

The Message of the Cross

Sunday, November 17th, 1991

Matthew 27:33-37

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, This Is Jesus The King of the Jews.

I don't think that you will have to turn in your Bible to the scripture that I am reading today. I'm sure you are very familiar with this passage of scripture. It is found in Matthew 27: verses 23 through 37. I'm speaking today, on the subject: "The Message of the Cross."

Listen very carefully as I read the scripture, *"And when they were come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink. They crucified Him and parted His garments, casting lots that the scripture might be fulfilled. And sitting down they watched Him there and they set over His head this accusation: This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."*

The whole world knows that a man called Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross nearly 2,000 years ago. We have no problem with that. In fact, all of you carry a calendar in your wallet or your purse or bankbook. That calendar divides time by the coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, into this world. You have the years B.C. (which is before Christ). You also have the years A.D. that means Anno Domini (the year of our Lord). The calendar that you have on your person tells you that a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived and died on this earth.

In our oldest history books (particularly Josephus), is recorded the death of Jesus of Nazareth. In the scriptures, the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation sets forth the death of Jesus Christ. The Word says, *"Jesus Christ died on the cross."* You can read about it in every book of the Old Testament. In fact, the scripture says; *"To Him give all the prophets witness."*

Preachers in this country and all over the world, in one way or the other, talk about the death of Jesus Christ of Nazareth on the cross. Almost every Sunday someone mentions the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross. There won't be anybody who hears me preach today, that does not know Jesus Christ died on the cross.

The whole world is divided on four questions. They are divided religiously and otherwise. The whole world is divided on these four questions:

The first of which is this, Who is Jesus of Nazareth?

The second question is; why did He die on the cross?

The third question is; where is He now?

The fourth question is; what do I have to do with this man Jesus of Nazareth? What do you have to do with Jesus of Nazareth?

Do you remember those four questions? I am going to deal with each one very carefully. You won't be hearing a more important message than the one you are going to hear today. I want you to listen carefully as I deal with these questions: Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Why did He die on that cross? Where is He now? What have you to do with this man called Jesus of Nazareth?"

The first question is who is He? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? There are a lot of opinions. The Pharisees who were religious leaders called Him the son of Mary and Joseph. They said in John 6: *"Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph whose mother and father we know and His brothers and sisters live among us? How is it that He saith, I came down from heaven? Is He not the son of Joseph and Mary?"*

Do you remember when they called Him the carpenter and a winebibber? They called Him a gluttonous man, and a friend of sinners. Do you remember when they called Him an imposter? They called Him a madman; they said; *"He is beside Himself. They even said that He was a son of the devil; that He cast out demons by Beelzebub."* That is what the Pharisees, the religious people had to say about Him when He was here on this earth.

The angels of God announced His birth first to Mary and then to Joseph; she was told that she would bear a son and would call His name Jesus. The announcement was then made to Joseph. The angel added this and told Joseph; *"Call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins."* This is a fulfillment of the writings of Isaiah who said, *"His name shall be called, Immanuel, which is interpreted, God with us."* So, the angels called Him, *"Immanuel, God with us."*

Then, the angels appeared to the shepherds on the night that He was born; the night that He came to this earth and into this world. They said to the shepherds; *"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour who is none other than Christ the Lord."* John the Baptist, whom we call the last of the Old Testament Prophets, called Him the *"Lamb of God."*

These Jews knew about a Lamb. They go all the way back to Abel's lamb, Abraham's lamb and the Passover Lamb. They knew of all the lambs that were slain on the Day of Atonement. They knew what John the Baptist was saying when he pointed to this man, Jesus of Nazareth, and said; "*Behold, the Lamb of God.*" He is the Lamb that fulfills all the lambs, prophecies, patterns and pictures of the Old Testament. "*We have greater witness than these.*"

The Heavenly Father called Jesus "my beloved Son." He called Him "my beloved Son" on two different occasions. The Father spoke from heaven and said; "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" Again, He said, "*This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him.*"

The demons knew who He was. When He cast the demons out of a certain man, they cried out; "*We know who you are. He was in the world and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not.*" The demons said, "*We know who you are; you are the Holy One of God. Have you come to torment us before our time?*"

The disciples called Him, "*My Lord and My God.*" He saith; "*I and My Father are one.*" When the disciples said, "*Show us the Father.*" He said; "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*" That is what Isaiah the prophet said; "*Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given. The government shall be on His shoulders. He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.*"

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? He is God! He is God in human flesh. That is what the scripture says and that is what He and the Father said. The Father said; "*Unto the Son, He saith Thy throne O God is forever.*" Paul said to the elders at Antioch; "*You feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" The church was purchased with God's own blood.

You see; God is Spirit. He is the Triune God; He is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The only revelation of God to men on earth is one, Jesus of Nazareth. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and is an Omniscient God. In John it says; "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; and the Word that was with God and was God was made flesh and dwelt among us.*"

In First Timothy 3:16, Paul writes to Timothy and says; "*Great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in human flesh.*" Do you have the answer? That is what the scripture says. His Word cannot be broken. Jesus of Nazareth is God Almighty in human flesh.

All right, the second question: Why did He die on the cross? Some people say that He died as an example. Others say that He died as a martyr. Some may say that He died as a reformer. I will answer this question from the scriptures and I will let you see exactly why He did die on that cross. Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross and Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on the cross. I can't explain how God Almighty was in human flesh. I do know that He died on a cross in human form.

First of all, He died on the cross because His Father willed it. That is right! His death was no accident. His death was decreed and purposed. His death was decreed and purposed of God before the foundation of the world and that from the beginning He should die on the cross. *"He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."* That is what the scripture says. It also says, *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."* His death was planned, purposed and decreed from the beginning.

He refers to that hour several times while He was here on the earth. He said, *"Mine hour is not yet come. For this cause came I to this hour."* Finally, in John 17, He prayed the great Priestly prayer; *"Father, the hour is come."*

You see; 700 years before He died on the cross, Isaiah wrote; *"He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities."* When Peter preached at Pentecost and accused those people of crucifying the Lord of glory, He said, in closing that message; *"Him, (Christ) being delivered into your hands, by the determinate council and foreordination of God, you with wicked hands have crucified and slain."* In Acts 4:28 it says; *"You did what God determined before to be done."*

He died by the will of God and according to the will of God. That is why He died; God willed it.

If you are an Old Testament student, you know that everything surrounding His death was prophesied and recorded in the scriptures long before He came into the world. There was the plucking of His beard, and the piercing of His hands and feet. There was the betrayal of Judas when he sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Judas brought the money back and cast it on the floor, and then committed suicide. Then, there was the buying of the potter's field with that money. These are just examples and were written in the scriptures long before He died. He died by the will of God and according to the will of God. That is why He died; God willed it.

Secondly: He died on the Christ that He might be Lord. Read Romans 14:9; *"To this end, for this cause, Christ died and rose again that He might be Lord, both of the dead*

and the living.” That is pretty clear isn’t it? For this reason and for this cause Christ died and rose again that He might be Lord.

He is Lord! He is Lord by decree, the decree of God. He is Lord by design, and He is Lord by death. When He died; He bought the universe. He destroyed all the powers of Satan. He destroyed principalities and powers. He destroyed those powers. He bought the universe, the kingdom and all the power. The power is given unto Him. He said, when He prayed in John 17; *“Father, Thou hast given Me power over all flesh.”* In Matthew 28, when He sent His disciples out to preach, He said, *“All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and preach the gospel.”*

Where did He get this authority? Well, this authority was decreed. The Father gave Him authority and He bought the right and purchased it. He redeemed it and it belongs to Him. *“He died that He might be Lord; King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”*

Thirdly: Turn to Romans 3:25; He died to declare God’s righteousness. Listen carefully; *“God has set Him forth, (He has set forth Jesus Christ) to be a propitiation through faith in His blood and in His death.”* What is propitiation? If you go back to the Old Testament, you will find the Ark in the Holy of Holies. In that Ark were the Ten Commandments, the broken law. Over that Ark was the Mercy Seat. The mercy seat was of beaten gold. At either end of that Ark was a cherubim. Over that Ark was the Shechinah Glory of God. That is where God’s glory was manifested, on the Mercy Seat.

A Mercy Seat is propitiation. A Mercy Seat is a covering. Propitiation is a Mercy Seat and a covering. Once a year, the old high priest would come in with the incense and blood atonement and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat. He would sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat seven times to atone, to cover and to be a propitiation for sins.

That was just in picture and type. That was a picture of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. He would come not with the blood of animals but with His own blood. *“Not into the Holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, with His own blood, making atonement for our sin.”* God set Him forth to be propitiation, a Mercy Seat, atonement and a covering. His blood covers us and cleanses us from all sin.

It says further, *“God set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare God’s righteousness.”* My friend, one does not comprehend the death of Christ rightly, until he understands that Christ’s death was not toward us. He didn’t die just to set an example or to get us to feel sorry for Him or pity Him. He died toward the Lord! His death was toward God. His sacrifice was toward God; it was to pay a sin debt. His death was to honor a law. His death was to satisfy justice. He died to declare God’s

Holiness, to declare God's righteousness and to declare the righteousness, which God has provided and purposed for His people.

We have to have righteousness. *"The soul that sinneth shall die."* That is what God says. Somebody has to die. The penalty has to be paid where the guilt lies. That person must pay the penalty. The guilt has to be paid by that guilty person. We are guilty. Christ came and took our guilt and took our sins. He became numbered with us. He became guilty and bore our sins in His body. The Father laid the stripes on Him and the justice of God was satisfied. The righteousness of God was declared. So, *"He died that He might justify us before God, that God may be Just and Justifier."*

Fourthly: In Hebrews 9, it says this; *"He died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."* That is why He died. He died to put away sin. *"He died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God."* In John 10:14, Christ said; *"I'm the good shepherd; I lay down My life for My sheep."* The word "for" means, in the stead of or the place of. The word "for" means, as a substitute. Christ died for the sheep. *"God's Son cleanseth us from all sin."* So, He died to put away sin. He died to bring us to God.

Fifthly: He died on the cross to purchase and purify a people, zealous of good works. I want you to listen to Titus 2; Paul says; *"We're looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour who gave Himself for us that in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself, a peculiar people."* They are a different people, a separated people, and they are zealous of good works.

Now, our Lord didn't die on the cross, just to keep people out of hell. He didn't die on the cross just to provide us a way to heaven. He died on the cross to establish a new kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness, inhabited by a people who love righteousness. He died on the cross to declare us legally righteous and justified. He also wanted us to be born of His Spirit and to become new creatures in Christ with a new life, new heart, new direction, new spirit and a new attitude. Those whom the Lord redeems by His blood, live not only by Him and through Him, they live for Him.

They manifest the fruit of His indwelling Spirit. That fruit is love. These people love God and they love one another. They have joy and rejoice in the Lord. There is faith and they believe God. They wait on the Lord in patience and gentleness, kindness, peace, humility, goodness and grace. *"He died, to purchase unto Himself and to purify unto Himself, a peculiar people,"* (a different people), a new generation of regenerated people.

In the sixth place: He died on the cross to show the riches of His grace toward us. He died to glorify Himself. Do you remember when he prayed in John 17? He prayed,

“Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee.” This is what it is all about. Christ died in order that He might be glorified. Christ died that the Father might be glorified and that the mercy of God might be glorified. Listen to Ephesians 2, *“In the ages to come He will gather together all things in Christ Jesus, and He will show the exceeding riches of His grace toward us in Christ Jesus.”* Christ died that He might be glorified. Christ saved us to the praise of the glory of His grace.

I know a lot of preachers talk about all of the rewards that they will receive in heaven, and the good works that they have done. According to the scripture, Christ is our reward. That is what He said to Abraham; *“I am thy exceeding and great reward.”* Christ is our reward. What is better than Christ? David said, *“I’ll be satisfied when I awake with His likeness.”* What can be better?

I will tell you this; the people in glory are not going to brag on us; they are going to brag on Him who saved us. He is not going to show off what we did, because we haven’t done anything. He is going to show the exceeding riches of His grace toward us. He is going to wear the crown. Christ is going to get the glory. That’s right! He died that He might show throughout eternity, (for all the universe to behold and wonder), His glory, the riches of His grace, and the riches of His love toward us in Christ Jesus.

Now, the third question: Where is He now? Where is Jesus Christ now? I will tell you where He is. In Hebrews 1:3, it says this; *“God has spoken to us by His Son, who being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High.”* That is where He is; He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

He said to the Son, *“Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”* Paul said, *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, whoever liveth to make intercession for us.”* Christ reigns, Christ rules, Christ is glorified, Christ is fully victorious and Christ is satisfied. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Now then, the last question: What do we have to do with this God-man? I will tell you this, the scripture says in John 3; *“The Father loveth the Son and has given all things into His hands.”* He has invested everything in Christ. He has given everything to Christ. Christ is the Heir. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

The apostle Paul said; *“God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whom you crucified, whereof, He hath given assurance to all men in that He raised Him from the dead.”* God is going to judge this world by Jesus Christ. Do you know what He says in First John 5? He said; *“This is the record, this is the truth, God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.”*

The life of God is in His Son. Our eternal life is in His Son. The hope of heaven is in His Son. *“He that hath the Son of God, hath life and he that hath not the Son of God shall not see life.”* Who is Jesus of Nazareth? He is God! Why did He die on a cross? He died to redeem us from sin and bring us to God.

Where is He now? He is at the right hand of God. What do I have to do with Him? Well, He is the one with whom we have to do. God has invested everything in Him. Believe on Him, and rest in Him. The promises are yours!