hear from the Lord every day so that we are continually feeding upon the words that come from our Heavenly Father. We must avoid being “Sunday Christians” by daily finding nourishment in God’s Word.

The Second Temptation

The Devil then took Jesus up into the Holy City and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple. It was extraordinary that God permitted the Devil to take Jesus to the temple in this manner.

We see a glimpse of the humility of both the Father and the Son in humbling themselves to use their arch-foe, Satan.

Even the archangel Michael did not rail against Satan when he was contending with him for the body of Moses. Jude 1:9 says, *“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”*

The Devil said to Jesus in Matthew 4:6, *“If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”* Satan can quote Scripture because he knows it very well. That is a direct quotation from Psalm 91:11-12.

Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 in Matthew 4:7: *“It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”* This trial was to test Jesus’ soul. Was His soul going to be satisfied by a dramatic angelic intervention? No, He refused to tempt the Father.

We may be tempted to do things merely to satisfy our souls. Often people invite us to look at this Scripture, *Command ye Me*” (Isa. 45:11), which they incorrectly interpret to mean that we are supposed to command God. However, this Scripture correctly exegeted means, “Are you commanding Me?” In other words, the Lord is saying, “Are you telling me what to do?” We are only to decree things when God tells us to. We are to simply speak forth the word He gives us.

Matthew 21:22 says, *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”* This verse must be balanced by 1 John 5:14, which says, *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”*

It is possible to be led astray by an unbalanced quotation of the Scriptures. Every truth pressed to its extreme becomes error. Satan’s use of Scripture could have destroyed Jesus if He had failed to balance the Scriptures, but Jesus replied, *“It is written...”* Like our Lord, we must correctly divide and expound the Word of Truth. Second Timothy 2:15 says, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

The Third Temptation

“Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Mt. 4:8-9). Satan has tremendous power. Jesus did not challenge him on that statement because He knew that Satan had the authority to carry out his proposal. Jesus called him the Prince of this world (Jn. 14:30).

Here Satan was testing Jesus in the realm of the spirit through worship. How important it is to worship God alone. We need to ask ourselves who we really are worshipping. Jesus’ response was, *“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written,*

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mt. 4:10).

Jesus was tested in His body, soul, and spirit. He was proven for His task of being that special arrow that hit the mark. Many times in the course of His three-and-a-half year ministry Satan tried to deflect Him from God’s path for His life. On one occasion the people tried to make him king, and on another occasion they tried to push Him over the cliff and kill Him.

There were many other occasions, but this is not a discourse on the life of Christ. However, we need to develop a foundation, showing why Jesus could go to the cross. We need also to see what God has to do to enable us personally to hit the mark and partake of His cross.

The Teachings of Jesus Concerning the Cross

As we have already shown, the Lord knew that God’s purpose for His life was to go to the cross that we might be saved. In this section, we want to examine the Lord’s own teachings to His disciples about His imminent sufferings and death.

First of all, on His way to the Mount of Transfiguration where Peter, James, and John would be privileged to see His glory, Jesus sought carefully to prepare them for His death on the cross. Matthew 16:21 gives us insight into what Jesus was teaching His disciples at this time: *“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and*

chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

After He came down from the Mount, Jesus was again careful to reemphasise His imminent death in response to the disciples' questions concerning the Second Coming and the teachings of the scribes that Elijah would come before the Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6). Jesus said in Matthew 17:11-12, *“Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.”* Here Jesus is alluding to John the Baptist, who came in the power of Elijah (Lk. 1:17).

These verses are also mentioned in Mark 8:31: *“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* Clearly, the Lord speaks here of His coming death and resurrection.

Mark 8:32-33 says, *“And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”* Thus Peter, the one who received the revelation that Jesus was the Son of God, became a conduit for the attack of Satan, seeking to prevent the Lord from going to the cross.

One of Jesus' trials was that His disciples unto the very end did not comprehend that it was the will of God for Him to suffer and die. There was no one to comfort Jesus.

Mark 9:12 says, *“And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught.”* In this verse, Jesus includes the fact that He must suffer the further humiliation of being mocked by those whom He created. Luke records this same conversation in this way: *“The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day”* (Lk. 9:22).

In this verse, Jesus declares that it will be at the instigation of the religious leaders that He will suffer. Then, in the last days before His passion, Jesus seeks to bring to the attention of His disciples the necessity of the cross. Speaking of Himself, Jesus says in the third person, as He often did, *“But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation”* (Lk. 17:25). After His resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, the Lord spoke of that necessity once again to two of His disciples: *“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day”* (Lk. 24:46).

His Reproach

While we should always have the actual physical death of Christ upon the cross before us, at the same time we must

never forget that the way to the cross was paved with the shame and reproach that was heaped upon Him by the religious leaders of His day.

This was, in effect, the fulfilment of Psalm 69:19-20, which says, *“Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”*

During His ministry, although the crowds gathered around Him, Jesus was continually reproached. Hebrews 12:3 speaks of the reproach of Christ: *“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”* Throughout His ministry, long before He went to the cross, the Lord had to endure constant reproach.

Jesus was a young 30-year-old man in perfect physical condition. He was a wonderful specimen of humanity, of course. However, the reproach and rejection He endured for three years and five months are what caused His death rather than the actual cross. He endured constant contradiction and opposition from His enemies. In John 1:11, we read, *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* Jesus was rejected by His very own people, the Israelites.

Isaiah 53 opens by declaring what the life of Christ would be like, what kind of man He would be, and what kind of

ministry He would have. *“Who hath believed our report?”* (Isa. 53:1). This was an echo of the Son saying to the Father that, in spite of His ministry, who believed Him? It was very difficult for Jesus to fight the tremendous opposition that came from the Jews and the religious leaders.

Even if we are surrounded by saints, God will ensure that we still experience opposition. God brings us into situations, either in the work place or somewhere else where we have to witness truthfully. People will not believe us and instead will mock and reproach us. Do you know what that does to us? It starts to cause mental and spiritual fatigue.

As the Apostle Paul said, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph. 6:12). When people set themselves against you, that opens a conduit for Satan to attack you. Demonic spirits know just where to strike in your body. They always attack the weakest part of our bodies. Jesus constantly had to face the attack of the evil one.

Isaiah 53:1 continues, *“...to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”* Isaiah asks the question: “Who understands what the Lord is doing?” Even Jesus’ closest followers could not understand what was happening.

Isaiah 53:2 says, *“...he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”* In other words, the people of His day could not

see in Christ anything they desired. He was not appreciated as the Son of God. But in Isaiah 53:3 we read, *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”* This refers to the time of His miraculous ministry. What a sad description of the Lord of glory!

As the Lord Himself said to the multitudes in John 6:26, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”* Certainly their god was their belly, and they minded earthly things. Truly, as the Lord warned His disciples, the world loves its own, but hates those who speak and live the life of the Spirit.

Consistently, the scribes and the Pharisees sought to trap Jesus with their questions. This alone would place tremendous stress upon Jesus, and we know that stress can actually kill a person. It can cause any number of illnesses to the mind and heart, as well as to other members of our physical bodies. Thus we see that His heart had become like wax. It had melted in the midst of His bowels (Ps. 22:14).

His Anointing for Burial

One of the least understood aspects of life is death, especially as it relates to the preparation for death—that event which we all must experience. The Apostle Paul gives us insight into the preparation for death in his letter to the Corinthian believers: *“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; To the one*

we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:15-16).

God watches over every detail of His creation, even knowing when a sparrow falls to the ground. He ordains the time of our birth and death. Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 3:1- 2, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."* Therefore, He plans our deaths so that we are ready to enter eternity.

Recently, I have had two experiences that I would like to relate, trusting that they will be a blessing to you, dear reader, or help you to encourage others. In one case, I was praying for a lady who had cancer. Several pastors and I anointed her with the intention of praying for her healing. We have seen many who have been gloriously healed from that accursed disease. However, as we prayed for this lady I received the words "Anointed for burial." She was being sealed by the Lord for heaven above.

In another instance, my secretary's uncle died in a motorcycle accident, yet the Lord spoke to my godly secretary that there were no accidents. Looking back, she realised that her uncle had met many of his relatives just prior to his death, and even on the day of his death had seen a beloved sister and read the Bible with her. Each of these reunions was in an atmosphere of peace and joy. It was as though all the meetings were God

ordained so that he might see them for the last time here upon earth before being reunited in heaven when their appointed times would come.

Now, for the Saviour of the world, the time of His departure was at hand, as we read in John 12:1-3, *“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”*

Spikenard speaks spiritually of peace, as we deduce from the list of plants given in Song of Songs 4:13. There are nine plants, corresponding to the nine fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Thus spikenard, which is the third plant listed, represents peace, the third fruit of the Spirit.

Thus she anointed the feet of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, for He was fulfilling the Scripture in His person. *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* (Isa. 52:7).

Then Judas said in John 12:5, *“Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?”* What is the significance of the number 300? We may understand

and correctly interpret spiritual types if we realise that the key is often found in the Law of First Mention.

The number 300 is first found in Scripture in Genesis 5:22, which says, *“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.”* Therefore, the number 300 in Scripture signifies walking with and being pleasing to God. Such was the life of our beloved Lord in the sight of His Heavenly Father.

Jesus thoroughly understood the significance of this anointing and that Mary was motivated by the Holy Spirit to anoint Him. Jesus replied in John 12:7, *“Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.”* He added in Matthew 26:13, *“Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”*

Judas, apparently stung by the Lord’s response, then left the feast and negotiated with the chief priests concerning how he would deliver Jesus to them. Judas did not care for the poor. He was a thief and had been stealing from the treasurer’s bag, which he carried in his possession. Having been thwarted in his quest for the money that could have been obtained by selling the ointment, Judas then sought recompense in the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Truly the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

All of this was to fulfil the Scriptures, which we read in Zechariah 11:12, *“And I said unto them, If ye think good,*

give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.”

We have included this in the way to the cross, for it was yet another sorrow that Jesus had to bear, knowing full well that Judas was stealing the money that had been given to the apostolic band for their needs. Consider the grief of Jesus in knowing that one so close to Him had not been receiving His teachings and had not been convicted by His way of life.

**May we choose to be
like Enoch,
walking with God
and bringing delight
to His heart.**

CHAPTER 4

THE UPPER ROOM

The first day of Unleavened Bread arrived and the disciples asked Jesus where He desired to eat the Passover. As far as we know, this would have been the first time that Jesus had presided at a Passover ceremony. How fitting for Him to do so now, for it was He who would fulfil the type of this feast for all time.

Jesus sent Peter and John with instructions, saying in Mark 14:13-16, *“Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.”*

The man with the water pot had to be in the right place at the right time. Unaware of the significance of what he was doing, he was preparing the room for the Lord to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. That man believed that the Passover room he was preparing would be occupied.

God may tell us to do something that seems insignificant, but our obedience may well be a link in a beautiful chain of

prophecy. Can you see how important it is for us to walk in the Spirit day by day? It is doubtful whether that man really knew all that was happening, but there he was in the right place at the right time, guiding the disciples to the right place.

How important it is to be the Lord's hand extended, perhaps going at the right time to a supermarket, a restaurant, or a place of work. We might be fuming when the red traffic light takes so long to change, but it could be God's way to bring us to the right place at the right time. How important those little things are. They are often God's leading.

Tuesday evening to Wednesday evening was the fourteenth day of Nisan, the day on which the paschal meal had to be consumed. This was the day designated in Exodus for the paschal lamb to be killed. Even at this Paschal supper there was sorrow and contention for Jesus to face.

However, there were also tranquil last moments for the incarnate Son of God during this Last Supper with those whom He loved so dearly. In John 13:1 we read, *“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”*

During this whole time, Christ maintained perfect composure. He knew the exact chronological sequence of events because God had everything in complete control. This is a very important truth, and is applicable in our own lives. We may

blame the adversary for our circumstances, but it is the Lord who is in control. Luke 22:14-16 states, *“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”*

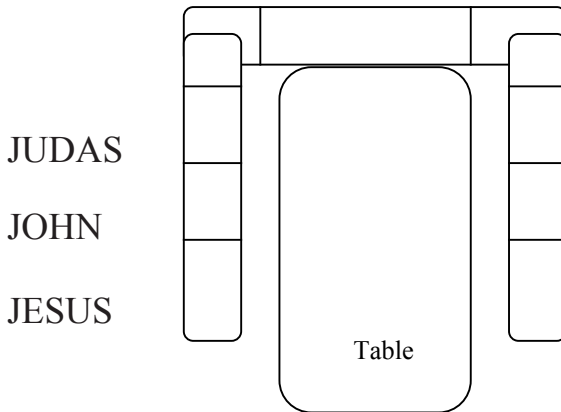
Here again in exquisite simplicity and humility—the Lord is predicting His sufferings and death. The timing, of course, was perfect, for He was the Passover Lamb sent to take away the sins of the world, even as John the Baptist had declared after Christ’s temptations in the wilderness (Jn. 1:29). But it was also a triumphant statement, because the Lord had striven by the grace of God through 30 years of preparation and three-and-a-half years of ministry to qualify for this moment. It was the beginning of the end of a long journey.

The seating arrangement at the Feast of Passover was very important, especially for the Pharisees who were concerned about position and honour. The feast guests reclined on pillows around a low table, each resting on his left hand, which left the right hand free to partake of the meal. The seating order was arranged according to rank, as it was for any other occasion. We note from the Lord’s comments in Luke 14:7 that the Pharisees sought the best seats.

In this feast, the disciples were again very conscious of their own particular standing in the kingdom of God, as we read in Luke 22:24: *“And there was also a strife among them,*

which of them should be accounted the greatest.” The order of seating was such that the head or leader of the feast (in this instance, Jesus) would recline on the middle of the divan that was situated on the left of the elongated horseshoe around the table in the manner indicated below.

Seating Arrangement at the Last Supper



** This seating arrangements seems like the most probable one after carefully examining Scripture.*

The chief place of honour (after the seat of the Head of the feast) would be on the left side of Jesus, which most theologians feel was occupied by Judas for the following reasons:

1. John was seated on the right side of Jesus, since he was leaning upon the breast of our Saviour (Jn. 13:23).
2. None of the other disciples heard Jesus when He whispered to John the sign by which he would know the betrayer.
3. When Judas asked, "Is it I?" Jesus responded, "*Thou hast said*" (Mt. 26:25). Again, it does not appear that the other disciples heard Jesus' reply to Judas.
4. This seating arrangement also explains why the Lord first handed the sop to Judas, following part of the Paschal ritual. He began with Judas, who was seated in the position of the chief guest. This explains why this act on the Lord's part did not raise any questions among the disciples.
5. After the loving rebuke of Jesus, it appears that Peter took the lowest position, directly across from John, and therefore would have been in a position to beckon John to ask Jesus about the identity of the betrayer.

In our study on the cross, we are seeking to understand the tremendous pressures that Jesus had to endure before the actual physical crucifixion. The strife of the disciples surely had an effect upon the strength of Jesus. Remember, Christ had already been weakened by the attacks of the Pharisees.

In reality, only those who have been exposed to the argumentative attitudes of the wicked can know the power and force which our minds and hearts must endure under such attacks. It is worse than any physical attack, and far more demanding and wearying. Moreover, the sorrow of the betrayal of a close confidant rests like a heavy weight upon one's heart. All of these factors must have added to Christ's heavy burden. Also, His own loved ones were concerned with their positions rather than with the comfort their beloved Master needed in His hour of greatest trial.

With poise and grace that can only exude from a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life, the Lord gently rebuked His friends by saying, "*The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth*" (Lk. 22:25-27).

Then, as if to encourage them for all that they had suffered and would yet suffer for His name's sake later in their ministry, Jesus continues by saying, "*Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Lk. 22:28-30). At this time it was customary for the head of the feast to take the first cup and offer thanksgiving for it. Afterwards, He

passed it to His disciples. We read in Luke 22:17-18, *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.”*

The next part of the ritual was for the head of the company to rise and wash hands. This, however, the Lord transformed into an act of humility. Manifesting His deep humility, servant spirit and divine graciousness, Jesus gave His disciples a practical lesson on the duties of a minister.

We read in John 13:4-17, *“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have*

washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Let us, dear ones, ask for that gracious mantle of servanthood. May it become a way of life for us to serve others, especially those who are of the household of God. In other Scripture passages, we read how the Lord sought to teach His disciples this aspect of humility. *"And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me"* (Mk. 9:35-37). Jesus said in Luke 22:26, *"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."*

The Liturgy of the Passover Feast

There were four main aspects of the Feast of Passover:

1. The Preliminary Course: The head of the household would pronounce a prayer of sanctification, comprised of a benediction upon the festival and the first cup. The preliminary course consisted of green bitter herbs, representing the hardships of the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage.

2. The Passover Service: In this service, the head of the household explained the significance of the meal from Exodus 12:26-27: *“And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.”*

The head of the feast would then outline the sequence of events of the Passover under Moses, giving God glory for their deliverance. Then the first part of the Hallel was sung (Psalms 113-114), and the guests would drink the second cup which had been brought in.

3. The Main Course: The main meal consisted of the Passover Lamb. Exodus 12:8 says, *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”* After grace, the guests would drink the third cup.

4. The Conclusion of the Meal: The second part of the Hallel was sung at the conclusion of the meal (Psalms 115-116). Then the guests would drink the fourth cup, which was called the cup of blessing.

The Revelation of the Betrayer

It was after this example of true servanthood that Jesus spoke to His disciples about the fact that one of them would betray Him. Quoting Psalm 41:9, Jesus said, *“Yea, mine*

own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” After this, He was troubled in His Spirit and said, *“But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing”* (Lk. 22:21-23).

“And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?” (Mk. 14:19). *“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon”* (Jn. 13:23-26).

Matthew 26:25 says, *“Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.”* We read in John 13:27-30: *“And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”*

Thus we see the unfolding of the events that preceded the betrayal some hours later in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is important that we note that Jesus was at all times in complete control of all these events.

He knew and commanded all things in spite of the tremendous pressures, sorrows, grief, and heartaches these events must have been to Him. In ordering Judas to do quickly what he had to do, Jesus was, in effect, setting in motion His own execution. Can we but fall at His feet in stark admiration? Jesus alone is worthy of our admiration!

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

The Feast of Passover continues with the eating of the Paschal Lamb. Afterwards, the fourth cup was filled and drunk. The fourth cup is called the cup of blessing, of which the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and associates with the Communion cup: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”*

It is clear that this happened at the end of the meal, as Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 11:24, *“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.”* This bread would have been the bread that was left over from the Paschal ceremony at the beginning of the meal and was designated to be eaten at the end of the meal. It was called the “Aphikomom,” or after-dish.

First Corinthians 11:25 states, *“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”* The Paschal Meal is not finished until the fourth cup is filled and is followed by a number of prayers. The Hallel is sung afterwards (Psalms 115-118).

This is what Jesus did. We read in Matthew 26:30, *“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* Mark 14:26 says, *“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* The text does not make clear whether all the Hallel was sung or only part, but it is really irrelevant to the theme of the cross. However, one aspect should be mentioned, and that is that the psalms of the Hallel emphasise the mercy of the Lord and that the death of His saints is precious in His sight (Ps. 116:15). In effect, the Lord Jesus was glorifying God in the fires, as we read in Isaiah 24:15, *“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.”* Let us meditate upon this very blessed example so that we, too, when called upon to pass through the fires of whatever tribulation comes our way, might never cease to sing praises to His name.

John 13:31 says, *“Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”* It was as the Lord was perceiving that the events of that last night were starting to be fulfilled that He could say that God was being glorified in His life. The Lord sought only His Father’s glory, and He continued by saying, *“If God*

be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him” (Jn. 13:32).

God was being glorified in the actions and life of the Lord Jesus. How important it is for us to realise that we were created by Him, for Him, and for His good pleasure. Revelation 4:11 makes this very clear: *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

Therefore, let us always seek the glory of God in everything we do, for we were created to show forth His glory to the angels in heaven, to mankind upon earth, and to the fallen angels and demons of Satan. Let us rejoice and count it all honour to serve Him acceptably in all our trials as our beloved Lord Jesus did.

We should understand that even as the Heavenly Father meticulously planned the life of His Son Jesus, so He has also planned ours. It glorifies God when we are led by the Holy Spirit to fulfil the things that He has ordained for our lives.

Jesus said in John 13:34, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”* This is sometimes called the eleventh commandment. The intrinsic character of God, apart from holiness, is love. *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”* (Jn. 3:16). The Apostle John reaffirms this by saying, *“God is love”* (1 Jn. 4:8,16). Therefore, we, too, should seek to manifest the love of God. This is only

possible when we recognise that love is a divine fruit of the Spirit, not a product of our own will or desire. We need to be rooted and grounded in the love of God. Love is the proof that we are His disciples, as Jesus said in John 13:35, *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

Jesus knew that there was only a short time left before His death, and He wanted to maximise the last opportunities He had to share with His disciples what was really upon His heart. His most important teachings were reserved for these last few hours. In the Upper Room Discourses, Jesus shared the truths that, in His opinion, were the most needful.

For this reason, we should earnestly meditate upon these discourses. The greatest of the discourses was His discourse on love. We should ask the Lord to cause us to be rooted and grounded in love so that we might do all things well and be pleasing to Him who has called us to this high and holy calling (Eph. 3:17).

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

John 13:36-38 states, *“Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”*

It is probable that the conversation recorded by John was punctuated by the phrase recorded in Luke 22:31-32: *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”*

Then the Good Shepherd sought to reassure Peter, as He always does with us, by saying, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”* (Jn. 14:1-2). The Lord gave Peter the assurance of his ultimate salvation. Jesus continues by saying in John 14:3, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*

The Lord is preparing a place, home, or house not only for the Apostle Peter, but also for us. However, as many who have received visions of heaven testify, our eternal homes depend upon our good works in this life.

Now the Lord seeks to reassure His disciples of their place in heaven by saying, *“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know”* (Jn. 14:4). I personally find it amazing that our Saviour can think only of His beloved disciples at this time, when in reality He is facing the climatic events of His life. Jesus should have been reaching out for comfort and support from His disciples, but instead He gave them strength and encouragement.

How great is our Lord! He has no thought of self, but only concern for others. Then our Lord gives the promise of the blessed Holy Spirit. (Please refer to our book entitled *The Comforter* for a thorough study on the Holy Spirit.) Then Jesus and His disciples arose and went out.

In the street outside, the Lord took the opportunity to continue His rabbinical form of teaching as they walked through the streets of Jerusalem. He taught His followers about sharing and experiencing His love, joy and peace. He exhibited such amazing poise for a person who knew that He would soon experience scorn and shame, six unjust trials, scourging, and finally agonies of crucifixion. In contrast, He wanted His disciples to be able to partake of that joy and peace that He was enjoying as He went through those streets for the last time as a free man.

On the streets of Jerusalem, before crossing over the Cedron Brook, Jesus poured forth His heart's desire unto His Father, in what is called Christ's High Priestly Prayer of intercession for His disciples and for all those who should thereafter believe on His name (Jn. 17:20). This prayer was essentially the cry of His heart—that we might all be united, and that the love that the Father has for Him might be in us.

When they reached the foot of the Mount of Olives, Jesus warned that everyone would forsake Him (as if the betrayal of Judas had not been sufficient in itself to break the heart of our Saviour). He then turned to the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7: "*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and*

against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”

We read in Mark 14:27-30, “*All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*”

This day must be understood from the Jewish method of counting days. For the Jews, the day had already begun at sundown (six o’clock that evening), and would continue until six o’clock the following evening. Jesus forewarned that the cock would crow twice before sunrise, before Peter denied Him three times. Mark 14:31 says of Peter, “*But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.*”

However, when we read the account, we see that Peter was less than charitable toward the other disciples. In effect, Peter was saying that although it was possible for the others to deny Jesus, he would never deny Christ.

Matthew 26:31-35 records this same account: “*Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen*

again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”

By his boastful declarations, Peter set himself up for a test. He was putting himself in the position of being subject to severe testing by Satan. Peter was, in essence, saying that he was more loyal, faithful, and loving than the other disciples. This was a proud attitude, and pride comes before a fall (Prov. 16:18). Incidentally, this was the second warning that Peter had received from the Lord.

Pride comes before a fall.

CHAPTER 5

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Then Jesus and His disciples went to Gethsemane, which means “the Olive Press.”

The Agony of Prayer and the Cup

Filled with consideration, Jesus said to His disciples, “*Sit ye here while I shall pray.*” Mark 14:33-35 says, “*And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.*”

We read in Luke 22:41-44, “*And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*”

It was here at the Olive Press that the Lord paid the price for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon His people. Pressed out of measure by the hordes of demons and fallen angels that were seeking to break His will, Jesus endured, undoubtedly

with the help of the angel of God. But in so doing, Jesus made it possible for us to be anointed with the oil of God, the blessed Holy Spirit.

As with Christ before the cross, the attacks of the enemy come prior to the trials. These battles must be won in order to retain composure and serenity in the trial.

The enemy must also be withstood so that the trial has the Lord's desired conclusion. By these attacks, the enemy seeks to demoralise the saints and wear them out. This is the same tactic that the Antichrist himself will employ, as we read in Daniel 7:25, *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."*

Returning to our narrative, we see the Lord still praying in Gethsemane. Luke 22:45 says, *"And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow."* Finally, they had realised that the Lord indeed would be taken. Therefore, in their sorrow, their hearts were heavy. Consequently, they fell asleep, even as we do in times of intense sorrow. Sleep seems to be nature's escape valve. Jesus said to them in Luke 22:46, *"Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."*

In times like these, it is prayer that preserves us from the temptation to fail of the grace of God and miss His best. However, the assault against Jesus by the army of fiends

must also have been a contributory factor in the disciples' slumber. We know that in the presence of evil people we feel those powers seeking to afflict us, especially in our minds. Mark 14:38 records Jesus saying, *"The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."* Mark 14:36 states, *"And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."*

Now we have not only a battle against the evil ones, but a battle to remain in God's will. Here the holy and undefiled Lamb of God was being required by His Father to drink the dregs of the sins of mankind's filthiness. It was the act of which the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* It was only through becoming sin that Jesus could bear our punishment upon the cross, for death has no power where there is no sin.

Mark 14:39-40 says, *"And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him."*

The Lord must have been in prayer for well over an hour, as Mark 14:41 says, *"And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."* Here there is a gentle rebuke, for the time allotted for prayer was over and they were spiritually unprepared for the test which was at hand. Mark 14:42

concludes with these words of Jesus, *“Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.”*

The Betrayal

“And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples” (Jn. 18:2). How truly wicked Judas was to have chosen the Garden of Gethsemane. This was the place where Jesus often resorted to have union and communion with His Heavenly Father. Gethsemane will forever be remembered as the place where the betrayal was enacted.

John 18:3 continues the account: *“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.”* The word used here to denote the company of those who were with Judas could have meant that there were approximately one thousand soldiers in all. The great number was a mighty tribute to the power that the priests thought Jesus possessed.

John 18:4 states, *“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?”* I once had a vision of this scene, and saw that Jesus could easily have concealed Himself in the darkness of that night. However, He almost leaped forward to show Himself to the crowd, knowing full well that it was the Father’s good pleasure that He should be taken by them. *“They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And*

Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them” (Jn. 18:5). The whole scenario had been carefully preordained by the Heavenly Father and meticulously fulfilled by the Son.

John 18:6-8 says, *“As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”* As we read these responses of Jesus, we see that, in effect, He was giving His name by which He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14).

“That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none” (Jn. 18:9). This statement seems to relate back to the High Priestly Prayer in John 17:12: *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”* How important it is for us as good shepherds (pastors) to keep those spiritual sheep that the Lord has entrusted to our care. We see the same zeal in the life of Jacob when he cared for his father-in-law’s sheep (Gen. 31:38-40).

Mark 14:44 continues the account of our Lord’s betrayal: *“And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.”* Luke 22:47-48 says, *“And [Judas] drew near unto Jesus, to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”*

As we all know, a kiss is a sign of endearment, respect, and love. It is certainly a sign of friendship, for we do not kiss strangers. A kiss signifies that we are at peace with the one whom we greet in this affectionate manner. Therefore, Judas was using this form of greeting in the most treacherous manner possible. Perhaps more than any of his other actions, it portrays the depravity of his nature. We should pause here in our narrative to consider this circumstance in depth.

Psalm 109 is very revelatory when it comes to the character of the betrayer. Writing hundreds of years before Judas' birth, the psalmist tells us that he was a man of great hatred, devoid of mercy, and that he clothed himself with the garment of cursing. The Apostle John added that he was a thief. Judas was given the same opportunities the other 11 disciples had. Even though he was anointed and was given power over demons and power to heal the sick, he did not delight in that blessing. Scripture says that he slew the broken in heart (Jesus), and therefore must also be counted as a murderer.

Returning to our narrative, we see that the other 11 disciples realised the tense situation. *“When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?”* (Lk. 22:49). *“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus”* (Jn. 18:10). We should note here the courage of Peter in front of some one thousand trained soldiers and palace guards. He wielded the sword fearlessly in the face of immense opposition. The soldiers could easily have killed him instantly.

The situation, however, was under the protective hand of Jesus, who said to Peter, *“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”* (Mt. 26:52). This is a very important statement. It is repeated in Revelation 13:10: *“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”*

When engaged in mortal combat with an enemy, we must remember the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10- 17: *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* **Thus the sword that Christians should use to fight their enemies should be the Word of God.**

In Revelation 1:16, John depicts Jesus with the sword of the Word of God coming out of His mouth: *“And he had in his*

right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The Lord then continues in Matthew 26:53 by saying, *"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"* The Lord has all power. He could have easily called upon His Father for help, and the Father would have sent an angelic host to protect Him.

Matthew 26:54 continues, *"But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" "...The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* (Jn. 18:11). This cup is the cup of suffering referred to by Jesus earlier in His ministry as the baptism of suffering (Mt. 20:22, Lk. 12:50).

"In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me" (Mt. 26:55). Luke 22:53 says, "...But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Matthew 26:56 states, "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Isaiah 53:8 clearly speaks of His imprisonment, "He was taken from prison and from judgment."

Forsaken

Then all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled. This is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7: *"Awake, O*

sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” It could not have been otherwise, for Jesus had to go to the cross alone. Having other disciples crucified with Him would have marred the anti-type of Christ as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world.

As the others fled, we are told in Mark 14:51-52, “*And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*” This is the sole account of this incident in the Gospels. For this reason, theologians believe that the young man spoken of is Mark. This brief interjection is included as a testimony to the apparent readiness of Mark to follow Jesus, even unto death. However, he lacked the grace of God to do so. This helps us understand the true character of Mark, who later forsook Paul at Pamphylia (cf. Acts 13:13; 15:38). Many years later, Mark became one of the writers of the Gospels and the constant companion and spiritual son of Peter. Paul received him back into fellowship (2 Tim. 4:11).

Thus early setbacks in our lives do not necessarily disqualify us from higher ministry positions of usefulness to our blessed Lord. Let us remember the words of Psalm 37:23-24: “*If the LORD delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand*” (NIV). May we take courage, for the spirit is truly willing but the flesh is weak.

The Arrest

John 18:12 gives us the account of the arrest: *“Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.”* We should reflect for a moment here on this Gethsemane scenario. When the Lord openly challenged His enemies, they could not stand before the revelation of His name, the name of God.

They fell down backward on the ground, Judas with them. They had no power at all to arrest Him, but He permitted them to arise from the ground. After restraining Peter, Jesus allowed them to bind Him. He had all power; they could only do what He permitted them to do.

So that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, He allowed them to bind Him. Yet like Samson of old, He could easily have broken those bonds because of the anointing of the seven Spirits of the Lord that was upon Him, and specifically, the Spirit of Might. Can you see the beauty of the Lamb of God who submitted to the will of His Heavenly Father by permitting descendants of Adam to spitefully use Him? Remember, Jesus is the Co-Creator of this creation. Yet He allowed His own creation to crucify Him.

**The beautiful Lamb of God
submitted to the will of His Father
that we might have eternal life.**

CHAPTER 6

THE TRIALS OF JESUS

The Trial Before Annas - The First Jewish Trial

Annas was High Priest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15. He was proposed by the Roman Governor Quirinius in A.D. 6, but he was deposed by Valerius Gratus in A.D. 15. However, he was succeeded by five sons and a son-in-law, Caiaphas. In reality, Annas was the power behind that office for many years.

In effect, it was before Annas and his family that Peter and John were arraigned, as we read in Acts 4:6, “*And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.*” They threatened the apostles. Annas was extremely wicked. The Jewish Talmud contains the curse, “Woe to the family of Annas.”

John 18:13 says, “*...And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*” Luke 3:2 says, “*Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.*” It was not customary in Israel to have two High Priests at the same time. Therefore, this substantiates what we have just said. Although Caiaphas was the High Priest, Annas was recognised as the power behind the office.

John 18:14 continues, *“Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.”* This occurred more than a week before the Gethsemane event. John 11:47-53 says, *“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”*

John 18:15 says, *“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.”* The companion disciple here mentioned was John, since the other Gospel writers do not record this incident. It is assumed that John had dealings with the High Priest’s household, because tradition seems to indicate that John’s father, Zebedee, brought fish to the palace.

The sequence of events, as detailed by the other Gospel writers, can suggest that all of Peter’s denials occurred in the palace of the High Priest, Caiaphas. There is no record

of any conversation in the house of Annas. However, others feel that the first conversation was before Annas.

This does not appear to change any of the circumstances or violate the type given in Exodus 12, where the Passover Lamb was taken on the tenth day and killed on the fourteenth day. The tenth day would signify that the Lamb of God had fulfilled the Law of God. The lamb was kept for four days, during which time it was inspected and declared to be without blemish. This signifies universal inspection.

Thus Jesus was essentially examined by four persons: Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. The latter two specifically acknowledged that they found no fault in Him. We, likewise, will be examined by the world, Satan, the Church, and the Lord. May we, too, be found without blemish, by His grace, before these witnesses.

“But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter” (Jn. 18:16). We must pause here to realise that John was in the same place with Peter, although he was never challenged as was Peter.

Herein we can see a very beautiful and important truth. Because of his meek demeanour and his holy acceptance of the words of Jesus, John was protected from failure. Conversely, because of his rashness and confidence in his own strength, Peter was tested and failed miserably.

However, as we read the account of these denials, let us be very charitable in our thoughts as well as our words concerning the Apostle Peter. Let us remember the admonition of Paul in Galatians 6:1: *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”*

John 18:17 says, *“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man’s disciples? He saith, I am not.”* While some commentators have suggested that Peter was afraid of a girl, that interpretation is not quite correct in our opinion. Behind her were a considerable number of Roman soldiers whom she could have summoned with ease, resulting in Peter’s arrest.

In similar circumstances, when the prophet Elijah fled from Jezebel, he was not fleeing from a woman. He realised that she commanded the whole army of her husband Ahab. Let us seek to put events like these in their true perspective. **Let us be careful of condemning those who will occupy far higher positions than we will in eternity.** Moreover, a meek attitude, as in the case of John, will protect us from being tempted and denying the Lord.

John 18:18-19 says, *“And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.”* We will see here the desire of the High Priest to root out all of Jesus’ influence by attacking not only

Jesus, but also His disciples. Jesus, however, did not respond to the questions concerning His disciples. Always the Good Shepherd, Jesus sought to deflect attention from the sheep and focus the attacks upon Himself.

Jesus said in John 18:20, *“I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.”* This is one of the important principles of the Gospel message. It is to be proclaimed openly before all so that all might be saved.

However, those who gather in little groups, pretending that they have greater revelation than others and that the message is only for the elect, delude themselves. Certainly, some truths Jesus chose to reserve only for the twelve, but the majority of the time He spoke openly to the multitudes. Of course, I am not suggesting that in countries that are hostile to the Gospel believers should not have meetings in secret places to avoid reprisals. That is something altogether different.

John 18:21 says, *“Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.”* In a trial, firsthand witnesses are an integral part of any argument. Thus Jesus, seeing those in attendance who had also been part of the multitudes that had listened to Him, turned to them for corroboration of His statements.

This, however, proved too much for one of the officers who realised that Jesus had, in effect, won the argument. We read John 18:22, *“And when he had thus spoken, one*

of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?" Jesus' response was perfectly correct. He was appealing to the witnesses present there. The officer was clearly in the wrong for smiting Jesus. The officer was guilty of intimidating the accused and should have been rebuked by the judge, the High Priest.

"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (Jn. 18:23). Again the reply of Jesus would have put any normal judge to shame, but the house of Annas knew no shame, for their consciences had long been seared by hot irons from the devil's cauldron. They had participated in lies, intimidations, harassment of the worshippers, blasphemies, and false doctrines. They were of the sect of the liberal Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection.

The Trial Before Caiaphas - The Second Jewish Trial

We read in John 18:24, *"Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."* Mark 14:53 says, *"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes."* One important fact should also be noted here—we are reading of an event that happened near to midnight. According to Jewish law, no trials could be held after daylight hours. Moreover, the accused, Jesus, had had no rest whatsoever during this whole time.

Mark 14:55 says, *“And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.”* Seeking to legitimise their actions, the leaders sought out whoever would raise a voice in witness against Christ. Their effort was painfully hypocritical, even for the religious leaders. They were so intent upon their desire to crucify Jesus that they would stop at nothing to achieve their purpose.

Mark 14:56 continues, *“For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.”* The fact that the witness was false did not seem to concern them. They were only chagrined that the witnesses did not say the same thing. Today, as in the times of Jesus, many lawyers are crooked, only seeking a conviction to accomplish their own purposes.

The legal profession is the only profession condemned by the righteous Judge of the whole earth (Lk. 11:46,52). We must remember that judges are ex-lawyers, and therefore, are not immune themselves to falsifying the truth, as is evident in the trial of Jesus.

Mark 14:57-58 says, *“And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.”* This is the misrepresentation of the saying of Jesus in John 2:18-21: *“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and*

six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."

"But neither so did their witness agree together" (Mk. 14:59). The High Priest was now himself tiring of the apparent impasse in the proceedings, so *"the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?"* (Mk. 14:60). The one thing that the Lord had to watch carefully was that He did not seek to gain His acquittal, for in so doing the plan and purpose of the Heavenly Father would have been thwarted.

Mark 14:61 goes on, *"But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* Now the Lord had to answer, and in so doing, He would accomplish the purposes of the religious leaders in condemning Him.

Therefore, unflinchingly and courageously, Jesus said, *"I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mk. 14:62). Looking into the future, the Lord declares that not only is He the Christ, but that He will come again with great glory. There is a principle here that will help us pass through trials triumphantly. The secret is to look beyond the trial into the future, which, of course, we can only do as God reveals it to us. In Hebrews 12:2, Paul tells us that Jesus did just that: *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of*

the throne of God.” Meditating upon heaven enables us to endure the trials of life.

“Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?” (Mk. 14:63). The Jewish Court procedures, as in the courts of western civilisation, do not permit self-incrimination. Therefore, the actual question of the High Priest was illegal. These legal niceties were obviously not observed by those who were the instruments of Satan.

“Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death” (Mk. 14:64). The extraordinary fact in this trial was that the accused was condemned on a matter of the truth of His identity. He was, in fact, Christ the Son of God, but was rejected, as the prophets declared He would be, by the very ones who were ordained to build the temple of God.

The Chief Corner Stone was rejected by the ones who should have received Him. Psalm 118:22 says, *“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”* The Lord Himself made reference to this in speaking of His coming trial in Matthew 21:42: *“He came to His own and His own received Him not”* (Jn. 1:11).

Beloved, it has been the same throughout all generations, even as the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 3:4- 7: *“And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and*

of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.” The situation was the same before Jesus’ day, and regretfully will be so until the Lord’s Second Coming in the clouds.

This marks the beginning of the further humiliation of the Son of God, as was foreseen by the prophets. Speaking of Jesus, Isaiah 50:6 declares, *“I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”* Mark 14:65 says, *“And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.”*

Here again we see the remarkable meekness and self-control of the Son of God. He could have easily acceded to their demands and declared the names of the tormentors and smiters. Yet to do so would have revealed His deity, and would have put Him in jeopardy of being acquitted. God’s plan was not for Him to be acquitted, but for Him to be condemned and die on the cross for the salvation of this world.

Mark 14:54 says, *“And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.”* We are told by John and Luke that the servants and the officers had made a fire of

coals because it was cold. *“And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest”* (Mk. 14:66). It was in the light of the fire, looking steadfastly upon Peter, that the female servant said, *“This man also was with Him”* (Lk. 22:56).

We read in Mark 14:67-68, *“And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.”* This was the first denial, already mentioned in John 18:17.

Mark 14:69 continues, *“And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.”* This was the second denial. Then we read in verses 70-72 of that same chapter, *“And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”*

A believer who had a vision of this scene told us that at this moment Jesus turned to look at Peter with a sorrowful face, yet void of reproof. Seeing His face, Peter was overcome with sorrow, and left the palace, even as Luke 22:61 tells us: *“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter*

remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Try to picture in your mind what Jesus was going through at this time. It was cold and Jesus had not had any sleep all night. He was surrounded by very wicked people who were mocking Him and smiting Him. Psalm 22:12-13 speaks prophetically of these evil people who were gnashing upon Jesus with their teeth, calling them "strong bulls of Bashan."

Jesus also had to bear the sorrow and anguish of having a loved one deny Him with atrocious and vile language. Yet His demeanour was full of love and compassion, for even when He looked at Peter, He desired to restore and help him keep his faith.

The Third Jewish Trial

Luke 22:66 says, "*And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council.*" This was the formal trial. It was conducted at the first light of dawn before the Sanhedrin. In New Testament times, the Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish council (Acts 5:34). It was presided over by the High Priest.

Jesus was asked the all-important question in Luke 22:67-68—"*Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.*" The Lord was never in any doubt as to the intentions of the religious

leaders to crucify Him. Was it not for this very reason that He had come into the world? As before, He looked toward the day of His triumphant re-entry into the world at His Second Coming, saying in Luke 22:69-70, *“Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.”*

The phrasing of the question and the answer left no one in any doubt that Jesus was acknowledging that He was the Son of God. The religious rulers responded in Luke 22:71, *“What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”* Thus the Jews had succeeded in satisfying their legal code. Before a multitude of hearers, they had concluded that Jesus had committed blasphemy. Therefore, a search for further witnesses was unnecessary.

Matthew 27:1-2 says, *“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”* Then Jesus was sent to Pontius Pilate.

Judas the Traitor

We break here in the narrative to consider another event that was taking place at this time—the remorse and suicide of Judas. Matthew 27:3 says, *“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief*

priests and elders.” It is evident that Judas was among those who were witnessing the trial of Jesus.

Also, the text suggests that Judas had expected Jesus to save Himself by some miraculous manifestation of divine power. Why, then, did Judas betray Jesus? We read in Matthew 27:4, “*Saying [And Judas said], I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.*” It was remorse, and not repentance (which is a gift from God), that came upon Judas. The Greek word used in Matthew 27:3 is not the word used for genuine repentance, but for “remorse.” Certainly, one could say that it was Judas’ love of money that caused him to betray Jesus.

Judas had been spurned at the supper with Lazarus when he had complained that the ointment that Mary poured upon the head of Jesus could have been given to the poor. In reality, Judas did not care; he was a thief who hoped to lay his hands on the money. He went out of the supper to plot with the religious leaders the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

However, I must say that the love of money must not be viewed as the sole reason for Judas’ betrayal, because that would lead us to believe that Judas repented when he returned the money to the treasury.

A life of wickedness and a refusal to be transformed by the power of God were the primary problems in Judas’ life. We must look at the betrayal for what it was—a dastardly act

of a blasphemous man. It has been viewed in this way by mankind universally, for the name Judas has entered into the vocabulary of many nations, being applied to a person who betrays his friends.

Returning to our narrative, we see in Matthew 27:5 that Judas *“cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”* We see again the terrible hypocrisy of the religious leaders in Matthew 27:6: *“And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.”*

They were the ones who had connived with the traitor, but they were blinded to their own wickedness. Blindness accompanies those who are bound with a religious spirit. Matthew 27:7 says, *“They took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in.”* They could not see their complicity in this foul act of condemning the innocent, Jesus.

Matthew 27:8 continues, *“Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.”* The acknowledgment by the populace that the field was bought with blood money is an eloquent admission of Jesus’ innocence.

Matthew 27:9-10 says, *“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me.”* This event fulfilled

Zechariah 11:12-13, which says, “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

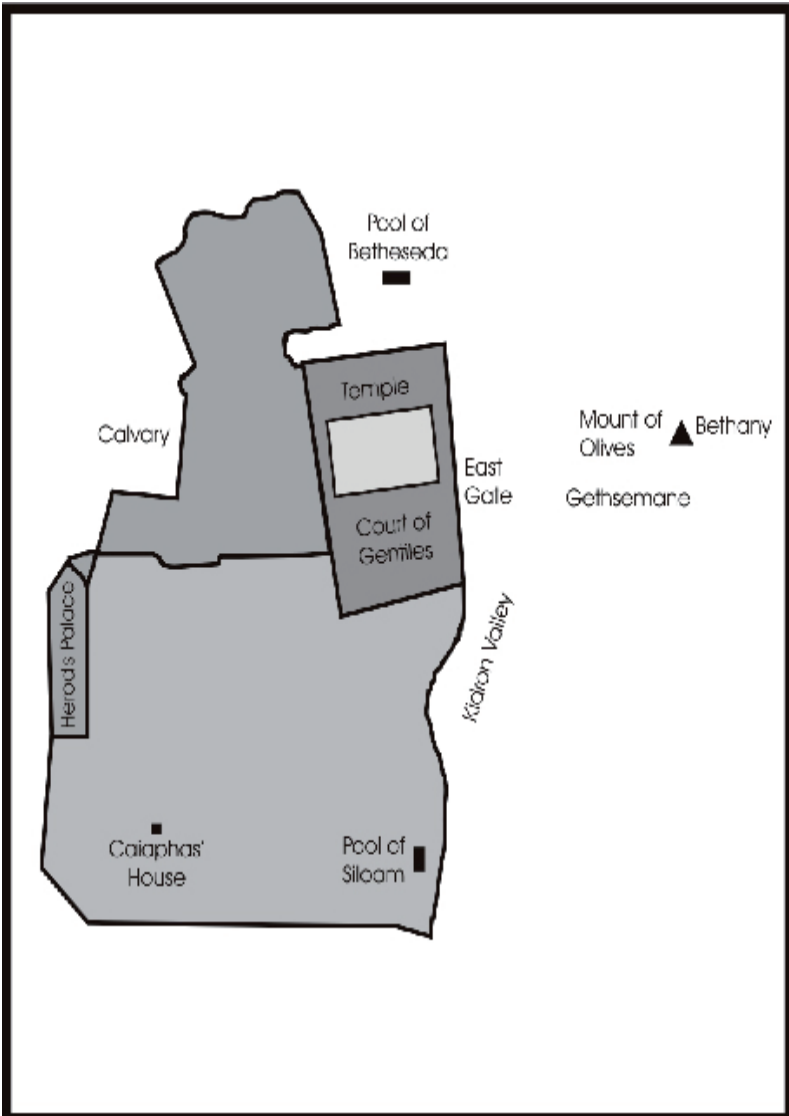
In Acts 1:18, Luke records the words of the Apostle Peter in the days following the Ascension: *“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”* What an ignominious ending for Judas, who could have made it to heaven but instead was cast into hell, and that by his own hand.

The Fourth Trial – The First Roman Trial

Scripture now returns to the fate of our Lord at this early morning hour of the Passover day. John 18:28 says, *“Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.”*

It is generally accepted that this refers to the fortress Antonia, where a cohort of troops was permanently posted. This is where Pilate resided with his wife when he came to Jerusalem. Pilate received Jesus in the hall of judgement, the place in the palace of the governor where justice was administered.

JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF CHRIST



The scrupulousness of the unscrupulous Jews was phenomenal. They were in the process of committing the most heinous crime in history, yet they were concerned that they might become ceremoniously defiled by entering into the court of a heathen ruler. Their rationale for becoming defiled was taken from Numbers 19:22, which says, “*And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.*”

John 18:29 says, “*Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?*” The character of Pilate and his position merit consideration before we continue with the narrative of the trials of Jesus.

He was the Governor of Judea. He was appointed in A.D. 26 by the Emperor Tiberius, to whom he reported directly, rather than to the Senate. In attaining this position, he had to have considerable military experience, including a command position. He was of equestrian rank, pertaining to the middle class of Roman nobility. It was from this rank under the Emperor Augustus that suitable men were chosen for public offices.

The post of Governor was essentially military, but one that oversaw the collection of revenues and the maintenance of order among the populace. He was empowered to administer justice, and had the authority to implement the death penalty. This in itself was an indication of the trust that Pilate had received from the Emperor, since only certain officials were given that power. Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, two famed Jewish writers, depict Pilate as a very cruel and wicked man. The Gospels

portray him as a blasphemer and a murderer, as we read in Luke 13:1, *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”* Pilate had ordered the death of some Galileans who were offering sacrifices in the Temple.

Remember, everything was minutely planned and determined by the Heavenly Father, who is the Righteous Judge of the universe. It is unlikely that God would have chosen a good man to pronounce judgement upon the spotless Lamb of God. No, it was essential to have a man who was inherently wicked. It was also necessary for the judge or ruler to be given adequate information regarding the innocence of Jesus. As we look deeper into the background of Pilate, we see the marvellous planning of the Father to bring to pass all things for His divine purposes.

Pilate was eminently anti-Jewish in his beliefs and actions, as shown by the way in which he sought to denigrate their customs and religious beliefs. He deliberately antagonised them when he ordered his soldiers to march into Jerusalem by night with heathen markings upon their standards (shields).

When the populace learned of these standards honouring the Roman Emperor, they appealed to Pilate to remove them. Being an obstinate man and of cruel disposition, Pilate refused. They then decided to appeal to the Emperor. Tiberius firmly rebuked Pilate and ordered him to remove the shields. Thus Pilate’s authority had been compromised before, and he feared that any further appeal to the Emperor would result

in his dismissal. With this in mind, we may now appreciate how Pilate succumbed to the evil wishes of the multitude at the trial of Jesus.

We now return to the Scripture narrative in John 18:30: *“They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.”* Luke 23:2 says, *“And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.”* John 18:31 continues, *“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”*

In accordance with Roman practice, the entire day-to-day administration of the nation of Israel was left largely to the Jewish High Priest and Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. The laws of the Jews were largely respected. The Jews were allowed a measure of autonomy, hence Pilate’s decision that they should judge Jesus according to their own customs.

John 18:32 says, *“...That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.”* Here we are presented with a problem, because the Jews had the power to carry out the death sentence by stoning, as was proven by the execution of Stephen. However, it seems clear that they had in mind crucifixion, a form of execution that only the Roman governor had the authority to order. They had inferred that the death sentence upon Jesus was merited.

We read in John 18:33, *“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?”* The judgement hall was in the palace of the governor, which by tradition was the upper palace, but this location cannot be determined with great certitude.

According to John 18:34, *“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”* The other Gospel writers also record that Jesus said, “Thou sayest,” which was an acknowledgment that He was King of the Jews. However, the manner in which Jesus responded was to inquire of Pilate as to whether the charge was his own or that of His accusers.

Pilate answered in John 18:35, *“Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?”* To this Jesus responded thusly: *“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence”* (Jn. 18:36). Jesus was making it clear that He was not a revolutionary seeking to overthrow the Roman domination of Judah. In contrast, His kingdom is spiritual.

We read in John 18:37, *“Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”* Again, Jesus clearly acknowledged His

Kingship. Jesus pointed out to Pilate that He had been born of a woman to be the King of the Jews.

Also, He declared that all those who are called of God would clearly understand the purpose and truth of His mission in life. Unless we are favoured by God, we cannot comprehend spiritual truths or understand the purposes of life here upon earth. We should realise, too, that this applies to every degree of truth. Thus we should seek to live a life pleasing to God so that we are favoured with an unfolding revelation of His plan for our own personal lives as well.

John 18:38 continues, *“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”* As we study this aspect of the trial before Pilate, we can see who was in command of the situation. It is Jesus unto whom the governor addresses the question, “What is truth?” Pilate is in complete ignorance of the situation wherein he himself plays a key role.

Convinced that Jesus was not a revolutionary, Pilate found Jesus innocent. This verdict should have ensured Jesus’ release, but the Jews had no intention of permitting such a verdict. Luke 23:5 tells us, *“And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.”*

Their only hope of a conviction was to prove that Jesus was a revolutionary intent upon leading an insurrection against

Rome. Pilate, on the other hand, wanted to be freed from the case, as we read in Luke 23:6, “*When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.*”

The Fifth Trial – The Trial before Herod

“And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time” (Lk. 23:7). Pilate now sought a way out of his dilemma by off-loading the case to Herod. This alternative was legally permissible because Herod was legally the ruler responsible for the province of Galilee.

It is necessary that we first be acquainted with the person and character of Herod before we can appreciate his involvement in the trials of Jesus. Herod the Great reigned over Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. He was the king at the time of the birth of Jesus. Josephus describes him as a man of great barbarity and a slave to his passions. Upon his death, the kingdom was divided among his three sons. Archelaus (ruling from 4 B.C. - A.D. 6) became ethnarch over half the kingdom, which included Samaria, Judaea, and Idumea. However, he was later deposed by the Romans for his cruelty.

Roman governors were then appointed to rule this area. The fifth of these governors was Pontius Pilate. From 4 B.C. to A.D. 34, Herod Philip ruled the Northeastern Province, which included Iturea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Batanea. Herod Antipas ruled the Northern Province of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D. 39). Herod Antipas was

admonished by John the Baptist for having divorced his wife Petrea, the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, and marrying Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip. Herod had John murdered at his fortress in Macherus. Thus, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, an adulterer and the murderer of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist.

As we consider the crucifixion of Jesus from God the Father's standpoint, we see that He chose five very wicked men to occupy the principal roles in this murderous act: Judas Iscariot, Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod. All were well suited to act treacherously and to subvert true justice.

We read in Luke 23:8, *“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.”* Jesus had said before that the adulterous generation seeks signs (Mt. 12:39). This adulterous and murderous king hoped that Jesus would satisfy his desire, but **God does not move at the whim of the wicked.**

The story continues in Luke 23:9: *“Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.”* Here, it is as though we are seeing the restraint for which King David once prayed in Psalm 141:3: *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”* David also said in Psalm 39:1, *“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”* **Jesus displayed beautiful,**

holy composure before His enemies. One of the greatest virtues of leadership is meekness, which literally means not reacting to adverse circumstances in an unseemly way. Jesus manifested this meekness more than any other person. Luke 23:10 says, *“And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.”*

Luke 23:11 continues, *“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.”* Although they mocked Him, Jesus was the epitome of regality. Upon reflection, they must have been put to shame.

“And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves” (Lk. 23:12). The reason for the enmity between Pilate and Herod was that Pilate had slain the Galileans, who were Herod’s subjects, when they were offering sacrifices at Jerusalem. Herod and Pilate were both conscious that Jesus did not present any threat to their domains.

They themselves, in reality, were not antagonistic toward Jesus. It was the priests who presented the real problem, for neither ruler wished to have a riot on his hands. The reason for the friendship between Pilate and Herod was probably that Herod appreciated the fact that Pilate deferred to him in acknowledging his right of jurisdiction over Jesus.

However, it is one of the facts of life that the wicked who have been at enmity with one another can be united in a

common cause against the righteous. I have experienced this in my own life. Two elders in my church, who hated each other, became friends when they united against me, but praise the Lord, He is the righteous Judge! Both of the elders who attacked me were severely judged by God. As we shall see later, so were both Pilate and Herod.

The Sixth Trial – The Third Secular Trial and the Second Before Pilate

This was the key trial, since it determined the crucifixion of Christ. All the other trials led up to this trial. Jesus was before Pilate, the Roman Governor, for the second time. Pilate alone had the power to order the death sentence by crucifixion. As we approach this trial, we must remember that, in one sense, Pilate wanted to uphold Roman justice. Yet on the other hand, he was seeking to appease the people whom he despised. Pilate never doubted the innocence of Jesus.

The narrative of the sixth and last trial begins by explaining that it was customary for the governor to release a prisoner to the people on the day of the Passover. We read in Mark 15:6, “*Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.*” The people, not the governor, had the right to choose the prisoner they wanted the governor to release.

The origin and the Scriptural basis for this custom was evidently the Day of Atonement. The Lord gave strict instructions that part of the ceremony was to include the

presentation of two goats by the High Priest to the Lord (Lev. 16:7). Lots were to be cast upon the goats; one lot was to be for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. The Lord's goat was to be offered for the sin offering. After other ceremonies, the scapegoat was to be set free. Thus, this was fulfilled at this Feast of Passover when two men were presented before the congregation.

Mark 15:7 says, *“And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.”* Barabbas had already been found guilty of the very crime for which Jesus was falsely accused by the religious leaders. Only the Heavenly Father could have so arranged a scenario as fitting as this. The guilty Barabbas and the innocent Lamb of God were brought together at this precise moment in the history of mankind.

Mark 15:8 continues, *“And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.”* Before Pilate acceded to the demands of the multitudes, he wanted to make his findings on the matter clear to the religious leaders. We read in Luke 23:13-15, *“And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.”*

According to Roman justice, Pilate should have immediately released Jesus because he found Him innocent. Yet Pilate, trying to placate the leaders and apparently seeking to facilitate the release of Jesus, said, *“I will therefore chastise him, and release him”* (Lk. 23:16).

It was not unusual for Roman magistrates to inflict a lesser punishment when the maximum sentence asked was not warranted. However, in no wise was even the lesser sentence merited in this case, for Jesus was found completely innocent of any crime, even as Pilate admitted. Pilate himself was guilty of a miscarriage of justice here too. As Luke 23:17 says, *“For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.”*

The precedent had been set by previous governors, and by Herod the Great himself. It amounted to an act of appeasement, introduced to diffuse public passion concerning a prisoner whom the populace believed had been wrongly imprisoned. However, it was used by the Father to enact the typology of the goats on the Day of Atonement.

Luke 23:18 says, *“And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.”* Consider the choice of the mob! Lest we forget, the nature of Barabbas is described again in Luke 23:19: *“Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.”* When the innocent, spotless Lamb of God heard the cries of His people whom He had come to save, they must have pierced His heart like arrows of sorrow. They chose one of the basest of all men in preference to

their Messiah. As we shall see later, **Jesus did not die of the wounds inflicted by the soldiers, but of a broken heart.** This is an experience that pastors go through from time to time when errant members of their congregations choose to follow a man of error instead of their good pastor. The heart of the shepherd is broken by their choice. It is, in effect, part of the fellowship of His sufferings that we are required to endure in order to know Him.

Luke 23:20 says, *“Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.”* Knowing that Jesus was not guilty of these crimes, Pilate earnestly sought to release Jesus without a riot. However, incited by the religious leaders, the mob cried out, *“Crucify him, crucify him”* (Lk. 23:21). This signified the manner in which Jesus would be murdered.

All these events had been predetermined by the Father to fulfil His good pleasure, for it pleased the Lord to bruise Jesus (Isa. 53:10). Pilate was insistent in seeking to release Jesus. We read in Luke 23:22-25, *“He said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”*

John 19:1 says, *“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.”* This scourging was meted out before capital punishment

in order to increase the suffering of the condemned. Cicero (106-43 B.C.), a Roman writer and politician, called scourging the “Intermediate Death.”

The scourging victim would be stripped of his clothes. Then the soldiers would tie his hands and bind him to a column in the Praetorium. The scourge of leather thongs was filled with spikes and bones that lacerated the victim’s back so that it became a bleeding mass of torn flesh. So terrible was this torture that many would faint and die from the wounds inflicted by it. However, Jesus endured this excruciating pain so that we might receive healing, for by His stripes we were healed (Isa. 53:5, 1 Pet. 2:24).

After this scourging, the soldiers normally would clothe the prisoner again. However, John 19:2 tells us that “*the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe.*” The crown of thorns, which was pressed into Jesus’ scalp, would have been sufficient to have inflicted severe mental and physical pain upon Him without further indignities. Yet enduring the pain of the crown of thorns was the price that God the Father deemed necessary in order for Christ to be able to wear, throughout all eternity, many crowns (Rev. 19:12).

“*And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands*” (Jn. 19:3). This cohort of soldiers was composed, according to history, of provincials from Syria, the hostile enemies of the Jews. With venial cruelty, they mocked and cursed the Saviour of the world. Jesus endured

this suffering in silence, even in the same way that a lamb is dumb before its shearers (Isa. 53:7). Christ opened not His mouth as the cruel whip descended upon His bleeding back time after time.

The soldiers then covered His wounds with a sargum, a short woollen military cloak worn by Roman generals and sometimes presented to foreign kings. John 19:4 continues the account: *“Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.”* Having said that he found no fault in Jesus, Pilate should have forthwith released Jesus. Yet again he was bound by the cries and the tumult of the mob, whom the religious leaders had been whipping into a frenzy.

“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!” (Jn. 19:5). Unbeknownst to Pilate, this fulfilled the prophecy given in Zechariah 6:12: *“And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.”*

This is clearly saying that Jesus is the One who will build the Church, the true temple of the Lord. Zechariah 6:13 goes on to say that He shall be a Priest upon His throne. Jesus was presented as the King, wearing the crown of thorns and mocked by this world, but He would be crowned by the Father of Lights. With His back bleeding, Jesus would soon be crucified as the Priest who offered up His body for the sins of the world.

John 19:6 says, *“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.”* By bringing the pathetic figure of the Lord forward, Pilate obviously sought to evoke the sympathy of the multitude. Any other time, a spectacle would have stirred the very bowels of compassion of the most hardened of mankind. But their hearts were hearts of stone.

John 19:7 tells us, *“The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”* Let us consider once again why Jesus was being crucified. He Himself had stated His true identity.

The leaders and their mob were blinded to the truth, for the Apostle Paul writes, *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Cor. 2:7-8). Unless they had been blinded by God, they would not have sent Jesus to the cross, and there would have been no salvation for us.

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer” (Jn. 19:8-9). It was crucial for Jesus not to respond to this question. If He had answered, the superstitious and ruthless Pilate would not have gone through with the crucifixion. Jesus could say nothing to save Himself; therefore, He had

to avoid answering questions that would have kept Him from hitting the mark of His high calling in God—the cross. *“Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”* (Jn. 19:10). Pilate acknowledged his power and responsibility, stating that he alone could send Jesus to the cross. He doomed himself before God and man by this admission.

Jesus answered in John 19:11, *“Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”* The response of Jesus merits our attention. He is giving us understanding of eternal judgement.

1. All power belongs to God, and He gives it to whomsoever He will. God rules in the affairs of man, as we read in Daniel 4:25, *“That the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”* The Apostle Paul makes this fact abundantly clear in Romans 13:1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”*

2. Jesus was saying that Pilate would not have been the governor unless God had foreordained and appointed him. God, not Caesar, was responsible for the appointment of Pilate. Therefore, even as God had raised up Pharaoh so that He might have an enemy for His people and manifest His mighty power in the ten plagues, Pilate was raised up to order the crucifixion of Jesus.

3. Then Jesus speaks of eternal judgement, placing greater guilt upon the religious leaders than He does upon Pilate. So it was indeed out of envy that they accused and delivered Him to Pilate. This reveals that envy is a cardinal sin that will send one to hell with a greater judgement than some other sins.

John 19:12 tells us, *“And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.”* Thoroughly convinced of the innocence of Jesus, Pilate again sought to release Him. Then the Jews played their trump card. They knew that they had Pilate exactly where they wanted him. Pilate had to make a choice between Jesus and Caesar.

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha” (Jn. 19:13). Still, Pilate fought to save Jesus. In the plan and purpose of God, Pilate then caused the Jews to make an everlasting decision that would bring them into bondage, sorrow, and woe until the Second Coming. They will be rejected until Jesus the Deliverer returns. Quoting Psalm 14:7, Paul says in Romans 11:26, *“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”*

Now comes the terrible choice in John 19:14: *“And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”* This sixth

hour would be mid-day (noon) in Western terms. This is the day in which the Passover Lamb was to be slain.

We read in John 19:15, *“But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”* Here the children of Israel refused their Messiah and chose the Roman Emperor as their ruler and king. It was a repetition of the scenario in which Israel asked Samuel to make them a king like all the other nations. God said to Samuel, *“They have not rejected you, but Me”* (1 Sam. 8:7).

The nation that had so many privileges from God refused her heritage under God. How many Christians are like this? Many people leave the Church and its great mantle of protection. Instead of putting their trust in God, they put it in men and rulers of this world.

Matthew 27:24 says, *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”* The rite of washing one’s hands to symbolise innocence can be found in Deuteronomy 21:6-7: *“And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.”* Psalm 26:6 says, *“I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.”*

However, this symbolic act could not absolve Pilate from the guilt of crucifying an innocent person. He had acknowledged that he had sole power; therefore, he was the one who gave the order for the crucifixion. He did it to placate the multitude and to keep his position. He thought his position could have been in jeopardy if the Jews had reported him to Caesar for allowing Jesus to lay claim to the throne of Judah.

Matthew 27:25 says, *“Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”* We must realise that the people accepted prime responsibility for the crucifixion, as foreshadowed in the types of the Old Testament by the slaying of the Paschal Lamb.

We read in Exodus 12:5-6, *“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.”*

Thus, in type and in fulfilment, Israel killed the Lamb of God. For this reason, judgement has followed the descendants of Israel from generation to generation even unto this present day. These judgements were prophesied by Moses years before in Deuteronomy 28:64-67: *“And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD*

shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.”

The judgements prophesied by Moses took place initially in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans under the direction of Titus. The land was known as the province of Palestina from A.D. 70-135. The Jews were forbidden to dwell in the land after the revolt of A.D. 132-135, when Emperor Hadrian declared Israel (Palestina) a Roman Colony and called it Aelia Capitolina.

Returning to our narrative, we read in Luke 23:24, “*Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.*” This was the greatest travesty of justice in the history of mankind. However, it was in the plan and purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that Jesus might take our guilt, and we (represented by Barabbas) might be set free. Praise His matchless name forever!

Pilate “*released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will*” (Lk. 23:25). “*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown*

of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head” (Mt. 27:27-30). This fulfilled Isaiah 50:6, which says, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

Matthew 27:31 continues, *“And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”* Jesus bore the shame and reproach of sin for us. When we consider everything that He was subjected to, we cannot but think that the sufferings that we are called upon to bear are nothing in comparison to His sufferings on our behalf.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* In reality, as Paul said in Romans 8:18, our sufferings are nothing compared to the glory that we will receive: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Let us take up our cross daily and with joy walk in the footsteps of our blessed Lord so that we may become partakers of the fellowship of His sufferings.

Before we continue with the narrative of the events leading to the crucifixion of our Lord, it would be good to consider again some of the aspects of the trials of Jesus.

The Jewish Trials

Jesus was surrounded by His accusers, who were also His judges. The charge was that He called Himself the Son of God, which was true. He was and is the Son of God.

That charge could not have been brought before Pilate, the secular power. Pilate would naturally have answered as he did in the beginning. Gallio, the Roman deputy of Achaia, did the same thing. We read in Acts 18:12-16, *“And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat; Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat.”*

The Jews not only accused Jesus before Pilate of making Himself the King of the Jews, which He was, but also accused Him of sedition, of which He was manifestly not guilty. Pilate recognised His innocence of that charge.

The Secular Trials

Both Pilate and Herod had found Jesus innocent of the crimes He was accused of committing. Pilate declared three times that Jesus was innocent.

1. John 18:38 - *“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”*
2. John 19:4 - *“Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.”*
3. John 19:6 - *“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.”*

On four occasions, Pilate sought to release Jesus.

1. He told the Jews to settle the matter themselves (Jn. 19:6-7).
2. He referred the case to Herod (Lk. 23:6-7).
3. He tried to persuade the Jews to choose Jesus as the prisoner released at Passover time (Mk. 15:6-10), for Pilate knew that they had delivered Jesus out of envy (Lk. 23:22).
4. Pilate sought to reduce the sentence by ordering Jesus scourged and then released.

Therefore, Pilate compromised Roman justice by trying to save his position. Pilate is in hell today because he did not accept his responsibility of releasing the Innocent One. He had even been warned of God through his wife's dream

(Mt. 27:19), yet his former life did not permit him to have the strength of character to do what was right. **We should be forewarned that if we do not walk uprightly, when we are faced with a test, we will fail because we lack the moral fibre to do what is right.** Let us, therefore, seek to do what is right in every circumstance, no matter how painful it is or how much it costs.

**Remember the words of Psalm 106:3:
“Blessed are they that keep judgment, and
he that doeth righteousness at all times.”**

CHAPTER 7

THE CROSS

The Way to the Cross - La Via Dolorosa

We read in John 19:16-20, *“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.”*

The title over Jesus’ cross was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Hebrew is the language of the Jews, signifying that Jesus is the King of the Jews. Greek is the language of the Gentiles, signifying that Jesus is the King of the Gentiles, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 49:6: *“And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”*

Latin was the language of Rome—pointing to the fourth kingdom of the book of Daniel, namely, the restored Roman

Empire—the empire over which the Antichrist will rule and reign in the last days. However, Christ will defeat the Antichrist and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In John 19:21-22, the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, *“Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.”* Pilate now shows the other side of his complex and evil character by becoming stubborn and determined to yield no more to the demands of the Jews whom he despised. However, without his knowledge, he was again fulfilling the sovereign will of the Father in heaven. He declared the kingship of God’s dear Son, Jesus Christ, before all nations and peoples on earth, under the earth, and before all heavenly beings (Phil. 2:10).

“And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha” (Jn. 19:17). Luke 23:26 says, *“And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.”*

After the injustice of the trials and the terrible affliction of the scourgings, Jesus now had the added humiliation of walking in the midst of four soldiers with the sign of His accusation for all to see. The cross became too heavy for Him to carry, and the Roman soldiers compelled Simon to carry Jesus’ cross. Later, Simon was well known to the Early Church through his sons Alexander and Rufus (Mk. 15:21).

When one of the soldiers touched Simon, probably on his shoulder, Simon was obliged to carry whatever load the soldier required for one mile. In this case, Simon had to carry the cross (that is, the *pallibium* or cross bar of the cross) of Jesus. The path that the cortege took was generally not direct, but wound through the streets of Jerusalem. The purpose of this was to add to the pain of those being crucified and to serve as a warning to the general population not to transgress the law of Rome.

Luke 23:27 tells us, “*And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.*” Seeing Jesus in His blood-drenched clothes, many women began to cry for Him as they would for their own son. These women symbolise the nation of Israel that will weep and mourn for Christ as for an only begotten son when they see His nail-pierced hands at His Second Coming (Zech. 12:10; 13:6).

The glorious Son of God had seemingly been reduced to a picture of pity. How this must have hurt the pious, who had hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Deliverer of Israel. For the wicked, He had become an object of derision, with His beard ripped from His face and His visage marred more than any other man (Isa. 52:14).

The narrative continues in Luke 23:28: “*But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*” Here again we see the magnificence of Jesus. He did not accept the

women's pity. He was not thinking of Himself or His own sufferings. His only concern was for the future of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The prophetic unction remained on the lips of this weakened vessel, Christ.

Can we not pause here to marvel that after all this humiliation and the pain of the scourging, His Heavenly Father still requires Jesus to give a prophetic warning to the weeping women? In this extreme agony, Jesus fulfilled His tasks—even unto the very end. What faithfulness!

The prophetic flow resumes as Jesus repeats the warnings that were first recorded for us in Matthew 24:19: *“For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck”* (Lk. 23:29). Times of judgements are not the ideal times to have children. Before a Christian couple has children, they should earnestly pray to make sure they are having children in God's perfect time.

“Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us” (Lk. 23:30). This is again a reminder of the prophetic warnings that the Lord had already given concerning the wicked. They will utter these words at Christ's Second Coming, when He comes not as the Crucified One, but as the all-conquering Judge to execute judgement upon His enemies.

“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Lk. 23:31). In this verse, Christ turns the

thoughts of His listeners to the awesome terrors that would come upon the defenders of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. When relations between the Jews and their Roman rulers deteriorated, the Jews rebelled in A.D. 66.

Jesus gives the analogy that if they have so unjustly and cruelly treated the Green Tree (symbolising the Lord Jesus Christ), how much more will they vent their anger upon the wicked nation of Israel when they rebel? In that rebellion, it is estimated that at least 200,000 Jews were slaughtered in the provinces, and one million perished in the siege of Jerusalem. Of these, 4,000 suffered death by crucifixion.

Luke 23:32 says, *“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”* Jesus did not suffer alone on that Passover Day. He was crucified along with two criminals. This was to fulfil the Scripture in Isaiah 53:9-12: *“He made His grave with the wicked...and He was numbered with the transgressors.”* And yet this factor would display the wondrous mercy of our Lord, since during the time of His greatest suffering and agony He could pardon and receive one who had been but a short time before cursing and mocking Him.

We read in Matthew 27:34, *“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”* This fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 69:21: *“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”* This mixture was given by the kind, devout women of Jerusalem to those experiencing crucifixion in order to lessen their pain.

This concoction drugged the senses of those who drank it. However, Jesus would not yield His senses to the drug. He decided to fully suffer the pangs of crucifixion so that He would fulfil all that the Father had planned for Him to suffer. Again we see the magnificence of our Saviour. How can we help but adore Him?

Jesus was obliged to lie upon the cross on the ground so that the soldiers could nail Him to those pieces of wood. After this, the cross was raised and then was dropped into the hole that had been dug for the upright wooden post. This action would have jarred His body, causing His bones to come out of joint. This helps us understand the saying of Isaiah 52:14: *“As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”* Speaking of the cross prophetically, David said, *“All my bones are out of joint”* (Ps. 22:14). Anyone who has had problems with his back knows what terrible agony just one vertebrae causes when it slips out of alignment. Thus Jesus experienced excruciating pain.

The Five Wounds

Five wounds were inflicted on Jesus: two in His hands, two in His feet, and one in His side. The actual piercing of His blessed hands and feet is foretold prophetically in Psalm 2:16: *“They pierced My Hands and My Feet.”* Luke 23:33 tells us, *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”*

His Hands

In the act of crucifixion, nails were driven into His hands. These are the wounds of which we read in Zechariah 13:6: *“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”* Hands are the symbol of service. God said in Isaiah 65:2, *“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.”* Hands are also the symbol of an invitation to friendship. We stretch out our hands to our friends when we meet them as an indication that we want to embrace them. Sadly, Israel refused the Lord’s gestures of love.

His Feet

As we see in the writings of the prophets, feet are the symbol of a dedicated walk and ministry. Psalm 1:1 says, *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”* Jesus did not walk with the impious scribes and priests of His days, but with the common folk, who heard Him gladly.

We read in Isaiah 52:7, *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* Paul interprets this verse in Ephesians 6:15, where he says, *“And*

your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

By piercing the blessed feet of Jesus, the people were rejecting His godly and holy walk, as well as His ministry as the Prince of Peace and the Preacher of Righteousness.

His Side

At Jesus' death, a Roman soldier pierced His heart with a spear. We read in John 19:34, *“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”* From the pierced heart of Jesus, blood and water flowed freely. Medically, this speaks of a broken heart.

This is confirmed by Psalm 69:20: *“Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”* Jesus experienced verbal and physical abuse by the priests and the soldiers as they struck Him and ripped His beard off His face. The reproach of the shame and disgrace that had been heaped upon Jesus literally broke His heart.

In actuality, Jesus died from a broken heart, not from the actual physical sufferings of the scourgings and the pain of the cross, although they would have eventually caused His death. Pilate marveled that Jesus had died so quickly (Mk. 15:44). We read in Psalm 22:14, *“My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels.”* We sometimes experience those wounds when we are rejected by those we love. We feel them in our hands and feet. Moreover, David wrote in Psalm 55:3-5, *“Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the*

wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.” We experience that pain and physical enlargement of heart when we likewise suffer the reproach of our enemies.

The Seven Sayings

The Gospels record seven sayings of Jesus while He was hanging upon the cross. Each of these seven sayings upon the cross has a spiritual significance. The last words of a person are of singular importance, especially when he is dying. This applies especially to the Lord Jesus. His seven last sayings reveal to us the things that are the most important to Him. By the grace of God, we will now examine them one by one.

The First Saying (Lk. 23:34)

The first saying is recorded in Luke 23:34: *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* This cry concerned those who were responsible for His crucifixion. Jesus asked His Father to forgive them because they did not fully understand what they were doing.

The Apostle Paul clarifies this in 1 Corinthians 2:8: *“None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (NIV). They had to be blinded so that they would crucify Christ. This was the purpose and plan of the Father for His Son’s life.

This first saying reveals the marvellous character of our Lord. He forgave His tormentors and interceded for their forgiveness before the throne of God. What a blessed example for us to follow! We need that same spirit of forgiveness so that we may forgive, with a free heart, all those who have offended us or have treated us unjustly and cruelly. That is the true victory of the crucified life, when we have died to all considerations of self-pity and injustice. Those who treat us cruelly are the vessels of wrath. God uses them to work in us, His vessels of mercy, the things that are pleasing in His sight. The goal is to present us faultless before His throne with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24). May the same sweet spirit of temperance that was in Christ dwell in us.

We read in Psalm 22:18, *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”* This was fulfilled when Jesus hung upon the cross in John 19:23-24. *“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.”*

Everyone who was crucified was subjected to this humiliation and degradation. The soldiers who were appointed to the grim and gruesome task of crucifying criminals received their clothing as a reward. The soldiers were permitted to

divide the garments of the condemned. This seamless outer garment that Jesus wore was indicative of His deity. Because it was made of one weaving, it had no beginning or end, even as our blessed Lord is eternal, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:3).

The Second Saying (Lk. 23:43)

Matthew 27:37 tells us, “...*And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*” Even in His death, there was the understanding among the onlookers that Jesus was no common criminal. In reality, the Jews were crucifying their King. They crucified the One who would receive a name above every name in heaven and on earth. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow under the earth, on earth, and in heaven above (Phil. 2:9-11).

Matthew 27:38 continues, “*Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*” Jesus was crucified between two common criminals, giving credence to the belief that He was guilty of some crime. Therefore, in the eyes of those who passed by, He was being justly punished. It was a further degradation of the spotless and matchless Son of God.

“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others;

himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God” (Mt. 27:39-43).

When we prayerfully consider this scene at Golgotha, we realise that during His three-and-a-half years of ministry, Jesus had raised the hopes of the nation of Israel. Now it appeared that He was a hopeless failure, apparently weak and destitute of all strength, power, and purpose to achieve that which He had offered others—salvation and deliverance from their bondages.

However, we must also see that Satan was behind all of these accusations and jibes of the adversaries. Certainly, through his vessels of wrath, Satan was trying to goad Jesus into exerting His authority and coming down from the cross. He was trying everything to keep Jesus from fulfilling His Father’s will. Satan and all his fallen angels and demons knew that it was upon that cross that Jesus would destroy them.

Colossians 2:14-15 describes the blow that Christ’s death upon the cross dealt to the kingdom of darkness: *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”*

“The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth” (Mt. 27:44). It appears that at the beginning

of their ordeal upon the cross, both thieves cursed Jesus, but then later it becomes clear that one of them had a change of heart as he beheld the matchless, quiet composure of the Son of God.

We read in Luke 23:39-41, *“One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.”* One of the criminals testified of Jesus’ goodness and innocence. Those who have dealings with the criminal side of society know full well that one criminal can readily recognise another. Those who have been in prison know other convicts. They also know the innocent. Thus the testimony of this malefactor is of great significance.

He said to Jesus in Luke 23:42, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* Not only did this man recognise Jesus as a just man, but he saw through the eyes of faith that Jesus was veritably who He said He was—the Son of God. Jesus even saved a soul while He was dying on the cross.

Jesus said to him in Luke 23:43, *“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* This is the second of the seven sayings of Jesus upon the cross. This statement reveals Him as the Saviour of the world. May we also seek to win souls for the Lord, even in our darkest hour.

The Third Saying (Jn. 19:26-27)

We read in John 19:25, “*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*” The third saying shows Jesus’ concern for His mother, Mary. He upheld the fifth commandment, which is, “Thou shalt honour thy father and mother.”

John 19:26-27 says, “*When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*” It is of great importance for ministers to recognise that they should not neglect their own families. The family was instituted by God as the basis of society, and it should be honoured at all times.

The Fourth Saying (Mk. 15:34, Mt. 27:46)

The first three sayings were spoken in light. Then from the sixth hour to the ninth hour there was complete darkness over the land. Matthew 27:45 says, “*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*” This would have been mid-day or noon western time, when the sun is at its height. The darkness cannot be attributed to an eclipse of the sun since Passover is celebrated at full moon. Therefore, it was a supernatural sign from the Almighty.

Upon the cross hung God’s sin-bearer, the One upon whom all the sins of mankind were laid. It is appropriate that He

was enshrouded in darkness, for that is where the sins of the world originate—in the kingdom of darkness.

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46). This is the fourth saying.

It was natural for God to turn away from His Son, because a holy God could not have fellowship with sin. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* In this saying, we see that Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29).

Matthew 27:47 says, *“Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for [Elijah].”* Jesus’ words were veiled so that only the initiated understood them. The superstitious Jews thought that He was crying out for Elijah. They did not realise that the prophets, however holy, do not know what is happening upon earth when they are in heaven.

The Fifth Saying (Jn. 19:28)

The fifth saying is recorded in John 19:28: *“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”* The beauty of this passage evokes again such admiration in our hearts and souls for Christ. Even wracked with pain, Christ had only one desire—to fulfil His Father’s will for His life and

accomplish all of the prophecies concerning His death. Truly, to His dying breath, Jesus was devoted to His Father's business (cf. Lk. 2:49). Before He surrendered His life to the Father, Christ's goal was that every jot and tittle of the Law would be fulfilled.

The Scripture that had to be accomplished at this point was Psalm 69:21, which says, "*They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*" This is one of the most distressing parts of crucifixion. The wounds, especially those on the victim's lacerated back, would become so inflamed that a raging fever would ensue. This, in turn, would produce an unquenchable thirst. It was not until the very end that the Lord declared His need, and He only did so to fulfil Scripture.

John 19:29 tells us that there was a vessel full of vinegar nearby. "*And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink*" (Mt. 27:48). This was not the wine mingled with myrrh that He had refused before, which was provided to stupefy the senses of those on the cross. The vinegar solely assuaged the thirst of those crucified.

Matthew 27:49 continues by saying, "*The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*" The crowd of mockers did not want Him to have even this comfort, but tried to keep the compassionate away from Him. They still were superstitiously concerned that Elijah might perchance come to save Jesus, and they wanted to see the event if it took

place. Naturally, this did not occur, since the purpose of the Father was the death of His dear Son, not His deliverance.

The Sixth Saying (Jn. 19:30)

We read in John 19:30, *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.”* This was the sixth saying upon the cross. The life of our Lord is so precise. Everything that had to be accomplished, especially the events upon the cross, had been minutely recorded by the prophets. Knowing all the things that had to be fulfilled, Jesus was in complete control of His destiny to the very end.

He knew perfectly well what had to take place, and with great clarity of mind, even until the end, He was intent upon fulfilling the Scriptures. Our amazing Saviour, with the meticulous care of an accountant, made sure that every jot and tittle of the Scriptures was fulfilled. Would to God that we could walk with such keenness and dedication of mind, soul, and spirit.

The Seventh Saying (Lk. 23:46)

The seventh and final saying is recorded in Luke 23:46: *“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”* Christ’s life was laid out by the Father and fulfilled with mathematical exactitude. With this final saying, Jesus expired.

The Seven Sayings of Christ upon the Cross

1. *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* Lk. 23:34
2. *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*
Lk. 23:43
3. *“Woman, behold thy son! ...Behold thy mother!”*
Jn. 19:26-27
4. *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* Mk.15:34, Mt. 27:46
5. *“I thirst.”* Jn. 19:28
6. *“It is finished.”* Jn. 19:30
7. *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”*
Lk. 23:46

CHAPTER 8

HIS DEATH AND BURIAL

In Chapter 8, we are going to look at the death and burial of Christ. We read in Matthew 27:51, “*And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.*” This is an event of prime significance for us believers. The Apostle Paul explains in Hebrews 9:8 that prior to the death of Jesus, the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet opened.

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing” (Heb. 9:8). But now we can enter into the Holiest place by the blood of the Lamb, with boldness and “*by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*” (Heb. 10:20).

The rending of the veil in the Temple was a very significant event. The veil is the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses. It separated man from the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the manifest presence of God (Ex. 26:33; 38:18, Heb. 9:3). Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-28, Heb. 9:7).

Do you think it was God’s plan for only one person to experience His true and living presence one day a year?

No, His desire was for everyone to have access into His presence. By His death upon the cross, Jesus broke down the wall of division between us and God, represented in the Temple by the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Paul says in Ephesians 2:18, *“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* This is why the rending of the veil in the Temple was so significant.

The rending of the veil also speaks of a spiritual experience for us as believers. It speaks of being crucified with Christ and dying to self, as described in Romans 6:6: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* This is not a spiritual experience that takes place at salvation.

When we are born-again, we are forgiven of all our sins and we become a new creature in Christ, but our old nature has not been totally dealt with yet. We still have habits, attitudes, thoughts, and actions of the old Adamic nature that need to be transformed by the grace of God.

Paul said in Galatians 2:20, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* Paul was speaking of the experience he had with God whereby he knew that his old nature was crucified with Christ and rendered powerless. In one sense, the veil represents our flesh, our old Adamic nature. Hebrews 10:20 confirms this: *“By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”* The veil represented Christ’s flesh and it represents ours as well.

By His death, Christ made the way for us to come into the Holy of Holies with God and experience His manifest presence. However, in order for us to experience that, our old Adamic nature has to be crucified with Christ. The veil is what separated man from the presence of God and it is our old nature that separates us from God's presence.

We need to earnestly pray that God will give us this spiritual experience and put our old nature to death so that we can walk in holiness. Then we can go within the veil, into the Holy of Holies and into the very presence of God, who dwells between the cherubim and speaks from the Mercy Seat. Praise His holy name forever and ever!

We read in Matthew 27:52-53, *“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”* This event fulfilled Isaiah 26:19, which says, *“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”* Thus, contrary to the reasoning of those who dispute the resurrection of Jesus, there were many in those days that could testify that Jesus was not alone when He arose from the grave.

The Testimony of the Centurion

“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that

were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54). A centurion in the Roman army was a soldier who had risen from the ranks and had the trust not only of his superiors, but of those whom he commanded as well. He was a man who, generally speaking, was a good judge of character. This centurion had probably watched and officiated at many crucifixions. He was obviously struck by the sweet and yet authoritative demeanour of our Saviour. More than those around him, and even more than the rulers, this centurion was in a position to clearly see the divine nature of Jesus manifested on that cruel cross. His testimony rings clear and true: “Truly, this was the Son of God.”

The Women at the Cross

“And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children” (Mt. 27:55- 56). Here the evangelist depicts the tender and faithful love of the women who had followed Jesus in life and were faithful to Him to the very end. These verses are a very touching tribute to these pious and loving women. Because of their loyalty, they were honoured at His resurrection.

The Burial

We read about Christ’s burial in John 19:31: *“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for*

that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

Once more we see the cruelty of the religious spirit. The observance of ceremonial laws was more important to them than showing compassion for the suffering. *"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him"* (Jn. 19:32).

The purpose of the request to break the legs of those crucified was to hasten their death so that they could be removed from the crosses. This would ensure that the day would not be defiled. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 tells us, *"If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree. You must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance"* (NIV).

We read in John 19:33-36, *"But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."* Jesus' bones were not broken because He was already dead. This fulfilled Psalm 34:20, which says, *"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."*

The significance of the broken bones must not be overlooked. This shows again the meticulous care with which the Heavenly Father orchestrated all things. The Lord Jesus is called the Lamb of God. When a lamb has a tendency to stray, its shepherd will break one of its leg bones to keep it from straying again. Thus a broken bone is a symbol of rebellion.

Therefore, Christ's bones could not be broken because He was not rebellious, but was obedient to His Father, as we are told in Isaiah 50:5: "*The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear; and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*" May the Lord say so of us that we faithfully fulfilled His commandments. Also, the bones of the Passover lamb could not be broken (Ex. 12:46, Num. 9:12).

John 19:37 says, "*And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*" This Scripture is taken from Zechariah 12:10: "*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*" This will be fulfilled at Christ's Second Coming.

The Burial of Our Lord

The body of a crucified person could be reclaimed by relatives after his death. In the case of Jesus, there were no

male relatives present. Also, being Galileans, His family had no tomb or burial plot available in or around Jerusalem. Thus the Father had provided one who would again fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9, which says, *“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”*

We read in John 19:38, *“And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.”* Mark 15:43-45 also tells us, *“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”* Joseph, a rich and generous man who had his own tomb, fulfilled the prophecy. He was a disciple of Jesus.

The story continues in John 19:39: *“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.”* Each of these spices has a spiritual significance. *Myrrh*, an embalming fluid, is a symbol of meekness. Thus, here lay the Lord who was the very epitome of meekness (which is the principal characteristic of a lamb). He was the Lamb of God, who before His shearers was dumb and opened not His mouth.

Aloes, also an embalming fluid, is a symbol of temperance or self-control. Let us meditate fully upon Jesus, who did not permit His accusers to provoke His spirit as did Moses, who thereby lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land (Ps. 106:32-33). A 100-pound weight of the mixture of myrrh and aloes was the measure reserved for the burial of kings. This showed that, in reality, the one being buried was the King of the Jews.

John 19:40 says, *“Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”* Linen is a type of righteousness. Jesus is Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness.

John 19:41 tells us, *“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.”* How appropriate that this tomb was in a garden, since Christ was truly the Garden of God, bringing forth to perfection all the blessed fruits of the Spirit. *“There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand”* (Jn. 19:42).

Down into Hell

Two events occurred simultaneously at the death of Jesus.

1. His physical body was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
2. His spirit went down into hell.

Matthew 12:40 confirms this: *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

We are told by Peter what Christ was doing during these three days and three nights. *“Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water”* (1 Pet. 3:18-20 NIV). By the Spirit, Jesus entered into the heart of hell. On that resurrection morning, we are told that He led the Old Testament saints into heaven. He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8, Ps. 68:18).

The Watch by the Women

Mark 15:47 tells us, *“And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.”* Luke 23:56 continues, *“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”* Thus the day after Jesus’ death upon the cross was, according to John 19:31, a Sabbath Day. It was a high day.

We have to study the chronological sequence of those days in order to arrive at the correct sequence of events and the days in which they occur. Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, before evening, and was resurrected some time

early Sunday morning, the day after the weekly Sabbath, which was Saturday.

The Chief Priests come to Pilate

The point that I want to make in the following narrative is that the chief priests and religious leaders clearly understood that Jesus had said He would be in the grave for three days. We read in Matthew 27:62-66, *“Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”*

The description of the tomb is given in Matthew 27:60: *“And placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away”* (NIV). The tomb is with us today, guarded by pious believers. I personally have had the privilege of entering it. The actual stone that was placed in front of the entrance is now missing. However, the gully by which it was rolled into position still remains as evidence to substantiate scriptural accounts.

CHAPTER 9

HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

We read in Mark 16:1, “*And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*”

The Stone Rolled Away

Unbeknownst to the women, before they arrived at the site of the garden tomb, an event of great magnitude had taken place. “*And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men*” (Mt. 28:2-4). These were, of course, the Roman soldiers who had been appointed by Pilate at the request of the chief priests to ensure that His disciples did not take away the body of Jesus.

Mark 16:2-6 tells us, “*And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not*

affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.” What a glorious declaration of faith for us Christians: He is risen; He is not here! Other religions can point to the tombs of their founders, but we point to one that is empty, for our Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father forever and ever. The Apostle Paul, writing on the resurrection, declares in Romans 4:25, “*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification*” (NIV). It is through the Lord’s resurrection that we have the assurance of eternal life by faith in His atoning death for our sins.

Mark 16:7 says, “*But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*” We must see the concern of heaven for Peter. He who denied his Lord with cursings was not going to be denied by his Lord. Peter’s innermost heart was known by God and his bitter sorrow at his failure was noted and remembered.

Even before the denial, Jesus had said, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am*” (Jn. 14:1-3 NIV). Heaven made a distinction between the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter. One acted with cold deliberation, while the other (Peter) acted unwillingly through the failure of the flesh.

It is worthy of note that women were honoured at the resurrection, being privileged to see the angel of God. Later it was to a woman to whom Jesus first appeared. Surely, Jesus did this to reward their faithfulness. They had been with Him since those early days in Galilee, ministering with fidelity and never doubting that He was the Son of God. It is very reminiscent of that great lady in the Old Testament, Abigail. She gave David great assurance concerning his future, saying, *“The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house”* (1 Sam. 25:28).

Faithfulness will never go unrewarded in the sight of our God. Let us be like Him who is called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11). Let us remember that *“he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much”* (Lk. 16:10). Therefore, if we are faithful in the little duties of life, God will promote us and give us greater opportunities.

“And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid” (Mk. 16:8). Luke gives a little more detail of this encounter with the angels in Luke 24:5-11: *“In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and*

Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not” (NIV).

John 20:2-7 says, *“Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.”*

This Scripture is spiritually significant because it shows that the Lord, who is the Head, had finished His course, while the body, His Church, has yet to fulfil her destiny.

John 20:8-9 continues, *“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”* It appears that the disciples had no problem with the death of Jesus. They were looking forward to His Second Coming, not to His resurrection, since that Scripture had been purposefully veiled from them until this time.

John 20:10 says, “*Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*” We need to pause and consider the chronological sequence of events on that resurrection day, for the Lord Himself appeared to the women and to the disciples on five occasions during the first day. He appeared on another five occasions during the following 40 days before His ascension.

The Five Appearances on Resurrection Day

1. To Mary Magdalene

“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she

had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her” (Jn. 20:11-18).

2. To the Other Women

“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me” (Mt. 28:9-10).

3. To the Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which

should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not” (Lk. 24:13-24).

The risen Lord expounded on the necessity of His death and resurrection from the Scriptures. The whole of the Bible speaks of the necessity of a sacrifice that would be acceptable unto a thrice holy God for the salvation of mankind. All of the Old Testament sacrifices merely foreshadowed the death of Jesus upon the cross, as the Lord explained to these two disciples when He explained the Scriptures to them.

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another,

Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them” (Lk. 24:25-33).

4. To Peter

We read in Luke 24:34-35, “*Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*” This appearance to Peter is mentioned, but is not specifically recorded. Its purpose was obviously to reassure Peter and to affirm his salvation after he had denied the Lord in so shocking a manner.

5. To the Ten Apostles

We read in John 20:19-21, “*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you! After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”* (NIV).

This is the official commissioning of the disciples as they were born again. We read in John 20:22-23, “*And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them,*

Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

The prerogative of forgiving sins is given to those unto whom the Lord grants it. It cannot be assumed to be the right of every born again believer. This power carries with it enormous responsibilities and is given to the spiritually mature.

John 20:24-25 says, *“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

The Five Appearances Between the Day of the Resurrection and Ascension Day

1. The Appearance Eight Days Later to the Eleven

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (Jn. 20:26-31).

2. The Appearance to the Seven Disciples at the Sea of Tiberius

As recorded in John 21, Jesus appeared to seven of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. It was at this time that the miraculous draught of 153 fish took place.

3. The appearance on the mountain in Galilee

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mt. 28:16-20).

4. The appearance to James, the Lord’s brother

“Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:7 NIV).

5. The Ascension

“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Lk. 24:50-51). While all these experiences were unique to our blessed Lord, we must never forget that they presage, in type, what the Church will experience too.

The Ascension is a type of the Rapture that will lift the Church up to meet the Lord as He descends in the clouds with great glory at His Second Coming. Should this occur in our lifetime, we need to know that we must qualify to have part in the First Resurrection so that we can rule and reign with Christ during the Millennium. Briefly, the qualifications for the First Resurrection are given in Philippians 3:10-11: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”*

We return now to our narrative in Luke 24:52-53: *“And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”* Just prior to Christ’s ascension, while Jesus and His disciples were upon the Mount of Olives, He said to them in Acts 1:4-5, *“...Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit”* (NIV).

Jesus said in Acts 1:8, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (NIV). As the Lord left this earth, He gave a charge to His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues.

The Power of His Resurrection

The Apostle Paul also spoke in Romans 8:11 of that resurrection life flowing through Spirit-filled believers: *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

The Lord wants us to know this resurrection power now, even as Paul prayed for the Ephesian church. However, the power of Christ’s resurrection is not something that man can understand with his own mind. It is so exceedingly great that it takes a revelation from God to comprehend the magnitude and vastness of its capabilities.

Paul prayed that the Ephesian church, which was Pentecostal and extremely well versed in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Scriptures, would receive the spirit of revelation. We read in Ephesians 1:17-23, *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know*

what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Ephesians 4:8-10 says, “*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*”

First Peter 3:18-22 says, “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven,*

and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

Beloved, we no longer worship a crucified Christ, but a risen Saviour who was raised by the power of God. God wants that same power to dwell in us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and by the seven Spirits of the Lord, which are listed for us in Isaiah 11:2: *“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”*

The Spirit of the Lord gives us power to preach. Wisdom enables us to make right choices and to conduct ourselves at all times in a manner glorifying to the Lord. Understanding enables us to know why God moves in any given manner. Counsel gives us the ability to know what we should do at any given time.

Might is the ability to manifest the strength and power of God, even as did Samson. Knowledge is the ability to know things past, present, and future. The fear of the Lord is the conviction that causes us to know our sins and to live a holy life in reverential fear before Him. We need these seven Spirits and anointings functioning in our lives.

The Tabernacle of Moses

The manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit can be seen in type in the three divisions of the Tabernacle of Moses. The

baptism of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the Outer Court, the seven Spirits of the Lord in the Holy Place, and the power of His resurrection in the Holy of Holies. Thus the power of His resurrection is the third level of the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Outer Court

In the Outer Court, there were four horns on the Brazen Altar (Ex. 27:2). Horns speak of power (Hab. 3:4). These horns typify the power that we receive through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the nine gifts of the Spirit.

The nine gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8- 10: *“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.”*

The Holy Place

In the Holy Place, the manifestation of the Spirit is likened to the golden candlestick with the seven lamps. These seven lamps symbolise the seven Spirits of the Lord described in Isaiah 11:2: *“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”*

The Holy of Holies

The power of His resurrection can be seen in the Holy of Holies through Aaron's rod that budded. Something that was dead came back to life and budded. That takes resurrection power! This is the power that Paul desired when he wrote, "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*" (Phil. 3:10). This power was manifested when Enoch walked with God and God took him directly to heaven without seeing death (Gen. 5:24).

We see the power of His resurrection again, in type, through Abraham. He was given power to conceive Isaac. Romans 4:19 says, "*for he considered not his own body now dead.*" It is also manifested in the raising of the widow's son by Elijah in Zarephath (1 Ki. 17:8-23). Also, we see it in the ascension of Elijah on the other side of Jordan (without seeing death) through a whirlwind (2 Ki. 2:11).

Another manifestation of this power is in the raising of the dead man who touched the body of Elisha (2 Ki. 13:21). Moreover, we have the promise of Daniel 11:32, that in the last days, "*the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*"

In the New Testament, we can see the power of His resurrection in the life and ministry of Jesus. While declaring that He is the Resurrection and the Life, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:25). After His resurrection, Jesus appeared

suddenly in the midst of His disciples and obviously went through walls. He must also have been transported by the Spirit. These manifestations were also experienced in the Early Church. Philip was transported by the Spirit (Acts 8:39). Paul says in Colossians 2:5, *“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.”* He had never seen the Colossian church, but he could say that he was present there in the Spirit.

I have had similar experiences. Once I was in a certain continent and in the Spirit, I was taken to another continent. With my own eyes, I saw a church board meeting take place. I actually walked through the room. I saw the board members and heard what they said.

Once a dear Canadian pastor who is now with the Lord shared with me a similar experience he had. He was in Europe during Christmas and was missing his family. To comfort him, the Lord took him in the Spirit to Canada and he watched his wife and children in their living room. His wife afterwards testified that she felt her husband’s spirit walking through the room at that precise moment. We need to pray for an outpouring of the Spirit of God so that we can experience the power of His resurrection!

**Pray for an outpouring of the Spirit
of God and experience the
power of His resurrection!**

PART THREE

THE CROSS IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

**The cross is not an option
for believers;
it is a commandment.**

CHAPTER 10

THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

In Chapter 10, we are going to look at the cross in the life of the believer, or the Crucified Life. The historical cross of Christ is important, but it is also essential to understand that there is a practical application of the cross for us as believers. The goal for every believer is to live a crucified life so that we can be like Christ and hit the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus for our lives!

Take Up Your Cross Daily

First of all, let me say that the cross is not an option for believers; it is a commandment. Jesus makes this very clear in Luke 9:23: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”* Beloved, it is a commandment! In Luke 14:27 He said, *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”* If we do not take up our cross, we cannot be His disciples.

The point that Jesus brings out in Luke 9:23 is that it is a daily walk—daily walking in the crucified life. The other point is that the cross is personal. We are to take up “our” cross, our tailor-made cross. The cross is different for each and every one of us. Jesus said in Matthew 10:38, *“He that taketh not up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”* If we are unwilling to take up our cross and follow Christ, we are not worthy of Him.

We read the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-21: *“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”* This was a personal commandment to that young man.

Verse 22 says, *“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”* Jesus said, *“But one thing thou lackest.”* His possessions were his god. He was unwilling to take up his cross and follow Jesus. For him, the cross meant that he had to sell all of his possessions in order to follow Christ. Now, this does not mean that everyone has to sell everything they have. This was the personal cross God required of that young man, which he refused.

In Matthew 10:34-39, we see another aspect of the cross: *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her*

mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

The context of the cross here is family life. Jesus said in this particular passage, "I am come to set the father and the son at variance one with another." In some homes, there is perfect harmony, but in other homes there is contention and division. Our particular cross is different than the cross others have to bear.

For one, it is to sell all his possessions. For another it is having to take a stand against relatives because they are taking a separate path. **It is very important indeed to understand that the cross varies from situation to situation and person to person.**

Jesus said in Mark 8:34-35, "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it...*" In Luke 9:23- 26 we read, "*...And follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me*

and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels."

God's dealings are very personal. He might not require of someone else the same thing He requires of you, but He also has a tailor-made cross for them that He does not require you to carry. Obviously, an ideal family life is desired, but some people have family members that are not walking in God's ways. For them, their cross is their family. For others, it is a physical illness or something of that nature.

We read in Luke 14:25-27, "*And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" We have to balance this verse. Obviously, we have to honour our father and mother and we are supposed to love our neighbours as ourselves. What Christ is saying is that He must come first in our lives.

Christ then gives an exhortation about counting the cost. Thus, there is a price attached to discipleship. It is the price that God requires you to pay that you must focus on, not the price He requires somebody else to pay. In other words, we cannot look at somebody else and say, "They have that cross, so that is what I must do." God has a tailor-made cross for each one of us.

In the Life of Paul

The life of the cross is a life of suffering, as is clearly seen in the life of the Apostle Paul. He was marked by God to manifest all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:16).

We see something of the cross in the life of Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:9-16: *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”*

People want the power of Paul, but they do not want to pay the tremendous price he paid. Paul lived a life of suffering. He took up his cross daily, and he encouraged us to follow his example. Let us not shy away from the cross and suffering, but rather, embrace it with joy.

The Crucified Life

As I mentioned earlier, we have to enter into the experience of Romans 6:6, being crucified with Christ. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, ***“I am crucified with Christ.”*** We want that to be our testimony as well.

Romans 6:6 says, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* The Greek word here for “knowing” means to know by personal experience. Spiritually, our old man has to die so that the new man can have the supremacy. We have to stop yielding to the desires of the flesh and put it to death.

Many years ago when I was a young pastor, the Lord asked me, “Do you want to spend the rest of your life going from victory to defeat, victory to defeat, or do you want to live in constant victory?” I knew I wanted something deeper than I had at that time. Then the Lord started dealing with little things in my life, asking me if I was willing to give them up. Then He moved on to the bigger ones, and I really had to cry out to God for grace to give them up. Finally, He asked me, “Will you give me your wife?” I loved my wife very dearly and I said to the Lord, “No, Lord, I cannot.” I knew that there would be a trial involving her that I was not able to bear.

A few days later, I was in a revival meeting, and at the end of the meeting the evangelist asked for those who wanted prayer to come forward. I went forward and when the

evangelist prayed for me, I was slain in the Spirit. Then the Lord said to me, “Who loves your wife most, you or Me?” I said, “You do, Lord.” Then He said, “Who has the power to look after her, you or Me?” I said, “You do, Lord.” Then He said so sweetly, “Then why don’t you give her to Me?” At that moment, in my heart, I felt that I was able to release her and give her to the Lord. After I released my wife to the Lord, I was able to stand up again.

Several days later, as I was in my study early in the morning, the Holy Spirit swept into my room. I had a vision of Jesus upon the cross, and I was caught up to hang with Him on the cross. Then the vision ceased and I saw the veil of the Temple torn from top to bottom, after which I felt a roll of the Spirit within me, and out from my mouth came these words: “I am crucified with Christ.”

That was my own personal experience of being crucified with Christ. Of course, it didn’t end there. I still have to daily take up my cross, but that experience gave me much freedom and liberty over things that used to bind me. In order to meet the demands of Christ upon our lives, we need to know that we are crucified with Him. Then with joy we can face the task of carrying our cross daily. Paul said in Galatians 6:14, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”* There is tremendous power in the cross of Jesus. **Walking in the crucified life gives us power for holy living.** Being crucified with Christ gives us victory over sin and the world.

I remember once in my life when the Lord said to me, “You can make a decision, and that decision will indeed cause you to remain on this plateau. But if you are willing to go through the darkness, I will bring you forth into a higher place.” At that time, I was in Switzerland, where the mountains are very tall. If you are looking afar off, it is possible to see a mountaintop bathed in sunlight, with a cloud underneath it, and another mountain below it where the sun is also shining. Underneath there is a cloud and below it the sun is shining too.

The Lord gave me a vision of this and said to me: “You can be on a lower slope of the mountain in light, but to get to the top of the mountain, you still have to go through a cloud. You have to be willing to go through darkness in order to come out into a higher place. Are you willing to go through that darkness?” So often the Lord, in trials, gives us a deep understanding of what we are passing through, although we do not understand all the details. We have to be willing to go through whatever He chooses to put us through.

The Lord wants to give us joy and peace as we experience the cross. It is not meant to be a gloomy experience, but one filled with joy. All of the Old Testament offerings were not complete without wine, which is a symbol of joy. In the same way, our suffering is not complete without joy. God wants to give us joy and strength in the midst of our trials.

Are we willing to take up our cross? Are we willing to suffer? Are we willing to be forsaken by our friends? Life at

the top is very lonely, but it is a test to see whether or not we desire Christ and Christ alone. The spiritual cry is created in our lives as we read Psalm 73:23-26, *“Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”*

Recently I had the experience of being in heaven, and there amongst all of those eternal splendours I could find no satisfaction. My heart just ached for Christ. He alone can satisfy the heart of His crucified ones. May we cry out, as did Paul in Philippians 3:8, *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”*

***“I count all things but loss
for the excellency
of the knowledge of
Christ Jesus my Lord...”***

EPILOGUE

We should never forget that the crucified life precedes the power of His resurrection. The cross comes *before* the crown. There is a price to pay for every truth before it becomes ours. There is no shortcut to glory. We have a very naïve saying that “salvation is free.” Was it really free? Surely, the greatest price ever known was paid for our salvation—the ignominious death of the Son of God upon Calvary’s cross.

The pain of those stripes bought our healing. That was the price He gladly paid for our health. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Let us remember that nothing is free. For any ministry position or gift there is a price to pay. The greater the gift, the greater the reproach that we must bear.

To the degree that we suffer with Him, to that same degree we shall reign with Him. Therefore, let us count the cost, and then by His grace may we pay the price to fulfil our calling with great joy!

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