

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary.

Tree of Life 07/12/98

The Doctrine of The Cross.

Tree of Life for 07-12-98

It is the focal point throughout every book in the Bible... it is the culmination of the angelic conflict... it is the cross of Jesus Christ. The doctrines concerning the cross mean nothing to those who are pursuing foolishness but to those who are saved and positive toward God's truth the cross is the very power of God, 1Co 1:18. The cross, to many uninformed Christians, is nothing more than an excuse to be lazy and claim charity under the name of Jesus. To such Christians the glory of the cross eludes them. God has nothing more marvelous to reveal to man than the cross and it goes way beyond salvation. His marvelous plan goes way beyond the fact that we are forgiven of all our sins but that we have a new life in Christ. Calvary marked the greatest hour in the entire meritorious history of deity! At the cross we have the meritorious attributes of God coming to their maximum expression.

At the cross God found a way to justify the ungodly and still remain just, Rom 3:26. And, the cross not only crucified Christ to the world but it crucified the world to us, we have a new life in Christ, Gal 6:14. At the cross we have God declaring the wicked perfectly righteous without a shadow of blame falling on His perfect character. Only when the Christian has the divine focus on what the cross is all about will he then see the Bible in its true light with all its deepest doctrines and treasures. So, the central message of the word of God deals with sin-stricken humanity and the cross of Jesus

Christ. God demonstrated his perfect righteousness (+R) in displaying publicly His Son on the cross as a propitiation on behalf of all, Rom 32:25-26.

Before we look into the cross throughout the Scriptures let us first note what the crucifixion consisted of. Crucifixion was considered the worse way anyone could be executed! It was the most wretched of deaths and even suicide was preferable to being put on the cross. A terror spread wide across the Roman Empire beginning in the 4th century due to the horrors of crucifixion. No other time in history would have allowed our Lord's death such humiliation and agony. On the cross there exists only two things, pain and eternity. Death on the cross usually occurred as a result of a ruptured heart (Joh 19:34) or asphyxiation all depending on how the victim was fastened to the cross. The arms could be tied over the patibulum (the horizontal part of the cross) or nailed through the wrists and feet, the nailed feet being propped up on a piece of wood. To add further humiliation to the victim's process, he was stripped completely naked as was our Lord. Our Lord did not have a loin cloth on while hanging on the cross as art depicts. And when our Lord carried the cross through the streets He did not carry the whole cross since that would be quite impossible seeing that it weighed close to 400 pounds! What He did carry was the patibulum (crossbeam) weighing from 150 to 175 pounds. This was cast upon the raw flesh of His shoulders and back. The raw flesh due to the scourging He received, i.e., the 39 lashes. These lashes were administered with what is known as a flagellum, a whip with a stubby wooden handle from which fall many stripes of leather. Attached to each strip of leather were bits of sharp bone, pieces of chain and small lead weights. These tools would dig as far into the flesh as the muscle. Many of the victims of scourgings slipped into a state of shock, but not our Lord, He didn't even scream. So by the time our Lord had the crossbeam thrown onto His back He had no flesh remaining there.

Once He arrived at Golgotha He was slammed down on his back onto the crossbeam, His wrists were secured with nails which were square (not pointy). These nails passed through

his wrist close to the median nerve thereby severely damaging that nerve causing the victim to sense a burning pain from His hand to His shoulder growing worse with each passing moment. The crossbeam would then be dropped into its place in the cross itself with a force that would dislocate the shoulders increasing the torture even more. Then the feet were nailed and the cross was raised and secured into a hole in the ground. Yet during all this physical suffering our Lord did not once open His mouth, it wasn't until He contacted sin that He screamed. Now, the crucifixion allowed our Lord to fulfill such prophecies as...

- * The serpent being lifted up on a pole, Num 21:9.
- * The prophecy that people would watch Him as He was suffering publicly, Psa 22:7-8
- * His hands and feet would be pierced, Psa 22:16.
- * Not one of his bones would be broken, Psa 34:29.
- * They would offer Him gall and vinegar to relieve His pain, Psa 69:21
- * The prophecy that He would be crucified, Isa 53:12.
- * The piercing of His side, Zec 12:10.

Let's take a look at the cross as it appears throughout the Scriptures. The first prophecy of the cross appears in Gen 3:14-15, "And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman [Mary] and between your seed and her seed [prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ] He shall bruise you [Satan] on the head [due to the cross] and you shall bruise Him on the heel [i.e., His feet which while walking the earth Satan did all he could to stop Him]." So, the immediate result of the woman and Adam's rebellion was the fall of mankind but the final outcome would be a blessing. Even at this point, in the garden, the cross was already a fact in the mind of God, even from eternity past though it had not yet appeared in time. Acts 2:23 tells us that Jesus Christ was delivered up according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. Eph 1:4 states that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8, the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Peter

also tells us that the cross was foreknown in the mind of God before He even created the world, 1Pe 1:18-20. God had to respect Adam's original disobedience. Without freedom of choice man would not be able to satisfy the desires of God's heart. It must be man's free choice to love God and hate the world's ways of doing things and this can only happen through learning how God thinks. We must learn to hate SELF (our old sin nature) which is Satan's agent within. If we do not, we only serve to offer Satan a handle within by which to lead us around. Man must learn to love the only One who has the right to govern all things. The second Scripture which we noted in pointing to the cross was Gen 4:1-5. Gen 4 gives us the foreshadowing of the cross in Abel's lamb offering. Heb 11:4 tells exactly why Cain's offering was unacceptable to God, by means of doctrine Abel offered His lamb. Cain having negative volition offered not what was of the blood (pointing to the cross) but what was of the ground which pointed to man's work. God provided a lamb for Cain to sacrifice but Cain rejected what God had to say in having a lamb to represent the coming Messiah. So, was it the nature of the offerings which determined God's approval? It could be since a right thing must be done in a right way. God is not interested in what you do, all you do, etc., but the nature of your standing in accuracy in His truth. Was the divine reaction motivated by the difference between the two men, one being proud and the other humble? Yes, this also played a role as noted in Heb 11:4. It is not what we do in SELF that makes us acceptable to God. Where there is true faith in God's lamb there is the grounds for acceptance and the source for transformation. If man's state is chaotic it is not due to God's teaching but due to man's rejection of it. Eph 1:6 tells us that we are accepted by God in "the beloved" (Jesus Christ), that is a one second deal, but our transformation is a gradual process. Once self is set up as god, as was the case with Cain, self becomes the almighty force ruling the heart, in such, evil deeds become the order of the day, e.g. Cain's murder of his brother. This is why self needs to be recognized as having been crucified, bringing into view the cross. Adam and the woman in the garden did not deny themselves nor did Cain. Such an attitude is promoted by Satan. Because of the original disobedience the Lamb of God who takes away the

sins of the world was brought into light. Man preferred to trust in his own merits so God offered His Son, a blood covenant poured out for all for forgiveness of sins, Mat 26:28. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins, Heb 9:22. And that is why Cain's offering was not acceptable to God. The third Scripture which points to the cross is Gen 6:5. The flood is a type of the cross. Noah preached of the coming of the flood for 120 years! This represents the fact that God is patient for all to come to repentance. And then the hour of judgment struck and God's word came to pass as it always does, Gen 7:17-21. The principle in this Scripture is, just like the entire world could have been saved by being in the ark, the entire world can be saved by being in Christ. The ark spoke of the person of Christ. Two great factors typified by the flood are: 1) He who was made sin on our behalf destroyed the power of sin by taking it down into death. 2) One died for all therefore all died, 2Co 5:14; Col 3:3. Our self life has been crucified, Rom 6:6. The Greek word for ark in 1Pe 3:20 is kibotow which means a treasure chest or a wooden ship which was constructed of gopher wood used because of its light weight and tough exterior. This wood represented the humanity of Christ. The analogy here is, Jesus Christ is the ark and the treasure chest, Col 2:3. The construction of the ark represents the work of Christ. And there is only one set of plans found in Gen 7 and 8 pointing to the fact that there is only one plan of God and one means of true stability. The ark had one door representing the only one way to adjust to the justice of God, through Jesus Christ, Joh 10:9. The ark had only one window which points to the one objective after salvation, to reach spiritual maturity by way of the one viewpoint, the divine perspective, Bible doctrine. There were three floors to the ark representing the concept of progress, i.e., the three stages of spiritual growth, spiritual self esteem, spiritual autonomy, and spiritual maturity. There is only one place of security in time of disaster and the ark represents eternal security through union with Christ. Each member of Noah's family in the ark represent each believer in union with the person of Christ. Those outside the ark represent unbelievers. Those in the ark were delivered from catastrophe as believers are delivered from the lake of fire. To be filled with the doctrine of the cross keeps the believer away from the

evil of doing human good and fighting evil. The fourth Scripture we noted as pointing to the cross is Gen 22 in the account of Mount Moriah. In the subject of typology Mount Moriah points to Calvary as Abraham was called to sacrifice his only son. Mount Moriah was later to be called Mount Zion and is where Solomon built his fantastic temple, 2Ch 3:1. It is also the same mountain which came to be known as the place of skulls, Golgotha, Luk 23:33! Now, Abraham was called to have faith in spite of what sight dictated. He was called to sacrifice a burnt offering representing propitiation. The sacrifice on the mountain was to take place between the father and the son only. Just as the substitutionary spiritual death took place in private between the Father and the Son. As Abraham and his son Isaac climb the mountain together Isaac carried the wood representing the humanity of Christ and Abraham carried the knife and the fire, representing the tools needed to execute the judgment of an innocent sacrifice. God alone will supply that which will satisfy Himself. Man can do nothing to meet the divine requirements of God. Now, Moriah represented the cross but not the total fulfillment of it since Abraham did not have to kill his son. The cross doesn't reach its consummation until the Father turns His back on the Son as He bears our sins and dies on our behalf. Scripture number five, Exo 12:3-9, the lamb without blemish. This is the passover passage. The last passover, Jesus Christ, was not only to free Israel from the tyranny of Egypt but free the whole of mankind from the bondage of sin. The central figure in the passover was a lamb without blemish. The blood from the lamb in this passage was sprinkled on the side of the door and over the door as an open proclamation of one's faith in Christ and obedience to Him thereby delivering them from death. But notice the blood was not to be placed on the threshold of the door cautioning us to beware of trampling under foot, the blood of the covenant, Heb 10:29. Such would be the case in saying you are a Christian but then walking over Jesus Christ and not elevating Him in your life. The pascal lamb was killed not just to be looked upon but fed upon, just as we are to be fed upon our sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ. Then we have another Scripture, Exo 14:5-14,21-30, the Red Sea incident which is a type of the cross as well. How does this story reflect the cross? The song of Moses and the

children of Israel contrasted in this verse with the book of Revelation (5:9,12;15:2-4) with the song of the Lamb, the new song. This is the song of the redeemed, which in both cases points to the cross. They came out of their bondage by trusting in the sacrifice of the lamb. Israel was liberated, a type of mankind being redeemed. The Pharaoh and his army was judged, a type of the prince of this world, Satan's doom. The cross of Christ is a place where members of the human race are divided into believers and unbelievers, winner believers and loser believers. The cross of Christ is the eternal basis for our happiness. Stay tuned for more on the cross throughout the Scriptures.

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