ISSUE # 10 - JESUS CHRIST: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

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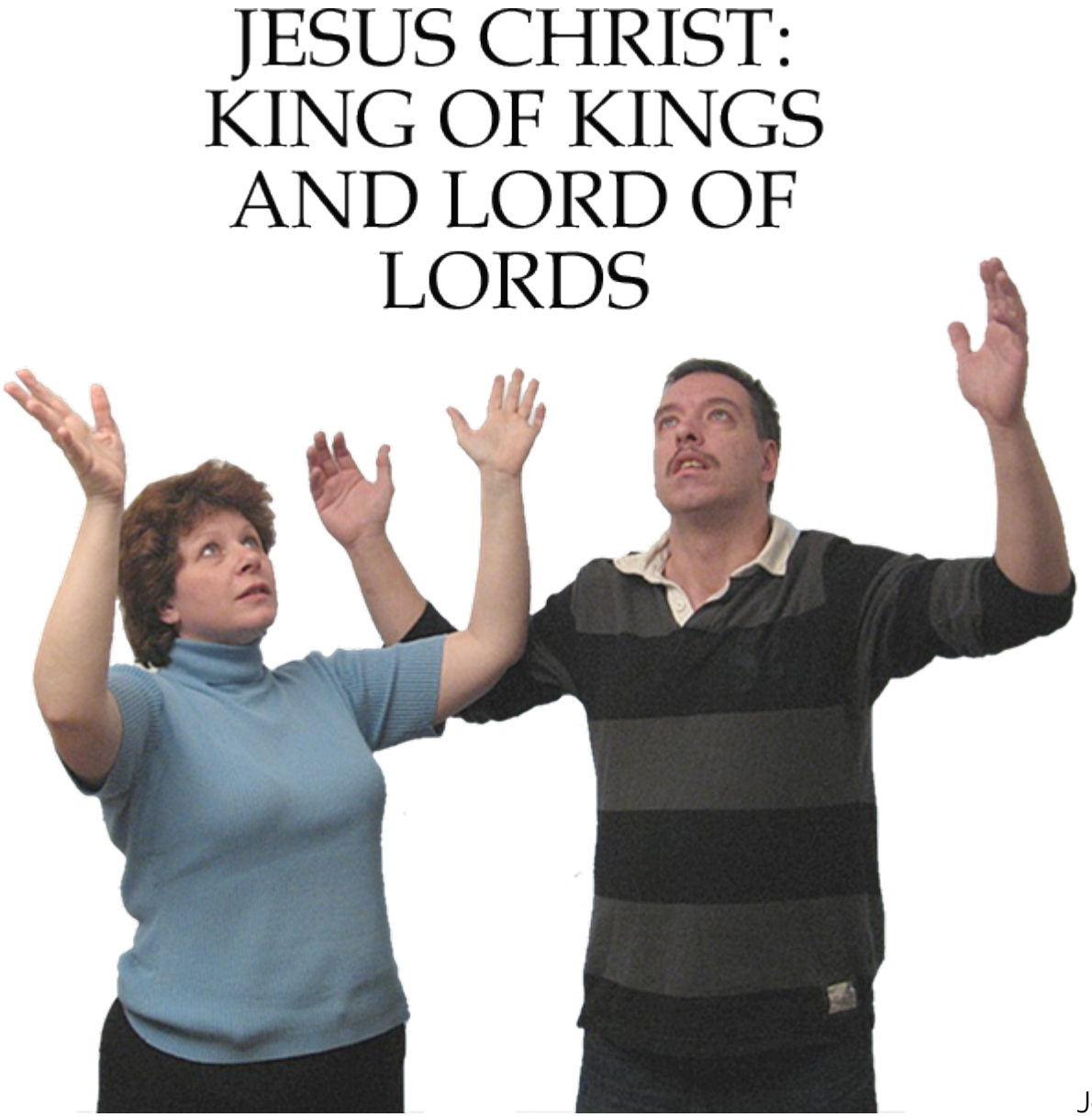
Category: The Main Issue



Jesus.

Jesus Christ is by far the most remarkable person ever to live. No one compares. No one comes

close. Jesus is in a caliber of His own.

John the baptist, a great man by human standard, said of Jesus, "(His) sandal strap I am not worthy to unloose." An officer sent to arrest Jesus said, "No man ever spoke like this man!" A man born blind declared, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Peter felt so small in His presence he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus is unique. His virgin birth, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven – these all affirm His matchlessness. Who compares to Christ?

None has so impacted the human race. Around Him relevance revolves. Only He can change a life.

Millions worldwide, of every nation, claim to be His. More songs are sung about and to Jesus than any other. More than any, He has affected the world. At this moment millions are worshiping Jesus from a heart of deep love and gratitude. More than any person, He is quoted, honored, and obeyed.

And hated. Worldwide, people curse His name and persecute His followers. In places His very name is outlawed. It has been so for centuries. Jesus divides the world, nations and families.

Who is this Jesus Christ? From where did He come? What does He require? Where is He now?

The Main Issue is about Jesus Christ because the main issue is Jesus Christ. Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" The main issue in your life is: What will I do with Jesus?

HE WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN

It is impossible to be born of a virgin. Mary, a young girl from Nazareth, Israel, certainly knew that. That is why she doubted the angel Gabriel who appeared to her saying, "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus."

Mary asked, "How can this be since I do not know a man?"

Gabriel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you."

And so the impossible happened. Jesus entered mankind through the body of an obedient virgin. The birth took place in Bethlehem, the city of David, Mary's ancestor. The virgin birth was a fulfillment of prophecy given by God to the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years previous, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bare a Son." Jesus Himself taught, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." How fitting that the most unique Person who ever lived was born in a most unique manner. And His birth was but an initiation into a life whereby the miraculous was the ordinary.

HE IS GOD

The Bible teaches, "There is one God." At times the Bible speaks of God in the singular and other times in the plural. ("Let Us make man in Our image.") Though there is one God, there are three Persons who make up that one God. They are the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. Christians refer to this as the Trinity.

Each of these persons are equal, fully God, each having all the attributes that make God God. They are each omniscient (all knowing), eternal (always was and always will be), and omnipotent (all powerful). Jesus was God before His virgin birth, during His life on earth, and is God at this moment and forever will be so. Though some find it difficult to accept that three distinct persons, each fully God, make up the one God, such the Bible teaches. That Jesus is God is plainly established:

The baby Jesus was called, "Emmanuel" which means "God-with-us." In other words God entered the human race through the infant Jesus. In the gospel of John the author refers to Jesus as "the Word." John declares: "In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word (Jesus) was with God, and the Word (Jesus) was God. He (Jesus) was in the beginning with God."

The Bible states in different passages that Jesus created everything, that "without Him nothing was made that was made." This could not be true if Jesus Himself were a created person. Since Jesus was not created but always was, He must therefore be God.

Jesus states very plainly that when one saw Him they also saw the Father because "I and the Father are one."

God the Father calls Jesus “My God” in Hebrews chapter one. He says to Jesus, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

God is called the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Christ is also called the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Jesus must therefore be God.

Jesus is not only fully God, but also fully man. A man from an eastern religion once lamented, “I cannot understand God. He is far above me. If only God would become as I am, a man, then I could understand Him.” This fellow did not know of Jesus. John wrote, “The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us.” God became a man, became as we are, lived as we lived, suffered many of the things we suffer. As a man He “was in all points tempted as we are.” Studying the life of Christ is a study of God. Emulating Christ is emulating God. Knowing Christ is knowing God.

Christ is still fully man and always will be. He is both the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.”

HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” John proclaimed these words to the crowd of people at the Jordan River when he saw Jesus approaching. The term – Lamb of God – must have seemed strange to those who had come to the Jordan to be baptized by John. Why did John call this Man the “Lamb of God”?

John and Jesus were cousins, John being about six months older. About thirty-one years previous the angel Gabriel appeared to, first, John's father to tell him they would soon have a baby boy in their old age, and then to Mary to proclaim the virgin birth of Jesus.

John was extraordinary. Jesus said he was the greatest man ever born. Though cousins, it is possible they had never met before that day at the river, as Jesus spent his early childhood in Egypt, and John, since youth, spent his days alone in desert places being prepared by God for a very special task: John was to be “the prophet of the highest,” Jesus' forerunner. John was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” calling people to repent and prepare their hearts for the appearance of Jesus, baptizing them with the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” One day while John was preaching and baptizing, Jesus approached and John recognized Him immediately as the

Messiah, and proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

The Lamb of God. Again, why did John call Jesus “the Lamb of God”? It is indeed a most fascinating story. Let's back up further into history, about seventeen hundred years.

We are in Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs. An arrogant and stubborn and cruel Pharaoh ruled that mighty nation. God's chosen people, the Israelites, were held in bondage by the Egyptians and forced to do slave labor, constructing entire cities with brick and mortar. God heard their cries of anguish and appointed Moses to confront the mighty Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites. The king must have been impressed when Moses cast his rod to the ground and it turned into a serpent, as God had instructed Moses to do. But there was no way he was going to let his treasured slaves get away, and he even increased their workload. Moses warned Pharaoh of mighty calamities that God was about to send upon the Egyptians if he refused to let God's children go, but Pharaoh was a particularly obstinate fellow.

God, through Moses, turned all the waters into blood – the rivers, streams and storage pools. Pharaoh would not relent. Moses called frogs out of the rivers and they invaded every house. Next the land was filled with lice. And then flies. Still the inflexible leader refused to bow to God's demands.

Much of the Egyptians' cattle suddenly died. Man and beast became infected with boils. A heavy hail killed man and beast and crops, this followed by a plague of locusts so thick it was impossible to see the ground. And then an incredible darkness fell over the land. But Pharaoh was a proud and mighty tyrant, not accustomed to submitting to anyone, not even One so mighty as He who brought these plagues. He refused to release the Israelites.

God told Moses that tomorrow was going to be a very memorable day, so much so that the nations would be in awe at the power of the God of the Israelites. God was going to bring such a devastating blow to the Egyptians that they would demand the Israelites to leave immediately. The event was to be known as the Passover and every year thereafter the day was to be commemorated by a special feast.

Here's what happened. God instructed each family to kill a lamb, splatter the lintels of the doorposts with the blood from the lamb, and then roast and eat the lamb. And they were to be prepared for travel, everything packed and ready to go. God then sent an angel of death over the land with orders to kill the firstborn male of every man and beast. However, when the angel saw the blood of a lamb on the doorposts he would pass over that house (thus the name 'Passover') and the people inside were safe. The Egyptians were not covered by the blood of a lamb and soon every household was filled with intense mourning as the firstborn male child died, including Pharaoh's own beloved son and heir to the throne. Pharaoh gave orders that the Israelites were to leave immediately. And so they did.

Moses was instructed to lead his people to the Red Sea - which actually was impossible to cross. It

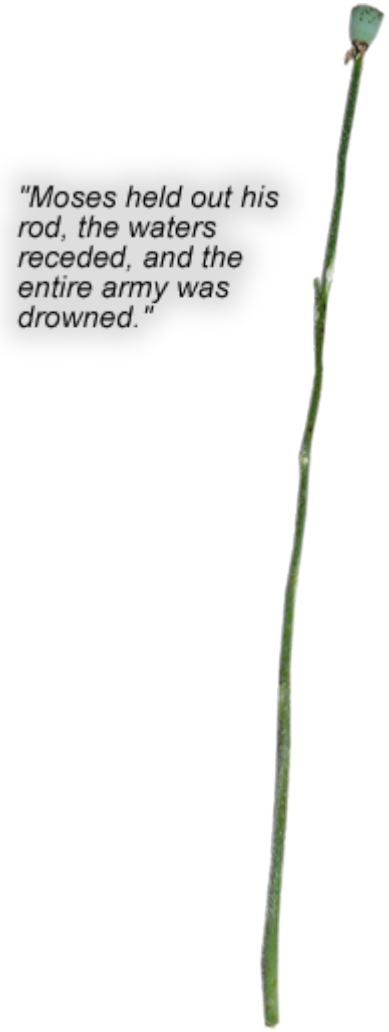
has been estimated they numbered six million, and there were also flocks and household goods. To cross the Red Sea was an impossibility, but nonetheless it was there that Moses led them. The next morning Pharaoh sent his army to recapture the Israelites. But God is more powerful than ten thousand Pharaohs. And He is the God of the impossible. He parted the waters of the Red Sea with a mighty wind and when Pharaoh's great army followed, Moses held out his rod, the waters receded, and the entire army was drowned.

Now let's get back to “the Lamb.” The pass over lamb is a 'type' of Christ. Type means similar. The lamb 'foreshadowed' the coming of the Son of God in human flesh. Just as the blood of the lamb protected the Israelites from the angel of death, so the blood of Christ protects those under His blood – the blood He shed on the cross of Calvary. That is why Jesus is called “our Passover.”

The lamb of the Passover had to be male, the firstborn, and without spot or blemish. The Lamb of God (Jesus) was a male, God's firstborn, and though tempted in every way He never sinned and was therefore an unblemished sacrifice. Just as the unblemished lamb was God's provision for the Israelites to escape His wrath, so the unblemished sacrifice of Calvary, Jesus Christ, is God's provision for us to escape His wrath. Man no longer has to suffer the punishment of his sin. Coming to Christ is coming under the protection of His blood.

"John was
extraordinary."

"Why did John call this Man 'The Lamb of God'?"



HE IS A MIRACLE WORKER

The first recorded miracle of Jesus occurred at a wedding feast in Cana, Galilee. They had run out of wine. Jesus instructed the servants to fill six large containers with water, and then He changed the water into wine. The quality of the wine was such that the overseer of the feast, knowing nothing of the miracle, complained to the bridegroom that the best wine should have been served first.

Jesus healed many. There was the “man whose right hand was withered.” Jesus told him, “Stretch out your hand.” When the man extended his shriveled hand “his hand was restored as whole as the other.” There was the “woman having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.” And there was the leper who cried out, “Unclean! Unclean!” to warn people to stay away from him. At the touch of Jesus “immediately the

leprosy left him." Jesus healed many, probably thousands. He "went about all Galilee..... healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease."

Jesus even raised the dead. There was the twelve-year old daughter of "a ruler of the synagogue." Jairus "fell at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house," but before Jesus arrived the girl had died. Jesus took her hand saying, "Little girl, arise." And she arose. And there was His friend Lazarus who lived, and recently died, in the small town of Bethany, near Jerusalem. When Jesus commanded the men to roll back the stone covering the entrance to the tomb, Martha, Lazarus' sister, protested because he had been dead for four days and would stink terribly. But when the stone was rolled back Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come forth!" and at His command "he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes."

Jesus gave His disciples power to heal the sick and do other miracles in His name. "Through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people." On one occasion "a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed."

Many are still healed today in the name of Jesus Christ. I first witnessed Christ's healing power at a tent meeting about thirty years ago. There was to be prayer for the sick after the service, and the evangelist invited anyone who had not yet witnessed a miracle to come and see. He told the small group seeking a healing that he did not have the power to heal anyone, but their healing would come from Jesus. I witnessed several healing miracles. One person's leg stretched three or four inches before my eyes. The hefty evangelist confidently asked senior men to lift him off the ground after praying for a healing of their backs.

Jesus still heals today. He still drives out cancer, opens deaf ears, gives sight to the blind.

"He changed the water into wine."

"immediately her flow of blood stopped."

HE FULFILLED PROPHECY

Many events enfolding the life of Christ were foretold many years previous and recorded in Old Testament writings. To the Jews, fulfillment of prophecy was to be considered proof that He was who He claimed to be, the Messiah, the Son of God. It had been prophesied that :

He would be born of a virgin.
In Bethlehem.
A descendant of Abraham.
A descendant of Judah.
A descendant of King David.
He would come out of Egypt.
And live in Nazareth.
He was to be preceded by another (John the baptist).
He would heal the sick.
Speak in parables.
Ride triumphant into Jerusalem.
On an ass.
As the people cried, “Hosanna!”

He was to be betrayed by a friend.
For thirty pieces of silver.
His disciples would flee when arrested.
He would be spit upon.
Scorned and ridiculed.
They would pluck out His beard.
Cast lots for His garments.
He would cry out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”
They would offer Him vinegar to drink.
None of His bones would be broken.
He would be buried with the rich.
For three days.
He would rise from the dead.

Also, Jesus foretold of events in His own life. “He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.' ”

"He would be born of a virgin"

"He would heal the sick."

HE DEFEATED SATAN

The Bible calls satan “the god of this world.” Jesus called him, “the prince of this world.” Once a mighty angel, satan was cast out of heaven because he rebelled against God and persuaded a third of the angels to join in the uprising. Later, he went after the authority that God gave to Adam, the authority to rule the earth. Through subtlety he persuaded Adam to sin, and Adam thereby lost his rulership over the earth to the devil. Since that time satan has been “the god (ruler) of this world.” Man has been victimized by this cruel despot ever since.

To defeat this enemy, God had to become a man and, as a man, win back what the man Adam had lost. Jesus came to earth so “that He might destroy the works of the devil,” to recover what was lost through Adam's fall. This was the battle of the ages – the Son of God versus satan.

Though Scripture doesn't say, it is probable satan is responsible for the slaughter of the the children under the age of two; it is probable he coerced Herod to kill the innocents in an attempt to snuff out the life of the Christ-child. Just before His ministry began, at about thirty, Jesus “was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness” where He was “tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing.” The Bible does not define the purpose of this encounter. Perhaps it was to satisfy God's justice.

You see, justice demanded that the sacrifice on Calvary's cross had to be a sacrifice “without blemish.” Only a spotless sacrifice would appease a righteous God, satisfy His standard of justice and qualify as payment for man's sins. If the sacrifice were blemished it would have no effect. If Jesus had sinned, He would not qualify as a sacrifice. The devil tempted Him at his weakest, while fasting forty days in the heat of the wilderness. Jesus passed the test. No one can deny the test was legitimate, that justice was fully satisfied, and Jesus did qualify to be the sacrifice to fully pay for our sins.

(One can only speculate what would have happened if Jesus had faltered and yielded to the devil's temptations. Certainly He could no longer be “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” Actually, Jesus Himself would be in need of a savior. He would be, as every other man was, at enmity with the Father. Would the Father or the Holy Spirit somehow enter the human race, as Jesus did, and become the sacrificial Lamb? Would such be possible? Again, one can only speculate. For certain the battle between Jesus and satan in the wilderness was most crucial. And Jesus - my Jesus! - won!)

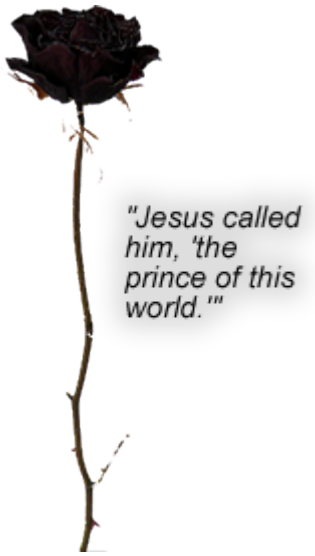
satan was behind the crucifixion of Christ, working through Judas, the Pharisees and others. The Bible tells us he “entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.” While it was Judas who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, it was the devil, always invisible and undetected, who seduced him. Undoubtedly satan likewise affected the Pharisees and Pilate as well. But Jesus was always a step ahead of his cunning enemy. He knew what Judas was up to and

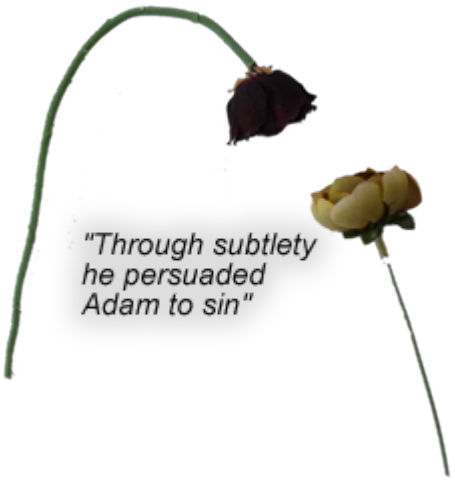
even told him, “What you do, do quickly.”

satan made a major mistake. When he had Jesus crucified, he murdered an innocent. It was innocent blood shed on Calvary's cross! Jesus was indeed the spotless “Lamb of God.” Christ's death was both satan's defeat and man's redemption. The debt for our sins was paid in full. Christ paid a debt He did not owe for a people owing a debt they could not pay.

Jesus is man's salvation. Accepting Christ is accepting Christ's salvation. To accept Christ is to be saved from punishment of one's sins. To such a one, “He (Jesus) has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and power, He made a public spectacle out of them, triumphing over them in it.”

The devil was defeated at Calvary. He no longer has rulership over those who come to Christ to be saved. All of mankind is now free to accept this great salvation, freely given. Before, death was a fearful thing but now, through Christ, death has lost its sting. Christ is the victor. One day soon Jesus will cast satan into Gehennah, the lake of fire, for a period of a thousand years and, soon after, for all eternity.





"my Jesus!"

HE HAS MANY ENEMIES

It seems Jesus always had enemies. When Herod heard the news that the Christ-child was born and purported to one day become a king, he had every child in Bethlehem under the age of two years executed in an effort to snuff out the life of Jesus. However, Joseph, stepfather of Jesus, was alerted by an angel in a dream, and escaped into Egypt.

When Jesus began his three year ministry at the age of thirty, He immediately made enemies with the powerful religious leaders, the Pharisees. The Pharisees were much like many religious leaders of today – they held lofty positions of leadership, were influential in the affairs of men, and were apportioned much esteem. And like many leaders today, they placed heavy burdens on the people, replaced the teachings of God with man-made doctrines, and used their influence to keep their people away from God's salvation.

When confronted by the Pharisees, Jesus never backed up one inch. As a matter of fact, He was often the aggressor. While having compassion on the prostitute and tolerance for the thief, He lashed out at the Pharisees. Because it was they who distorted the word of God and steered the people's devotion to themselves. Filled with zeal for the Father He loved, Jesus verbally flogged these men, and did so publicly:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.”

“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

“Blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!”

“You are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are filled with dead men's bones.”

“You outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

“Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?”

The Pharisees refused to repent, and seeing their credibility ebbing, tried to discredit Jesus before the people. But they always came out the loser. For three years their hatred for Jesus festered, and they plotted His death. Afraid of the people, they arrested Jesus at night, having bribed Judas to lead them to Him.

Prior to His arrest Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane praying, “Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will but Yours be done.” The cup was the cup of suffering soon to begin. Luke writes, “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” F.J. Dake writes, “It is a recognized fact that under extreme mental pressure, the pores may be so dilated that the blood may issue from them; so that there may be bloody sweat. A number of cases are on record of such agony.”

It was more than the awaiting cross that brought agony to Jesus. Scripture declares that Jesus, “bore our sins on His own body on the tree.” To any of us, this would be a grievous happening. But to Jesus “who knew no sin” it was almost unbearable. Jesus had never experienced the slime of sin. Only He could claim that satan “had nothing in Me.” But now, “Him who knew no sin (was) to be sin for us.” The one and only innocent was to become grossly contaminated. The lepers He healed were cleaner by far than what He would become. Tomorrow.

Praying in the garden, Jesus knew that tomorrow He would “become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree).” Bearing the sins of man, He would be rejected by His own Father. From the cross He would cry “out in a loud voice 'Eli. Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' ”

That was tomorrow. Tonight He asks His Father if it was possible, if there was another way, to “remove this cup.” But there was no alternative. He could hear the soldiers coming.

"It seems
Jesus always
had enemies."

"Blind guides, who strain at a gnat
and swallow a camel!"

HE WAS ARRESTED

“A great multitude with swords and clubs” came to get Jesus under the cover of darkness, away from the people who would defend Him. They were led by Judas who identified Jesus, surrounded by the eleven disciples, by kissing Him on the cheek. “Judas,” Jesus responded, “are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

“Jesus said to the multitude, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me.' ”

One of the disciples, “Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?' ”

“And He touched the ear and healed him.”

“And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest where the scribes and elders were assembled..... Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death.”

“Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said.' ”

“Then the high priest tore his clothes saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?' They answered and said, 'He is deserving of death.' Then they spat in His face and beat Him with the palm of their hands, saying, 'Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck you?' ”

The Jews, being under the domination of Rome, did not have authority to put anyone to death. They could have severely punished Jesus by scourging Him with a whip, but Rome did not allow them to execute. And the Pharisees wanted Jesus dead, not simply chastised. Only then could life go on as normal; so they thought. A chastised Jesus would change nothing; Jesus must be eliminated. So they brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, determined to persuade him do that nasty task for them.

“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning..... Pilate then went out to them and said, 'What accusations do you bring against this man?' They answered and said to him, 'If He were not an evil doer we would not have delivered Him up to you.' ”

“And they began to accuse Him saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying He Himself is Christ, a King.' So Pilate asked Him saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And He answered, 'It is as you say.' ”

“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?' And He answered him not a word, so that the governor marveled greatly.”

Upon discovering that Jesus was a Galilean and therefore under Herod's jurisdiction, and anxious to escape this very uncomfortable quandary, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. “Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him with a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.”

“Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, 'You have brought this man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse

Him; no neither did Herod.' "

Pilate "knew that because of envy they had delivered Him. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, 'Have nothing to do with this just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.' "

"Pilate said to them, 'What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said to him, 'Let Him be crucified!' Then the governor said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, saying 'Let Him be crucified!' "

"So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, 'Behold I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I found no fault in Him.' Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, 'Behold the Man!' "

Pilate thought the sickly sight of a chastised Jesus would appease the mob of Jews, and it seems that was his reasoning when he had Him whipped. Scourging is a gruesome discipline as F.J. Dake explains: "A scourge was a Roman instrument for severe bodily punishment. It consisted of a handle with about a dozen jagged pieces of bone or metal at each end to make the blow more painful and effective. The victim was tied to a post and the blows were applied to the bare back and loins and sometimes to the face and bowels. The flesh was cut in several places by each blow. So hideous was the punishment that the victim often feinted and some died under it."

"Behold the Man!" Pilate shouted to the mob. Flesh hung in bloody strips from Jesus' mutilated body. Bruises from being struck on the head with reed rods colored His face. The purple robe and crown of thorns was a mockery to His claim of being a king. His head was swelled like a balloon from the thorns digging into His scalp. His beard was matted with the spittle of soldiers. The noble Person who just yesterday walked with unfeigned dignity among the populace – possessing an incomparable stately bearing that came not from learning but knowing He was indeed the King of kings, the very Son of God – was now a pathetic weakling barely able to stand, His face grimaced in torment. Surely, Pilate must have thought, the people, His own people, would now be appeased, their lust for revenge satisfied. Surely they would cry, "Enough! Set Him free!" Pilate, though the hard ruler he was, must have been amazed when the merciless mob cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

"Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, 'If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.' "

"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person.' " He then sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

The mob must have been ugly indeed, and most fearful, to cause a hardened Roman ruler to crucify

a Man he himself declared to be innocent. It is certain that satan was at the scene with a host of demons inciting the crowd, bringing it to a mad frenzy.

Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and satan would have all been astonished to learn that Jesus was there by choice, that He could have escaped anytime He chose by simply calling angels to His aid. Jesus had previously said, “I lay down My life..... No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.”

"So they brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate."

"Are you the king of the jews?"

"Let him be crucified!

"I am innocent of
the blood of this
just person."

HE WAS CRUCIFIED

“When they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, and led Him away to be crucified.”

“And He, bearing the cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgatha.”

“And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' ''

Jesus knew the Jewish nation was to suffer much in the centuries to come, Jerusalem would soon

be destroyed, the people dispersed throughout the world where they would experience grievous persecution.

“There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and one on the left.”

The soldiers drove nails just below each of Jesus' hands, and a single nail through the heels, pinning His feet to the cross. C.T. Davis, a medical doctor who made a comprehensive study of the crucifixion, writes, “As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral (chest) muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal (rib) muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself to get even a short breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the bloodstream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen.” (Google: Dr. C. Truman Davis)

“From the sixth hour unto the ninth hour” (from noon to three) Jesus hangs on the cross suspended by three nails, writhing in agony. He slumps downward because of the pain and because of the weight of His body. In this sagging position Jesus is suffocating and must use His legs to push Himself erect. He fills His lungs with air and drops down again. This slumping-rising action goes on for three hours until His death. For reasons unknown, God covers the land in darkness.

Hmmm. What was Pilate thinking when darkness blanketed the land at the very hour his prisoner hangs from a cross? - the One he himself declared to be innocent. Darkness in the early afternoon – what could it mean? Possibly the warning of his wife - “Have nothing to do with that just man”- echoes in his mind.

And what were the Pharisees thinking? Was the darkness a sign from heaven? Could they have been wrong? Have they put themselves under a curse?

“Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, THE KING OF THE JEWS, but HE SAID I AM THE KING OF THE JEWS.' Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.' ”

It seems that Pilate had been pushed to his limit.

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,' that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: 'They divided My garments among them, And for My

clothes they cast lots.' "

"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.' "

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' "

"And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." The veil was sixty feet high and quite thick, and separated a special area called the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. This area was where God was present in a special way, a place forbidden to the people; only the high priest was allowed to enter once a year. That the curtain was torn "from top to bottom" indicates it was torn by an angel, at God's instruction, and not by men.

The tearing of the veil immediately prior to the death of Jesus was very significant, indicating an end to the old way and the beginning of another. The old way was trying to appease God by obeying the laws He imposed. The new is the "law of faith," faith in Jesus Christ and His payment for our sins. The new way is an entrance into fellowship with God, not by man's abilities or good works or efforts, but through childlike trust in Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life."

"Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, and put it on hyssop, and put it into His mouth. And so when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

"And the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised."

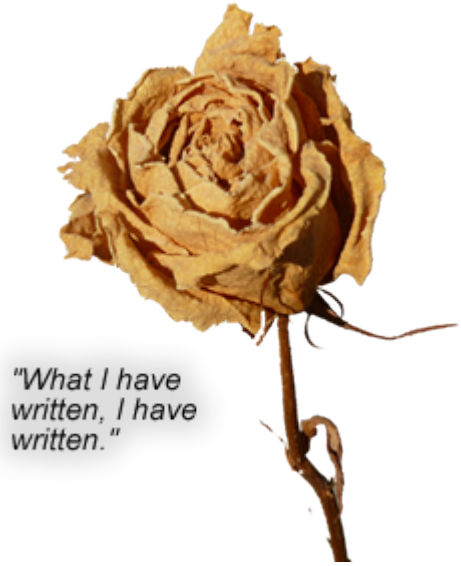
And what was Pilate thinking now? And the scribes and Pharisees?

"When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that have happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' "

"Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs."

The breaking of the legs was accomplished by a heavy blow beneath the knees. Legs broken, the victim could no longer raise himself, and died of suffocation. Jesus was already dead, but just to be

sure “one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”



TEEN PROBE

S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T T-A-L-K T-O T-E-E-N-S

I've said it before and I'll say it again: there's plenty of stuff, important stuff, they just ain't never going to teach you in school. And if you limit yourself to what you learn in high school and college, you'll be in trouble big time.

They're not going to teach you that there's a price attached to your sin so big you can't ever pay it off. That you are a creation of a holy God, and not some evolutionary product of chance happenings. That you will one day face this Creator of yours to be judged for dirty deeds and rebellion.

They're not gonna teach you about this place called Gehennah, the Lake of Fire, commonly referred to as hell. Not a nice place, this Gehennah. No happy campers there. Just lots of people sitting in, not around, the campfire.

A prison of hopelessness. The kind that makes you feel real bad. Like a thick, clammy fog that surrounds you from all sides and never goes away. No second chance, no way out, just a forever of

feeling real bad.

And they're never going to tell you about heaven where there's nothing but happy campers, guys that got it made. A fun place, this heaven. If you ever arrive, you won't want to go anywhere else. Not ever.

And they certainly won't tell you about Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords. They're not going to tell you about the One who bore your sordid sins on His body on the cross, the One who paid your ticket into heaven, the One, the only One, who can change you from the inside out and make you something you're not ashamed of.

Like Josh McDowell. Jesus changed Josh's life when he was a second year university student. Listen up as he tells his story …

JOSH MCDOWELL:

I thought most Christians were idiots. I'd met some, I used to wait for a Christian to speak up in the classroom so I could beat the professor to the punch in tearing him or her up one side and down the other. I thought that if a Christian had a brain cell, it would die of loneliness. I didn't know any better.

But these people challenged me over and over . Finally, I accepted. But I did it out of pride, too refute them. I didn't know there were facts. I didn't know there was evidence a person could evaluate with his mind.

After much study and research, my mind finally came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ must have been who He claimed to be. In fact my search to refute Christianity became the background for my first two books. When I couldn't refute it, I ended up becoming a Christian. I now have spent 13 years documenting why I believe that faith in Jesus Christ is intellectually feasible…

I believe I am a walking testimony that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and lives today…I was compelled to conclude that my arguments would not stand up, that Jesus Christ was exactly who He claimed to be – the Son of God.

It came to the point where I'd go to bed at ten at night and I wouldn't fall asleep until four in the morning. I knew I had to get Jesus off my mind or go out of my mind! I always have been open-minded, but not so open-minded that my brains could fall out.

Being open-minded, on December 19, 1959, at 3:30 p.m., during my second year at the university, I became a Christian.

Somebody asked me, "How do you know?"

I said, "Look, I was there."

That night I prayed four things in order to establish a relationship with the resurrected, living Christ. He since has transformed my life.

First, I said, “Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me.” Second I said, “I confess those things in my life that aren’t pleasing to You and ask You to forgive me and cleanse me.” (The Bible says, “Though your sins are as scarlet they will be white as snow.”) Third, I said, “Right now, in the best way I know how, I open the door of my heart and life and trust You as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life. Change me from the inside out. Make me the type of person You created me to be.”

The last thing I prayed was, “Thank You for coming into my life by faith. It was a faith based not upon ignorance but upon evidence and the facts of history, and God’s Word.

I’m sure you’ve heard religious people talk about their “bolt of lightning.” Well, after I prayed nothing happened. I mean nothing. I still haven’t sprouted wings! In fact, after I made that decision, I felt worse. I literally felt I was going to vomit. I felt sick deep down.

“Oh, no, McDowell, what’d you get sucked into now?” I wondered. I really felt I’d gone off the deep end – and some of my friends agreed.

But I can tell you one thing: In six months to a year-and-a half, I found I hadn’t gone off the deep end. My life was changed!

I was in a debate with the head of the history department at a Midwestern university, and I said that my life had been changed. He interrupted me with, “McDowell, are you trying to tell us that God really changed your life in the 20th century? What areas?”

After 45 minutes of my describing the changes he said, “Okay, that’s enough.”

Another area that started to change was my bad temper. I used to blow my stack if someone just looked at me cross-eyed. I still have the scars from almost killing a man my first year in the university. My temper was such an integral part of me, I didn’t consciously seek to change it.

One day, I arrived at a crisis, only to find my temper was gone! And only once in the last 21 years have I lost my temper. (But when I blew it that time I must have made up for about six years.)

And there is another area of which I am not proud. But I mention it because a lot of people need to have the same change in their lives through a relationship with the resurrected, living Christ. This is the area of hatred.

I had a lot of hatred in my life. It wasn’t something outwardly manifested, but there was a kind of inward grinding. I was ticked off with people, with things, with issues. Like so many other people, I was insecure. Every time I met someone different from me, he became a threat.

The one person I hated more than anyone else in the world was my father. I despised him. To me he was the town alcoholic. If you’re from a small town and one of your parents is an alcoholic, you know what I’m talking about.

When we had friends over, I would take my father out, tie him up in the barn, and park the car up around the silo. We would tell our friends he had to go somewhere. I don't think any person could hate someone more that I hated my father.

Maybe five months after I made that decision for Christ, a love from God through Jesus Christ entered my life. It took that hatred and turned it upside down. It was so strong, I was able to look my father squarely in the eyes and say, "Dad, I love you." And I really meant it. After some of the things I'd done, that shook him up.

When I transferred to a private university, I was in a serious car accident. With my neck in traction, I was taken home. I'll never forget my father coming into my room and asking, "Son, how can you love a father like me?" I said, "Dad, six months ago I despised you." Then I shared with him my conclusions about Jesus Christ.

"Dad, I let Jesus Christ come into my life," I said. "I can't explain it completely. But as a result of that relationship, I've found the capacity to love and accept not only you but other people just the way they are. "

Forty-five minutes later one of the greatest thrills of my life occurred. Somebody in my own family, someone who knew me so well I couldn't pull the wool over his eyes, said to me, "Son, if God can do in my life what I seen him do in yours, then I want to give Him the opportunity." Right there my father prayed with me and trusted Christ.

Usually changes take place over several days, weeks, or months…even a year. My life was changed in about six months to a year-and-a-half. The life of my father was changed right before my eyes. It was as if somebody reached in and turned on a light bulb. I've never seen such a rapid change before or since. My father touched whiskey only once after that. He got it as far as his lips and that was it.

In the last 20 years or so Josh McDowell has been busy trying to convince teens like yourself that accepting Christ is a very sane thing to do, speaking in more than 800 universities. The scepticism that often awaits him dissipates as he presents the facts of history regarding the life of Christ, especially His resurrection.

Yes, I said facts. You see, Josh McDowell, when he was opposed to Christianity ("I thought most Christians were idiots"), when he was looking for ammo to humiliate Christians, discovered that Jesus Christ REALLY DID rise from the grave. And He REALLY DID fulfill prophecies spoken thousands of years previous. And He REALLY DID predict the details of His own death. And He REALLY IS who He claimed to be, the very Son of God.

Hey, he wasn't taught this in school! Schools don't teach you what you really need to know. Sorry, but that's, the way it is. High school and college tend to draw you away from, not closer to, God and reality. In many places in North America it is actually ILLEGAL to teach Christ! So I'm going to tell you

stuff you just ain't gonna hear in class. Listen to some people who know:

THOMAS ARNOLD, professor, author of the three volume History of Rome: "I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

BROOKE FOSS WESCOTT, English scholar: "Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it."

Didn't hear that in history class did you? But could it be that Jesus really, REALLY rose from the dead? Is there true, genuine, for sure evidence? Listen up:

JOSH McDOWELL: "One man who was highly skilled at dealing with evidence was Dr. Simon Greenleaf. He was the famous Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University and succeeded Justice Joseph Story at the Dane Professor of Law in the same university. The rise of Harvard Law School to its eminent position among the legal schools of the United States is to be ascribed to the efforts of these two men. Greenleaf produced his famous three volume work, A Treatise on the Law of Evidence, which is still considered one of the greatest single authorities on this subject in the entire literature of legal procedure.

"Greenleaf examined the value of the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ to ascertain the truth. He applied the principles contained in his three-volume treatise on evidence. His findings were recorded in his book, An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice.

"Greenleaf came to the conclusion that, according to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history (emphasis mine)."

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, one time British solicitor-general, attorney-general, High Chancellor, High Steward of the U of Cambridge, recognized great legal expert: "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet." LORD DARLING, one time Lord Chief Justice of England: "no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

Some people figure the resurrection didn't happen because it just couldn't happen. I mean, the dead tend to stay dead. Don't they?

DR. JOHN WARWICK MONTGOMERY, author: "The only way we can know whether an event can occur is to see whether in fact it has occurred. The problem of miracles, then, must be solved in the

realm of historical investigation, not in the realm of philosophical speculation."

MONTGOMERY: "It passes the bounds of credibility that the early Christians could have manufactured such a tale and then preached it among those who might easily have refuted it simply by producing the body of Jesus."

RON SIDER, historian: "If the Christians and their Jewish opponents both agreed that the tomb was empty, we have little choice but to accept the empty tomb as a historical fact.''

PAUL ALTHAUS, University of Erlangen, Germany: "The resurrection could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned."

KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE, historian: "Never has Jesus had so wide and so profound an effect upon humanity as the past three or four generations. Through Him millions of individuals have been transformed and have begun to live the kind of life which he exemplified…Gauged by the consequences which have followed the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have been the most important events in the history of man. Measured by His influence, Jesus is central in the human story."

Hmmm. Central to the human story. Hmmm. Through Him millions of individuals have been transformed. Then WHY is the life of Christ not taught in history class? Why is it that His profound teachings are ignored? Hey, the answer – the real answer – is on page. six.

satan. That invisible rat. The one most of your teachers would say doesn't exist. satan the deceiver, the liar. The Bible says "whose minds (including yours) the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them."

Listen up! I will tell you one more time: If you reject Jesus, you will die in your sins. You will spend an eternity in that place of very unhappy campers. Jesus said, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" Until now you have been following the blind. Educated, cultured, impressive – but BLIND!

Turn to Jesus while there is still time. Come to Jesus in prayer. Humble yourself. Ask him to wipe away the stain of your dirty sins.

Ask Jesus into your heart and life.

And e-mail me a call so I can share your joy.

NOTE: Josh McDowell's testimony was taken by permission from his book. The Resurrection Factor, published by Here's Life Publishers, available at Christian bookstores.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again"

"Not a nice place this Gehennah."

" Like Josh
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"I believe that I am a walking testimony that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and lives today...."

"Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me."

"The one person I hated more than anyone else in the world was my father."
"Dad, I love you."

"The life of my father was changed right before my eyes."

"Didn't hear that in history class did you?"

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HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

"Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man want to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded that the body be given to him. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock."

"And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen and with spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury."

The Jews had certain guidelines regarding the preparation of a corpse. Assuming that these procedures were observed, the body of Jesus was stretched out on a board, lying on His back, His feet toward the door of the tomb. His body was washed by at least two persons in lukewarm water, His hair combed in its familiar manner. The body was then clothed in linen strips which were sewn together (knots were not allowed). First they wrapped His body from the feet to the armpits, then after placing His arms to His sides, wrapped His upper body again up to His neck. The wrapping was

then coated with a mixture of aloes (aromatic spices) and myrrh (a gummy substance). The body was wrapped again with linen strips, coated with more mixture and another wrapping of linen strips. There was at least three wrappings of cloth and, as the above Scripture verse reveals, "about a hundred pounds" of mixture. His head was wrapped separately.

"On the next day...the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying 'Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, After three days I will rise. Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, He has risen from the dead.'"

"Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard."

The stone that covered the entrance to the tomb was probably close to two tons, engineered to roll in place with ease, yet very difficult to remove. The guard consisted of four soldiers which was changed every three hours. (It was the Roman practice to execute any soldier found sleeping while on watch.) On either side of the stone was a Roman seal - a solemn warning not to touch.

"There was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men."

Two women came "to see the tomb" where their beloved Jesus was buried and were frightened at the sight of the angel. "But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.'"

Two of the disciples raced to the tomb, one entering the tomb seeing "the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself."

"Then the other disciple...went in also; and he saw and believed" the women's report that Jesus had risen. What did he see that made him believe? Obviously it was the condition of the linen encasement that had enclosed Jesus' body. If it were cut or torn open, "the other disciple" would have concluded that someone had removed the body. The fact that "he saw and believed" indicates that the miraculous had happened, that the body had escaped the wrappings without disturbing them.

"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."

However one of the disciples, Thomas, was not present and when the disciples gave him the great

news. Thomas replied, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands, and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”

“He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, ‘These are the words I have spoken to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations.’”

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”

"go your way,
make it secure
as you know
how."

"the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone"

"Peace be with you."

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

HE IS COMING AGAIN

"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'"

The "two men" in "white apparel" confirmed what Jesus had taught the disciples, that He would one day return to earth "in like manner," the same way He left, in visible form. Christians refer to this future happening as the Second Coming of Christ. There are more Scriptural prophecies regarding His second coming than His first coming as a babe born of a virgin. It is agreed by most that the second coming of Christ is very imminent. He could come any time.

When Jesus ascended into heaven two thousand years ago He took His rightful place at the right hand of the Father. To this day He still governs heaven from His throne. In heaven there are many angels, probably billions, and also a great number of saints who have died over the centuries. To all residents in heaven, Jesus is the center focus.

The apostle John saw Jesus in a vision. "And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." Jesus was "clothed with a garment down to His feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters...and His

countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."

The angels and saints live in the heavenly city called New Jerusalem. New Jerusalem is thought to be approximately 1500 square miles at the base and rises, perhaps pyramid shape, 1500 miles high. The Bible does not fully describe heaven, but there are eyewitness accounts from Christians who have been taken there. It seems that Christ reigns from a magnificent throne, around which are worshippers constantly worshipping Him, at the top of the holy city. From the throne flows a river of water, pure and refreshing, meandering downward throughout New Jerusalem.

Somewhere below the throne of God is a park called Paradise where the angels and saints are free to enjoy the marvelous splendor of God's creation. In this park there are said to be trees and flowers and shrubbery of magnificent variety and beauty, each producing a superb fragrance. In this park are animals roaming freely, birds flying about, every creation a perfection. Everywhere there is music such that earth has never experienced.

Surrounding this huge city is a wall made of jasper. This wall is a total of 6000 miles long and 300 feet (90m) high. The wall sits on a foundation of precious stones and jewels. There are twelve entrances to the holy city, twelve gates of pearl never closed. The streets are made of pure gold, transparent and clear as glass. The glory of God's presence is brighter than the sun and illuminates the city with a brilliance unknown on earth. The effect of gold and precious stones sparkling in this light must be awesome indeed!

In this New Jerusalem there is peace and joy and harmony. There are no picket lines, no shortages, no arguments, no crying, no headaches, no depression, no dust. It is a place where one wants to be. It is where Christians go the moment their bodies quit functioning. It is where Jesus reigns supreme. This is where Jesus was going when the disciples watched Him ascend into the clouds.

One day Jesus will leave New Jerusalem and return to earth. This time He will not come as a babe, but as the King He is. The Bible has much to say about the second coming of Jesus Christ. As was His first coming, the second will be in fulfillment of many prophecies spoken by the prophets millenniums previous and by Jesus Himself.

Before His return certain prophecies regarding events centering on the nation of Israel must be fulfilled. The most significant event prophesied was the reestablishing of the nation of Israel. Never before had a people been dispersed throughout the world and returned to again form their own state. But such was prophesied, and such occurred in 1948. This major prophecy fulfillment was to begin the fulfillment of many other prophecies.

In the past four decades the world has been undergoing, momentous changes, many of which the Bible has foretold. Most scholars who study Biblical prophecies agree that every prophecy that must be fulfilled (before the second coming of Christ can occur) has already taken place. Humanity stands at the verge of one of earth's most significant happenings.

Jesus is coming soon. Very soon. Be it tomorrow, next year, or the next decade, no one knows. But most agree the time of Christ's return is nearing.

Paul writes of this event: "When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Jesus will cast satan into Gehennah, the Lake of Fire. Jesus will reign as King over the earth from His beloved city Jerusalem. The Jewish nation will finally accept His claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

"Jesus is coming soon."

HE LOVES YOU

Why? Why did Jesus do what He did? Why did the Son of God leave His glorious position in heaven, enter the human race, suffer rejection, betrayal, misunderstanding and ridicule, allow people to spit in His face, tear His beard, strike Him with rods, rip His body with a whip, drive nails in His hands and feet, and hang Him on a cross? What was the purpose? Why, oh why, did Jesus do it?

He did it for you!

I said, Jesus did it for you!

“The wages of sin is death.” Eternal death. An eternity in a prison of anguish and remorse, a prison called Gehennah, the Lake of Fire. Yes, sin has immeasurable consequences. You were doomed and lost and hopeless. You owed a debt you could not pay.

But Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. Your debt. So that you can be free. Free from the load of guilt

and shame. Free from fear of death. Free from the consequences of your sin.

Jesus paid the price of your sins. You think it was the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross? Oh, no! It was your sins, and everyone's sins, that nailed Him to that cross. As much as anyone, it was your sins that spilled His innocent blood. Jesus went to the cross on your behalf.

Yes, it's true Christ died for the whole world – "God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son." But you are as much a part of "the world" as anyone. He died for you. If Jesus thought of anyone while hanging on the cross, he must have thought of you. Because He loves you as much as He loves anyone. If you were the only sinner on earth, He would have come. I said, He would have come. Jesus would have suffered it all just for you. He loves you that much.

The apostle Paul declared, "I live by faith in the Son of God who loved ME and gave Himself for ME." Yes, Paul was quite aware that Jesus died for every man, woman and child. But he also realized that Jesus died for him individually. You too can say, "The Son of God loves ME and gave Himself for ME."

In Isaiah, chapter 49 we see how God loves His own: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands." It should not surprise you that Jesus loves you. Did He not create you? Was it not Jesus who decided the colour of your eyes, the shape of your nose, the texture of your hair? Was it not He who placed the fingers on your hands, invested in you your talents, gave you your unique personality?

Jesus loves you more than your mother loves you. More than father or brother or sister. More than your best friend. Jesus doesn't just say that He loves you; He proved it. Not just words, but action. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Jesus Christ really did lay down His life for you. Jesus Christ really did suffer that brutal cross for you. Jesus Christ really did bear your sordid sins upon His body. Jesus Christ really does love you!

There is only one reason why you have not yet opened the door of your heart to Jesus. Deception. You are being deceived. By whom?

"If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." The "god of this age" is satan. He has thus far deceived you. You have rejected the One who loves you most to serve the one who hates you most. satan has many underlings who work hard at keeping you in a state of deception. They do not want you to comprehend and accept "the gospel of the glory of Christ." They have you under their influence and they want to keep you. They have blinded you to the fact that Jesus desires to rescue you and establish a relationship.

Yes, I said relationship. Nowhere in this paper did I talk about religion. Jesus Christ did not come to establish another religion! Religion is shallow and useless. Jesus came to establish a relationship.

With you. That's how it's supposed to be. Jesus and you. Walking together. Having good times. Bonding. Working together to reach others still in satan's hold.

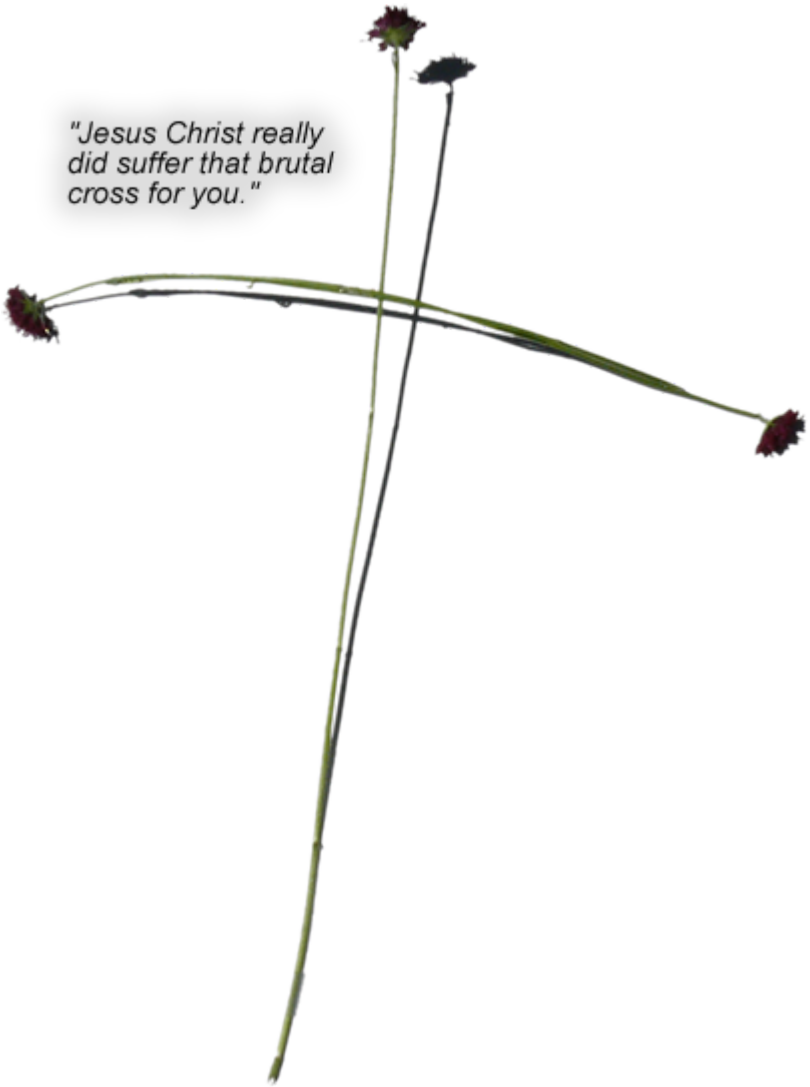
Because of His deep love for you Jesus desires to share all He has with you. He wants you to "receive the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father." His Father, His kingdom, all that Jesus possesses He wants to share with you.

Yes, there is a price. You can expect misunderstanding, rejection and even persecution. But when it's all over, when your life on earth is finished, you will be with Jesus in a far better place. Forever and ever.

Will you respond to the love of Jesus? Will you humble yourself before Him in prayer, asking Him to forgive your sins and make you white as snow? Will you embrace the new life that He won for you at Calvary? Will you tell others of your decision for Christ?

"And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires let him take the water of life freely."

"The Son of God loves ME and gave Himself for ME."


"Jesus Christ really did suffer that brutal cross for you."

"With you."