

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary.

Tree of Life 07/19/98

The Doctrine of the Cross Part 2.

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Tree of Life for 07-26-98

The Lord Jesus Christ became a man not just to pay for our sins but also to arise from the dead. That we might be identified with Him and be free from guilt and shame to share the riches of His grace and the victories of His ascension as one seated with Him in heavenly places. What is important today in the church of Christ is as it was in the early church, understanding the Cross. Our job as Christians is not to clean up the world or produce works of the flesh but to understand the main theme throughout the Bible...the cross. Because of the cross no believer in Christ will ever be forsaken. There is only one person who trusted in God who was forsaken and that was Jesus Christ as our substitutionary sacrifice.

Satan knew the Old Testament prophecies well and the last thing he wanted was for Jesus Christ to go to the cross. Therefore the pressure Satan instituted on our Lord Jesus Christ during His lifetime and especially on the cross was beyond human comprehension! In fact, never was Satan so determined to destroy a soul as he was with the Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ remained impeccable through it all and so annulled the rights of Satan in keeping mankind in bondage. If man remains in bondage to Satan's ways thereafter, it's because he chooses to do so. Each believer should make a commitment to Jesus Christ now before the eternal state when it's too late. Every knee will bow before

Jesus Christ, Phi 2:10. Jesus Christ is God, John 8:58; John 1:3; Matthew 28:18; Jer 33:15; Phi 3:20-21; Colossians 2:2-3.

He is the only member of the Trinity who became human for the purpose of the cross and payment for all sin. By doing so, His deity has come under great attack by the religious groups of the world today. But God was manifest in the flesh, 1Timothy 3:16 and in Him all the fullness of deity dwells, Colossians 2:9. Jesus Christ is much more than a prophet, He sent the prophets, Matthew 23:34. So, understanding the cross is not only the center of life on earth but also determines your position throughout all eternity.

When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples, He opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures and what was written of Him in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets which must be fulfilled, Luke 24:44-45. The cross is not only the fountainhead of forgiveness and peace and reconciliation and eternal life but also of judgment and eternal loss. To reject Jesus Christ as one's substitute means you are depending on your own righteousness to stand before God and God will never ever accept anything of human merit! All human good was rejected on the cross, Titus 3:5. It is through the Son we are offered eternal life and made righteous before God and He (Jesus Christ) is waiting to offer all His pardon but He cannot go beyond the cross. He cannot force man's free will to choose to believe in Him as Savior.

Ask yourself, what other religion offers an answer or solution to sin. All other religions point to man keeping himself good and offering absolution and feelings of remorse for wrong doings. How can we think that we actually have something to offer the all powerful and all knowing God? It is He who has something to offer and that is forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the member of the Trinity who became flesh to die as our substitute, Jesus Christ, called the uniquely born Son of God, John 3:16. God's love is nowhere more greatly revealed than on the cross. But the truth of the cross must be sought out. Those who truly desire to know the truth will find it, Jer 29:13. Unfortunately for the religious people things have to be obvious. A king has to appear glamorous for example. That is how the Jews missed out on who Jesus Christ

was. Note, Israel has had no king since Jesus Christ whom they rejected. He was rejected by the very people He came to die for and this rejection continues today. The gospel was not believed and He became the object of mental attitude sins, verbal sins, and physical abuse, Isaiah 53:1-3.

Many misinterpret out Lord's sufferings as an appeasement to the wrath of the Father but this is totally wrong. Jesus Christ did not appease the wrath of an angry God, He satisfied the perfect justice of a holy and loving God. For God so loved the world...John 3:16. In Romans 1:18 Paul informs us that Jesus Christ did not appease but reveal the wrath of God against sin not against the Son. And the veil which drapes over the understanding of man's mind can only be removed in regard to such truths when one turns to Jesus Christ as more than a great prophet but as He who was and will always be God Hebrews 13:8. To understand the Bible, the very word and thinking of God Himself, one must grasp a full understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ. The supreme purpose in the plan of God in declaring why Jesus Christ came is found in John 1:29, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*"

Jesus Christ came to die on the cross and redeem mankind, everything else in His life was secondary such as His being a King, the Son of God, etc. One of the greatest things announced about our Lord was done so by His forerunner John the Baptist, the greatest O.T. prophet, John 1:29. His announcement spoke of one thing, sacrifice. And this the Jewish people understood perfectly. The cross hence appeared in the N.T. for the first time. There had been a powerful awakening among the Jews through John the Baptist's preaching on the horrors of sin and the warnings of judgment. It was a part of God's plan to point out sin in the lives of people so that they would recognize their need for the lamb of God who would take away their sins. As John the Baptist was preaching on sin and condemnation and guilt he was setting the people up for the answer; the solution... the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Their repentance had to be not toward their sin but toward the person of Jesus Christ which would lead to

repentance from sin as well. Now, in noting John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord's water baptism is brought up as an issue and as a vote for water baptism being the means of salvation. Matthew 3:13-16 gives us an account of our Lord's water baptism. The reason why our Lord succumbed to this ritual was to announce the coming of the cross. His doing so was a teaching aid, a representation. He entered into water baptism because He wanted to declare his oneness and love with sinful man and reveal in the waters of the Jordan what would later take the form of an absolute identification with the sins of the world on the cross, i.e., His death. When our Lord's ministry opened up He did not reveal that he was the Son of God, a King, a Prophet, and so on but His opening declaration pointed to the cross. Our Lord's great forerunner could not have announced the appearing of the world's only hope in any other terms except "Behold the Lamb of God". Any other title would have misled the multitude from the real meaning of what was taking place, which was the sacrifice had come. But just as Satan tried to blind His audience then he continues to do so now. The cross is not a popular message in the church today because the god of this world has deceived those in the world, John 8:44. And the church in deception turns itself to human works and religion. Phi 3:18 tells us if we do not understand the cross we become enemies of the cross. So the problem exists today as in John the Baptist's day of people looking to water baptism for salvation. 1Corinthians 1:14-18 tells us the power of God is not in water baptism but in the cross. Water baptism was a teaching aid used to point to the cross. But now that we have the reality of the teaching aids why continue in them? Why not appropriate the truth of the cross which the aids pointed to?

Romans 5:20 gives us the principle of why the Law came in, i.e., to increase man's recognition of his inability to keep the Law and hence to focus on his sin. Only then can Jesus Christ abound all the more as the solution. If man thinks he does not need a solution to sin of what value is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away sin?! Satan loves to blind people to the truth of the cross since that is where he was defeated once and for all, Colossians 1:20; 2:14. So, the cross was our Savior's

supreme objective. Men are born to live but our Lord Jesus Christ was born to die on our behalf. He is our only hope for truly there is no hope in mankind. In light of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, the first and supreme matter in the life of an individual or a nation is their relationship with God. It was the purpose of the Jewish Temple just as it is the purpose of our human temples (bodies) today... our relationship with God. That is the key to everything! The trouble with the Jews in the early church and the trouble with believers today is the misappropriation of what God has given. They abused the Temple (John 2:18-21) just as we abuse the purpose of our temples. In Romans 11:13-23, the apostle Paul warns the church of the very same thing. The Jews and now the Church reject the knowledge of the cross. The Temple needed to be cleansed from the misappropriation of the things that God had given. These things were being used for man's own unworthy and selfish ends. The cleansing must come by pointing out the cross.

God has given each of us time, talent, and treasure with which to worship and serve Him. The problem is we misuse it greatly in the church today. Very few use what God gives them to bring glory to Him. Most believers refuse to pick up their own cross in denying self for the sake of others and Christ.

Inconvenience is not in their vocabulary. So just as the Temple needed to be cleansed back then the temple of the body of each believer needs to be cleansed today. The Jews turned their Temple worship into something that was formal and external only. The formalization and externalization of religion is the greatest of all curses. There is a great danger in taking the things which God has appointed and using them for one's own ends or to serve one's own ambitions. There is no spiritual life in such a case. If you are going to pick up your cross and follow Christ you are going to have to learn to get rid of all the nonsense in your temple, all the rituals and empty formalization. Such nonsense only serves to stand in the way of your relationship with God and spiritual growth. God is not impressed by man's external show of deeds. The temple is designed for our Lord's commands and personhood not for our own independent goals and endeavors. When our goals line up with The Father's will is when we understand the cross and appropriate it's power. Truth rids the temple of all

**the lies and gimmicks that makes men great in their own eyes.
Our greatness lies in our understanding of the cross.**

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