

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

Risen and Victorious in Christ

April 2014

the late Alvin Holmgren; March 2005 CM

Submitted by Dave Impola; Everett, Washington

THE RESURRECTION NEWS IS THE most glorious and far-reaching word that has been uttered by mortal tongue. It offers blessings of inestimable worth. There is no greater joy than to have risen with Christ, and to possess living, victorious faith in Him.

The resurrection message does not consist only in a teaching or a doctrine about which we learn and to which we give mere intellectual assent. It is not just a subject that we should be able to discuss theologically in an intelligent manner. Neither is its essence something that is seen fulfilled regularly in nature when it awakens from the dormant, death-like sleep of winter and puts on the fresh, new beauty of spring.



Concerned about the true understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Martin Luther wrote:

How is a dead man profited, however much life may be preached to him, if that preaching does not make him alive? Or of what use is it to preach righteousness to a sinner if he remains in sin? Or to an erring, factious individual, if he forsakes not his error and his darkness? Even so, it is not only useless, but detrimental, to listen to the glorious, comforting, and saving doctrine of the resurrection if the heart has no experience of its truth; if it means naught but a sound in the ears, a transitory word upon the tongue, with no more effect upon the hearer as if he had never heard.

The key to the resurrection experience lies in the personal realization that Jesus was delivered to death for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:25) Its effectiveness is found in the individual awareness of our sinfulness, and of our need for grace. When I spoke of personal salvation with Christian friends in Latvia, they often emphasized their belief in the basic Biblical truth that the knowledge of sin must precede the knowledge of grace.

The word 'death' is used in Scripture as a means to identify the condition of those who are not in fellowship with God. It is referred to as being *dead in trespasses and sins*. (Ephesians 2:1) Of himself and his experience, Paul said, *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.* (Romans 7:9-10) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19)

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE PROVIDES THE foundation upon which rests the hope of our salvation. Our Saviour Jesus Christ...hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10) How can this simple message do such great things? How can this Word even raise the dead? The power is that of the Holy Spirit, which calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In His instructions to the disciples, the Lord told them that the means by which His ministry is made known and available is through the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name. In many ministries today, this order no longer exists. The invitation to embrace Jesus as Savior has been replaced by the familiar, commonly used injunction to "make Him the Lord of your life

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by submitting your life in service to Him." If it is in this way that citizens are enlisted into His kingdom, we are in danger of depriving them—and the Lord Himself—of His primary purpose for coming into this world. Jesus explained His mission by saying that *the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* (Matthew 20:28)

Our relationship to Jesus is not established upon our service to Him, but upon our being the beneficiaries of His sacrificial service to us. The primary emphasis in ministry must have as its foundation the order of grace that the Bible established. Otherwise, we will never truly know the joy of being risen with Christ, or of living in victorious faith through Him.

When the grace of God, which brings salvation, appears to a convicted sinner, he finds that he is no

longer his own, but the Lord's, possession. It is then that he rises with Christ; and the new man, who has been created within him, seeks *those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* (Colossians 3:1)

All that Christ is, and all that He has done, become ours through faith. We can rest in the assurance that, because He lives, we, too, shall live. Through Him, we are victorious by the power of faith—and that faith is a gift of God. His love has won the love of our hearts. He is our Savior, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

*"Crown Him the Lord of life, Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife For those He came to save;
His glories now we sing, Who died, and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring, And lives, that death may die."*

(Godfrey Thring)

At Easter Time



EACH YEAR AT EASTER TIME the "Christian" nations of the world commemorate the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. This tradition has been carried from one generation to the next for centuries. Although this tradition is wonderful, and cannot be spoken against, we recognize for many it is simply that: a tradition. As God's children, let us never allow this holy event to become merely a tradition in our lives. It is much too precious to be taken lightly. In this Easter message may we continue together in considering God's great love for all.

God sent His Son into this sin-cursed world to save lost and fallen mankind from their sin. The Scriptures teach us that *whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) Can we truly understand that we, as individuals who deserve nothing but punishment because of our sinfulness, have received the unmerited favor of our loving God? It is only when we recognize what we are, and that it was out of His great love that He has called us by the Gospel, that we can truly begin to comprehend how great His grace has been toward us.

Dear pilgrim traveler, may we who here must journey by faith be reminded today of those sad and yet wonderful events which took place so long ago at Easter time. Christ loved us so much that while we were yet sinners, alienated by sin and unbelief, He took all our sins upon Himself. Our incomprehensible sin-debt of ten thousand talents, which was impossible for us to repay, He so willingly took upon Himself and bore on the cross of Calvary. There Jesus was crucified so that we might be set free. No longer a captive in the proverbial land of Egypt, no longer shackled there in the bondage of sin, no longer oppressed by the harsh taskmaster, but now set free. Jesus said, *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* (John 8:36) We have been set free not because we are deserving, not that we merited God's favor or because we earned the right to freedom, but, dear friend, it was because God loved sinners like you and me. Jesus once said, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...* (John 15:16) How humbling a matter this becomes in the heart of His child when we consider how great God's love is for sinners. "Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan. Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." (William R. Newell) *For he hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Freedom in Christ Jesus is God's gift to us. Let us rejoice again today, as we reflect on the events of Good Friday and Easter, in the knowledge that in Christ's suffering and death, He atoned for your sins and mine with His holy precious blood, culminating His victory over death, hell and the power of the devil by His resurrection from the dead. Therefore, *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* (Romans 3:24-26)

How great a blessing God has preserved in His congregation of believers where, even today, the power of the Gospel is preached to repentant sinners that all sins are forgiven in the holy name of Jesus and in His atoning blood. With a childlike faith we cling steadfastly to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ and echo the words of the Apostle: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* (Romans 1:16-17) He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the author and finisher of your faith and mine, dear believer.

Pastor Ken Storm; Tapiola, Michigan
Submitted by Arne Nordahl; Vancouver, Washington

The Old Cross and the New

A. W. Tozer

Submitted by Jesse Fraki; Ottertail, Minnesota

ALL UNANNOUNCED AND MOSTLY UNDETECTED, there has come, in modern times, a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new type of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally, if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the Gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrill seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

THE OLD CROSS IS A SYMBOL of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended. The cross

made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under a death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear, or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We who preach the Gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.



*God offers life, but not an improved old life.
The life He offers is life out of death.*

Whatever does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die. Having done this let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say God has set

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The Beauty of the Cross

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Hello Children,

I hope this day finds you well and looking forward to spring. Maybe some of you in other lands don't look forward to spring as we do where I live, but here in our area we are seeing the first early flowers poking their heads out of the wet, cool earth and showing us their pretty colors. We are also hearing a few more birds as they return from their winter homes. It is a time of the earth springing forth with new life, a time of refreshing. It is also the time to ponder on Jesus dying, giving His life freely for all and then rising the third day.

WHEN JESUS WAS 30 YEARS OLD He began the greatest part of His ministry among the people. Just 3 years later the people whom He had called His chosen people (the Jews), along with others, wanted Him to be put to death.

Up to this time Jesus had been teaching, preaching, healing the sick, comforting the sad, binding up the broken hearted, restoring sight to the blind, raising certain ones from death, encouraging the hopeless, preaching peace into the hearts of those who would receive His words, calming the storms in people's lives and even real storms, giving peace to the fearful, taking the little children in His arms and telling them He loved them, forgiving the sinner, having mercy on the lost, offering grace to the humble, feeding the hungry with natural food and His Word, praying for all His disciples and all those who would love Him and serve Him, and giving, giving, giving of Himself daily.

Then the day came when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. When He looked over the city He cried, because the people thought He was going to be their earthly king. They did not yet understand who He really was and this made Him very sad.

He found men buying and selling things in His holy temple and He chased them out. He said to them, *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.* (Matthew 21:13) Things were not well here.

Jesus met with His disciples for their last meal together. It was here He shared bread and wine which were His body and blood and they all drank and ate of it. Jesus told them, *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.* (Matthew 26:29)

It was now evening. They went out to a place called Gethsemane, where Jesus went off alone to pray to God about His upcoming death that was to happen just hours ahead. He prayed and asked God to take this hour away from Him, but really that God's will would be done.

While Jesus was praying, the betrayer Judas (a former disciple) came to that place with those who wanted Him dead. They took Him bound from the garden to Caiaphas the high priest who was angry to hear that Jesus spoke of sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

In the morning Jesus was bound once more and taken before Pontius Pilate who could find no reason to kill Him. Pilate washed his hands of the accusations against this just (right) man. He was led away by soldiers who whipped Him, put a "crown" of thorns on His head and a reed in His hand, spit upon Him, and bowed low before Him in sheer mockery saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They hit Him on the head with the reed. Pilate handed Him over to the people who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Jesus was made to carry His cross out to the hill of Golgotha. There His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Two thieves were hung on either side of Jesus. One mocked Him, but the other cried out for mercy and it was granted him. This was an awful way to die but Jesus was willing to die for all people and He bore the pain of it all.



Christ, Messiah
by Carl Bloch

What is the beauty of the cross? Jesus said He would arise on the third day and He did. After

spending some days yet on the earth He was received up to glory to sit on the right hand of power (God). Jesus lives forever. The grave could not keep Him. Jesus had overcome death, and if we believe in Him, we will have eternal life and one day we also will live in heaven with Jesus for eternity. That means FOREVER. What a day that will be! **The beauty of the cross** is that on it Jesus died, and He was buried and rose again so that we might have **life** through His name. When we see the symbol of the cross we are reminded of what happened there – for US.

We must say **THANK YOU, GOD**, for sending Your Son in our behalf. We have so much to look forward to. I pray as much for myself as

for all believers, that we will press on toward the mark of the high calling of God. We will not be losers if we continue in faith.

GOD LOVES YOU!

Keep Jesus in your hearts, children, and let us all remember to pray for one another.

A blessed Easter to you all! God's peace.

Light and Darkness

Pastor Wayne Juntunen
Esso, Minnesota

WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD of darkness, no matter where we may be on this planet. We cannot avoid the reality of this darkness. To do so exposes our own darkness, even though we be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did not Jesus say to His own, *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* (Matthew 6:22-23) I believe what our Lord was speaking about is that our own grasp and understanding of God's Word, and especially knowing Christ, is like darkness. How great is the darkness of unbelief!

There are, at least, two facts of this darkness with which we must contend. The first is the fact that because our hearts are evil by nature we commit evil deeds. We sin because by nature we are the enemies of God (Romans 5:10). Then because of these evil deeds, we love the darkness because we do not want to be "found out," either by being confronted or convicted of our sinful attitudes, words or actions. We are no different than Adam and Eve. We try to hide from the Light! The Evangelist John in his Gospel wrote: *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* (John 3:19-20) The only solution to our lying, deceiving ways is to come to the Light, as John continues—*But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* (John 3:21)

But this is exactly one of the barriers against truth with which we must contend. Man's pride underlies his manifold ways to defend himself against the truth. Yes, the truth hurts, but it does not hurt as much as the lie! It hurts God, others, ourselves, and the whole world suffers on account of it. This is why we read in the Book of Revelation that *...all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* (Revelation 21:8) This is because only the blood of Jesus can cover sin. As long as we are unwilling to admit

and confess our sins, they cannot be covered by the blood of Christ. We read in Proverbs 28:13: *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* God have mercy on us that we would be moved by His Spirit to humble ourselves and draw near to God that He may draw near to us (James 4:8).

The second fact of darkness with which we must contend is our natural inability to comprehend it coupled with a determination to overcome it. Again, we read John's testimony of the Lord, *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.* (John 1:4-5) Luther attests to the fact in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles Creed saying: "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him..." This, he goes on to say, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Since this is the case, we need not despair if others to whom we preach the Gospel do not understand, for only God can open their ears and eyes. And, on the other hand, neither need we be afraid of those who oppose the Gospel, even to the point of killing us, for no matter how forcefully or viciously people may fight against the Lord, they cannot gain the victory. When our Lord said the gates of hell cannot prevail against His Church (Matthew 16:18), it is so!



LET US, THEREFORE, GO FORTH as soldiers of the cross proclaiming the mighty power of God by which the enslaved and imprisoned masses can be set free from their bondage of sin and death to live in the freedom and victory of our precious Lord Jesus Christ—the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

God's peace be with you! ~

The wounds of Christ were the greatest outlets of His glory that ever were. The divine glory shone more out of His wounds than out of all His life before.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis



here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint or alter the pattern shown us on the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we shall know the old power. ~

Living the Effects of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota

WHILE JESUS WAS YET IN THE TOMB, those who did not understand the meaning and purpose of the life of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of man, made provision to stop Him from coming out of the tomb in which His dead body had been laid. This they did by placing a stone in the opening of the tomb and by putting guards at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66).

When He arose on Easter morning, the guards who had been "as dead men" during His resurrection, went to tell the chief priests all the things that were done. They were told by the chief priests and elders to tell people that His body had been stolen away in the night by the disciples (Matthew 28:4,11-15).

The rejection of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the denial which began on the same day on which He arose, continues today. In a letter written somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 years after this unparalleled historic event, a Christian congregation had a question concerning the resurrection of the dead.

The question did not so much center on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, but more so on the question: "Is there a resurrection of the dead?" For the answer to that question drives the answer to the following questions: Did Jesus arise from the dead? Do we need to believe that He arose from the dead? Can't we be a Christian without believing that He arose from the dead?

Everything we believe and trust depends on whether Jesus Christ arose from the dead and is alive today. If He arose from the dead, then it follows that all He did and said in His life is true. If He did not rise from the dead, then it also follows that all He did and said is not true.

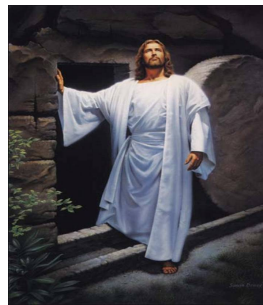
Let us hear how this question was answered by the Apostle Paul in approximately the year 50 AD. He begins by speaking of the Gospel that he received and which is defined as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He goes on to give evidence of Jesus' resurrection by pointing out the various people who had seen Jesus alive after His resurrection, which included Paul himself. He poses a rhetorical question and gives the consequences of no resurrected Jesus.

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

No resurrection means that Christ is not risen, the content of our preaching is worthless, our faith has no substance, we are liars, we are yet in our sins, those who

have gone on before have died in their sins, and we who are living today have only this life to live. But, no, He is resurrected, and therefore the opposite of what he just told them/us is true.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26)



Christ arose and He is the "firstfruits" of them that slept. His unique resurrection precedes all other resurrections, for even though people have been raised from the dead previously in a physical sense, all but Jesus went back to the grave to await the final resurrection unto life. This thought is captured by both the Prophet Isaiah and Apostle John:

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:10-12) And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:23-24)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU, for me, as we live in our post-resurrection life? Christ is risen; there is a resurrection from the dead. This means the content of our preaching is true, our faith has as its object the person and work of Jesus Christ, we are telling the truth, we are not in our sins, those who have fallen asleep (died) are awaiting the resurrection from the dead, and we have a lot more to look forward to than this life. Let this be an encouragement to us today, for our preaching is not based on some abstract idea, but rather it is based on the historical facts of the death, burial and resurrection of the Incarnate God, Jesus the Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, keep on preaching the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ! ~



Crucifixion
by Peter Paul Rubens

The (Scientific) Death of Jesus

John Ruotsala, FM Administrator
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

AT THE AGE OF 33, Jesus was condemned to death. At the time, crucifixion was the "worst" death. Only the worst criminals were condemned to be crucified. Yet it was even more dreadful for Jesus; unlike other criminals condemned to death by crucifixion, Jesus was to be nailed to the cross by His hands and feet.

Each nail was 6 to 8 inches long. They were driven into His wrists, not into His palms as is commonly portrayed. There's a tendon in the wrist that extends to the shoulder. The Roman guards knew that when the nails were being hammered into the wrist that the tendon would tear and break, forcing Jesus to use His back muscles to support Himself so that He could breathe. Both of His feet were nailed together, thus He was forced to support Himself on the single nail that impaled His feet to the cross. Jesus could not support Himself with His legs because of the pain, so He was forced to alternate between arching His back and then using His legs just to continue to breathe. Imagine the struggle, the pain, the suffering, the courage!

Jesus endured this reality for over 3 hours. Yes, over 3 hours! Can you imagine this kind of suffering? A few minutes before He died, Jesus stopped bleeding. He was

simply pouring water from His wounds. From common images we see wounds to His hands and feet and even the spear wound to His side, but do we realize the wounds were actually made in His body? A hammer driving large nails through the wrist, the feet overlapped and an even larger nail hammered through the arches, then a Roman guard piercing His side with a spear. But before the nails and the spear, Jesus was whipped and beaten. The whipping was so severe that it tore the flesh from His body, the beating so horrific that His face was torn and His beard ripped from His face. The crown of thorns cut deeply into His scalp. Most men would not have survived this torture. He had no more blood to bleed out; only water poured from His wounds. The human adult body contains about 3.5 liters (just less than a gallon) of blood. Jesus poured out all 3.5 liters of His blood.

All of these without mentioning the humiliation He suffered after carrying His own cross for almost 2 kilometers (over 1 mile), while the crowd spat in His face and threw stones. The cross was almost 30 kg (over 66 pounds), only for its higher part, where His hands were nailed.

JESUS HAD TO ENDURE ALL THIS experience in order to open the gates of heaven, so that we can have free access to God. So that our sins could be washed away. All of them, with no exception! Jesus Christ died for you! ~

The Crucified

Here we have the essence of the Gospel which Paul learned when he first met Christ on the way to Damascus. Jesus Himself had affirmed that *this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* (John 17:3) Unfortunately, the English language has only one word for knowing, whereas the Finnish language, as well as some others, has two. The word for knowledge used in this passage is one that is intimate, that is, of the heart.

The Apostle John lays emphasis on this in his epistle: *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* (1 John 5:11-12) He continues, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* (1 John 5:13)

And the reason he writes of believing on the "name" of the Son of God is defined in the passage wherein the angel proclaimed to Joseph, *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.* (Matthew 1:21) Thus we see that in the very name of Jesus is the forgiveness of our sins and salvation!

Dear reader, let us hold high the blood-red victory banner of Golgotha and thank and praise the thorn-crowned and crucified resurrected King of glory!

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The Alpha and Omega

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending... Revelation 1:8

I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last... Revelation 1:11

Jesus identifies Himself in this way to His close friend John in the beginning of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are used to bracket the quality(ies) or quantity(ies) for which the letters provide the termini.

Jesus then follows the letters with two appositional (explanatory) phrases: "beginning and ending" and "first and last." These appositions clarify the usage of the Greek letters; they are the beginning and ending and the first and the last of the Greek alphabet. Still the question then remains: what is it that they bracket? Literally they bracket all the rest of the Greek letters from Beta to Psi. That may not seem important to us, but to the Greeks who first heard this text it probably had much greater significance. The Greeks like many other peoples believed that speech and the alphabet were of divine origin. They were a gift to humanity from God that made the human able to communicate like the divine. John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit uniquely describes Jesus in terms of communication: Jesus is the "Word" in John's Gospel and "Alpha and Omega" (Jesus' own usage) in the Revelation.

Alpha... Omega
Aα...Ωω

Only the human being among all creation can hear and respond to God in speech. When John identifies Jesus as Word and Jesus speaks of Himself as Alpha and Omega, He is indicating that He is the fullness of divine communication. Jesus is the full revelation of God in the flesh. Thus John begins his Gospel: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)* This Word was given so that we would know the full revelation of God in personal form. As John further states: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)* In the book of Revelation this is what Jesus Himself is indicating, that He is the complete communication of God; He is the beginning of it and the end, the first of it and the last. In other words, Jesus is all God has to say. He is the express image of the Father; He says and does only as the Father says and does.

What a blessing that God has so freely given His Son to us that we may hear and know His Word fully. How amazing that God's own Spirit indwells us to guide us in the understanding of this Word that we can now have faith. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

Glory to God in the highest for His inestimable gift! ~

When the Lord of glory left His Father's bosom, and came into this world, we are sure it was for a purpose suited to His divine nature. Christ came to make men glad. It was said of Him, *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek... (Isaiah 61:1)* Ah! sure, He must be a good Savior that was to bind up broken hearts, and to make all men glad. Therefore, when He came, He said, "That your joy might be full (John 16:24)." His first words to his disciples were, "Peace be unto you."

But the devil wants you to believe that we want to take away your mirth and joy. He is a liar, and he was a liar from the beginning. Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; so do we. We come to break your false joy, to awaken you from your dream, before you be dashed into the burning lake. Ah! we come to give you fullness of joy that cannot wither, joy that cannot die.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 16:8-11