

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.**

**The Tree of Life for week ending 04/11/04.**

The Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18-22, Hebrews 2:9-17

Our Lord's final cry from the Cross is recorded in **Luk 23:44-46**, "*And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.'* And having said this, He breathed His last."

You are not prepared to live unless you are prepared to die. The lives of so many revolve around a struggle against death and the fear of dying. The Lord Jesus Christ tasted death for us all, **Heb 2:9**, and broke the power of death, **Heb 2:14-15**. Death will inevitably come; it is an appointment that we all will keep, and only God knows the time. And as believers, we can have complete confidence concerning the day of our physical death, **2Co 5:6,8**.

Our Lord confronted death, which was the last enemy, in all its sorrow, trial, pain, and finality, **1Co 15:26**, "*The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*" In **Luk 23:46** He said, "*Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.*" He died confidently because He had the Father's presence and the Father's promise. In this last statement our Lord quoted part of **Psa 31:5**, which reads, "*Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.*" This Psalm is an Old Testament promise, which the Lord Jesus Christ applied to Himself. He does not continue with "Thou has ransomed me," because He was never in any need of redemption. When He died, He claimed God's Word and entrusted Himself to the Father. He lived by God's Word, and when you have lived by God's Word, you can die by God's Word.

This is the same assurance that we can experience—confidence in death, which can only come from the Word of God. When He came to the conclusion of His work, Jesus Christ was no longer in the hands of sinners; He was in the Father's hands. He died confidently because He was in the Father's hands, **Psa 31:8,15**.

Our Lord died confidently and willingly, **Joh 10:17-18**. No Old Testament sacrificial animal ever died willingly, but the Lord Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for us. Before He did so, He forgave His enemies, gave salvation to a repenting thief, cared for His mother, and finished the work God gave Him to perform. He had no regrets in His dying moments. We do not know how long God will give us to live, so every day, every minute, we have is a gift of His grace. As He did, we should approach the time of our death having shared salvation with others, having been faithful in taking care of those who depend on us, and surrendering to God willingly, having finished the work that He set before us.

The Lord Jesus Christ also died *victoriously*. The work was finished, the battle was won, and when He gave up His spirit, several miracles took place. The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, and God opened the way into the Holy of Holies,

**Mat 27:51.** The veil was almost a foot thick and stood forty feet high, and only God Himself could rip it from top to bottom. This proved that entrance into heaven was now available for all who would believe. In **Mat 27:52-53**, *“The tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.”* Our victorious Lord was leading the Old Testament saints from Paradise to Heaven, and some were permitted be resuscitated, come out of their tombs, and announce it in the city. Our Lord’s power over death was complete.

The Lord Jesus Christ proved Himself victorious over sin (the torn veil) and over death (the opened graves), and there was also an earthquake that shook the city. An earthquake had also taken place at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to Israel in **Exo 19:18**; however, the earthquake following our Lord’s death did not announce the coming of the Law, but rather its *fulfillment*. The Lord Jesus Christ died in the safest place in all the universe, in the hands of God, **Joh 10:27-28**, and so can we.

Our Lord’s seventh and final cry can be described by the word *contentment*, **Luk 23:46**. Upon His physical death, His human spirit went into the presence of the Father, His soul went to Paradise in Hades, and His body went into the grave to await the glorious moment, three days later, when the body would be rejoined by the soul and the spirit, and Jesus Christ would rise from the dead, literally and bodily.

The seventh cry was the beginning of the end, yet the end was a new beginning, for Jesus Christ would arise from the grave in resurrection body, walk among men for a short time, then ascend into the presence of the Father to sit at His right hand as our great High Priest and make intercession for us forever. Note also that there is a change in His words, from *“My God, My God”* in **Mat 27:46** to *“Father”* in **Luk 23:46**. He now addresses God the Father as *“Father”* because His work has been completed and He is no longer paying the penalty of sin. The Father has been propitiated by the spiritual death of His Son, fulfilling the analogy of the blood sacrifice of the Old Testament. He is now ready to dismiss His Spirit to His Father.

Jesus Christ lived and died, surrounded by the Word of God. He was the only true *“original thinker,”* **Joh 7:46**, *“Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.”* He continually quoted Scripture; the majority of His expressions can be traced to the Old Testament. In His death, He was not driven beyond the ability to think; He was strong even while dying, and now He utters His final words by recalling the book of Psalms, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He was perfectly happy as He declared, *“It is finished!”*

### **The Meaning of our Lord’s Words on the Cross**

1. Forgiveness for His enemies, **Luk 23:34**, *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”*
2. Salvation, **Luk 23:43**, *“Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”*
3. Compassion, **Joh 19:26-27**, *“Behold, your son!...Behold, your mother!”*
4. Anguish, **Mat 27:46**, *“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”*
5. Suffering, **Joh 19:28**, *“I am thirsty.”*
6. Victory, **Joh 19:30**, *“It is finished!”*
7. Contentment, **Luk 23:46**, *“Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.”*

After enduring six unfair trials and unmatched brutality, it is time for His vindication, justification, and divine support. After His physical death, His human spirit will go to the presence of the Father, **Luk 23:46**, His soul to Hades, **1Pe 3:18-22**, and His body to the grave, **Mat 12:40, 27:60**. There in the tomb, some three days later, the body would be rejoined by the soul and the spirit, and the Lord Jesus Christ would be resurrected.

In **1Pe 3:18-22**, we have the Champion, the only real winner in history, the only One who could win the victory, and whose victory is the greatest of all time. The fact that He became a winner for us on the Cross means that we have eternal life as those who believe in Him. The Lord Jesus Christ won the strategic victory on the Cross, and we have the privilege of winning the tactical victory by sharing in His strategic victory and advancing to spiritual maturity, **1Pe 3:18**, “*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust [the righteous One as a substitute for the unrighteous ones], in order that he might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.*” The word for died is *apothnesko*, which means to die by separation—a reference to our Lord’s spiritual death on the Cross (**2Co 5:21, 1Pe 2:24**). This broke the back of Satan in the angelic conflict.

The humanity of Christ remained impeccable on the Cross; He was the “*lamb without spot and without blemish,*” as He underwent the greatest possible temptations. People were gathered around the Cross to mock and sneer at Him. They were brutal and callous, and they ridiculed Him in every way possible, as every sin in human history (including theirs) was being imputed to Him by the omnipotence of God the Father.

There are two reasons why our Lord remained the “Righteous One.” He was sustained by the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit inside the predesigned plan of God, **Heb 9:14**, and He used the problem-solving devices, especially sharing the happiness of God, **Heb 12:2**. And both of these sustaining factors are now available to us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So look again at **1Pe 3:18**, “*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous One as a substitute for the unrighteous ones [all of us], in order that He might bring us to God.*” The Greek noun *adikos*, translated “unjust” or “unrighteous ones,” includes all our failures when under the control of the old sin nature. The phrase “*in order that*” introduces the *purpose* of the Cross, found in the verb *prosagage* (*pros* = face-to-face; *ago* = to bring), which means to bring us *face-to-face with God*. Sinful man is brought face-to-face to God with perfect righteousness by the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. If you have personally believed in Jesus Christ, you have been brought face-to-face with God, **Eph 2:6, Col 1:22**.

“*...Having been put to death in the flesh [which Satan desperately tried to prevent], but made alive in the Spirit.*” The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit had custodianship of our Lord’s human soul after His physical death, and under the custodianship of God the Holy Spirit, His soul was brought to Paradise and Tartarus, located under the earth in Hades. Our Lord’s human soul was in Hades for three days, and in Tartarus, He visited the fallen angels of **Gen 6**, who had sexual relations with the beautiful women of that time. These angels had been incarcerated and had not witnessed the Cross, the defeat of their leader Satan. They now knew their rebellion had failed.

**1Pe 3:19** continues, *“In which [the Holy Spirit] also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison [fallen angels]...”* The Greek verb for “went” is *poreuomai* in the passive voice, which means that the Lord Jesus Christ *received transportation*. The “spirits in prison” are the angels (*beni ha Elohim*, the sons of God) of **Gen 6:1ff**. They were judged and incarcerated in Tartarus when the Flood came on the earth, **Jud 1:6, 2Pe 2:4**.

**There are four compartments of Hades.**

1. Paradise is where the Old Testament believers resided after their physical death, before the resurrection of our Lord.
2. Torments is the place where all unbelievers currently reside, **Luk 16:23**.
3. Tartarus is the current prison of the fallen angels of **Gen 6**.
4. The Abyss contains demons who transgressed certain rules of the angelic conflict and the boundaries of the human race.

When He arrived in Paradise, the thief who died at Calvary met Him there, as did Lazarus and others such as Abraham, Moses, and David. We read in **Eph 4:8-10**, *“Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.’ (Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”*

Peter goes on in **1Pe 3:20**, *“Who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.”* The patience of God had waited 120 years, during which the world received intensive Gospel proclamation. God kept waiting under the principle that *grace always precedes judgment*. This verse does not refer to water baptism because those in the water were destroyed. The water that drowned the unbelieving world was also used to deliver the eight souls who were believers and also true humanity. Water was an instrument of destruction for unbelievers, but physical deliverance for believers. In **1Pe 3:21**, *“And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh [not water], but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”*

At the moment of our salvation, the baptism of the Spirit made us members of the Royal Family of God. Each member of Noah’s family in the ark is analogous to the believer who is union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Union with Christ delivers every Church-age believer from all divine judgment. Just as the eight were safe in the ark, so we are safe in union with Christ. Your conscience was delivered at the moment you believed in Jesus Christ as Savior, when God the Holy Spirit entered you into union with the person of Jesus Christ, making you Royal Family of God and a new spiritual species.

Our Lord’s next trip was from earth to the third heaven, **1Pe 3:22**, *“Who [Jesus Christ] is at the right hand of God [the Father], having ascended into heaven after angels and authorities and powers had been subordinated to Him.”* When Jesus Christ ascended, He was seated at the right hand of God the Father and received his third royal title, **Rev 19:16**, *“And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”* He is now higher than all angels *in His humanity*.

The basics of our Lord’s victorious proclamation to the fallen angels is recorded in **Heb 2:9-17**, *“But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor,*

*that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. [Humanity is lower than angels, but in a resurrection body we will be higher than angels.] For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies [Jesus Christ through the agency of the baptism of the Spirit] and those who are being sanctified [Royal Family], are all from one [idiom meaning “all of the same family”], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying [in **Psa 22:22**], ‘I will proclaim Your name to Your family [Royal Family]; in the middle of the congregation I will sing Your praise.’ And again, ‘I [personification of all Church-age believers] will put my trust in Him.’ And again, ‘Behold, I [victorious Christ] and the children [Royal Family] whom God has given to Me.’*

*“Since therefore the children share common blood and flesh [true humanity], He also himself, in the same manner [virgin birth], shared their humanity, in order that through death [substitutionary spiritual death] He might destroy [neutralize, render powerless] him [Satan] who has the power of death, that is, the devil. And might deliver those who, through fear of death, were subject to slavery all of their lives. For obviously, He [humanity of Christ] did not assume the nature of angels, but He did take on the seed of Abraham [new racial species of the Jew]. For this reason, He had to be made like His brethren [Royal Family] in every way, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*

**The Cross of Jesus Christ is the focal point of the plan of God and human history, the very center of the universe. At the Cross, salvation was accomplished, once for all, and the ultimate victory over sin, death, and the kingdom of darkness was won. The Cross stands for all time and eternity as the ultimate example of honor, integrity, selflessness, and the power of Bible doctrine. There are so many precious lessons we can learn about who God is and how to live our lives, from our Lord’s words and His death on the Cross.**

1. God can convert any evil situation into divine good, **Gen 50:20**.
2. Whenever someone tries to curse or destroy another believer, the Lord will turn the curse into a blessing when the believer operates in the faith-rest drill.
3. **When evil comes against you, the Lord can turn it into a blessing, providing that you operate in the faith-rest drill and let Him handle the situation. You will be rejoicing (not gloating) while they are being disciplined. If you hate another believer, you hate the Lord.**
4. The believer does not have to fight and defend himself; God will do that for the believer who operates in the faith-rest drill, **2Th 1:6**.
5. We are also told to stop being anxious and worried and let God handle any unjust and unfair situation, **Isa 35:4**.
6. We are commanded never to take revenge on anyone for any reason, **Rom 12:19**.
7. If you are being mistreated in any situation, do not lift up your hand against another person, **1Sa 24:12**.
8. If you have been robbed by another believer, do not take out your vengeance and frustration on him, but give it over to the Lord.
9. Never repay evil with evil and give someone what you think they deserve, **Pro 20:22**.
10. When someone has wronged you, let the Lord repay him according to his deeds, **2Ti 4:14**.

**Phi 2:5** *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.*

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