

Solus Christus — Solo Scriptura — Sola Fide — Sola Gratia



## Word to the Wise

LVIN AND CAROL RATZLAFF were determined to get their picture in the paper. This paper. So they plotted a plan. Or planned a plot. First, they would develop a genuine, lifelong interest in spiritual matters. Then, at the cost of much personal turmoil and trauma, they would learn to love the gospel first and foremost. They would next become ardent supporters of **Good News Unlimited**.

When Dr. Ford was away in Australia, they would invite the one with the camera to come hold gospel meetings in Hendersonville, North Carolina, (March 11-12, 1988). They would carry him back and forth to the airport, entertain him in their home for three days (with own room and shower and two sets of towels), shuttle him to meeting hall an hour away, take him to the art museum at Bob Jones University, the Revolutionary War battleground at Cowpens, feed him eight meals, sit through five of his sermons— then take him to Lake Lure and innocently pose beneath Chimney Rock.

Then they would sit back, and wait. Here is their dream come true.

Just kidding. Cajoling shy Alvin and Carol to pose for a picture was agony. They avoid the spotlight.

There are times, though, when we do appreciate a little attention. The plane taking me from Sacramento, California, to Greenville/Spartanburg, South Carolina, took off three times, and landed three times going, and the same coming back. Twelve times I silently clamored for God's special protective attention.

But on the last great Judgment

Day, I plan to be quiet as a mouse. A tiny, squeakless, mouse. I will much prefer God to take up someone else's case—anyone's—before mine.

Except, there is no need to fear. Jesus is the center of attention on that great Day. At God's right hand since his ascension, Jesus long ago caught the Father's approving eye. And everyone else's—for Jesus *is* the issue at the Judgment. To believe in him will mean *justification*—receiving the verdict of acquittal of the last day Judgment (Gal 3:24).

Paul brought that future justification right down to his own times, nineteen centuries ago: "So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). We can have that future verdict, too—NOW! "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement . . . so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:25,26).

That Day will come. Better plot your plan now. Or plan your plot. The terrifying Judgment spotlight need not rest on you. Jesus will be your divine cynosure. That's better than having your picture in the paper. Even this paper.



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by Roy Gee



The Seven Sayings rom the

by Desmond Ford

[In Part 1, Jesus' first three sayings from the cross were examined. In this concluding selection from Dr. Desmond Ford's A Kaleidoscope of Diamonds: The Jeweled Glories of the Cross Revealed, Volume Two, the last four sayings are discussed.-Ed.]

HE SEVEN SAYINGS from the cross (RSV):

- "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'' (Lk 23:34).
- "Truly, I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise'' (Lk 23:43).
- "Woman, behold your son! . . . Behold your mother!" (Jn 19:26,27).
- "'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).
- "I thirst" (Jn 19:28)
- "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23:46).

4. THE WORD OF ANGUISH TO GOD "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'' (Mt 27:46).

To understand this mysterious cry of dereliction, we must include the strange bewilderment of Christ in Gethsemane. It is all related to these words from the cross. Where Mark uses the words "greatly distressed and troubled" (Mk 14:33), the Greek term translated "troubled" (ademonein) describes a confused, distracted state which sometimes results from physical

derangement. According to Swete it means "the distress which follows a great shock." Christ was no coward, but here he is in agony as he faces death.

#### The One Great Fact

One fact and one fact only can explain the two events: the shocked, distressed spirit and bleeding brow in the garden, and the anguished cry from Golgotha. That fact is that Jesus was "made sin for us," even "a curse" (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13). God hid his face from Christ who represented the sin of all the ages. When Christ foretold his fate, he likened it to the time when Moses lifted up the molten serpent on a banner staff (Jn 3:14). He was telling Nicodemus that he was to be treated as the devil, as sin incarnate.

Is not the worst part of sin's punishment the awareness of being separated from God? Could Christ truly have taken our place without experiencing such separation from his Father? Peter Green suggests that would "have been as if He had paid the farthings, pence, and shillings of some vast debt but left the pounds for us to pay."1

Spurgeon says that the records of

Only those who live through the dark see the glories of the dawn.



DESMOND FORD

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time and eternity do not contain a sentence more full of anguish than this fourth word from the cross. Christ had endured silently all the torment of his body, but when his Father forsook him, his great heart broke. It is not, "Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?" These were terrible griefs, but this is the sharpest and cut him to the quick. "The sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings."

#### Calvary Banishes the Horror of Being Forsaken

There are times when some of us face a horror which makes the brain reel and the heart faint, "the horror of a universe without God, a universe which is one hideous, tumbling, crashing mass of confusion with no reason to guide and no love to sustain it." At such times a glance at Calvary can steady us and perhaps even restore us. He was forsaken that we might never be. He prayed that prayer, that we might never need to. We need not suffer for our sin, for Christ has suffered in our place. Therefore, however overwhelming our grief and bewilderment, let us like Christ hold on, crying, "My God, my God . . ." Hold on to the arm which only appears to be thrusting us away.

It is good to remember that those who know how to pray continuously in life find it much easier to do so in death.

Recall the Syrian Phoenician woman to whom Christ momentarily pretended to be unsympathetic (Mk 7:24-30). Let her faith be yours also. Hold on. Nightmares never last. Tunnels have their exits. Only those who live through the dark see the glories of the dawn.

#### Hating Sin

Should we not hate the sin that brought such agony to him who loved us so? Shall we sin lightly because there is forgiveness with The dearest idol I have known Whate'er that idol be, Lord, I will tear it from its throne, And worship only Thee. Observe that this central word of the cross epitomizes the heart of the Atonement—Christ in our stead being treated as sin itself! Our Redeemer in his divine nature suffers infinitely for us.

5. THE WORD OF SUFFERING TO THE SPECTATORS ''I thirst'' (Jn 19:28).

As Samson thirsted after his tremendous battle wherein he slew hundreds (Judges 15:18), so now our Lord thirsts after his struggle has deteriorated his physical condition. Christianity is not asceticism. The body is one of God's gifts and is to be treated with respect. For the body's good we are to use, but not abuse, the things of this world. On the cross, Jesus refused the opiate drink offered him, but later accepted the sour ration wine.

This is the only word of physical pain uttered by Christ on the cross. How it rebukes us for our extreme sensitivity to bodily discomfort! If the innocent One suffered, is it strange that we sinners should often be physically chastised? We can draw comfort in our sufferings from remembering that Jesus sympathizes with us, for he too entered into our frailties and woes. He knows our desires, and in his good time he will grant us what is right. All physical joys are his invention, not the devil's.

The words, "I thirst," signify his spiritual thirst also. Like many of the expressions voiced during this day of all days, it has a double meaning. He thirsts for the love of his redeemed and for fellowship with them. Behold the infinite condescension of our Christ. He made the mighty oceans, streams, and fountains, yet for us he consents to be thirsty.

The record says that "immediately one of them ran" to alleviate his thirst. How slow we have been, and how deaf!

Neither life nor death has terrors for the one trusting in the God who is love.

## 6. THE WORD OF VICTORY TO HIS PEOPLE: FINISHED!

"It is finished!" (Jn 19:30).

Like the preceding cry, this is but one word in the original (*tetelesthei*), but that one word contains an ocean of significance. "It consolidated heaven, shook hell, comforted earth, delighted the Father, glorified the Son, brought down the Spirit, and confirmed the everlasting covenant."

It is the worker's cry of achievement and the sufferer's cry of relief. Note how it matches his first words in the temple: "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" Throughout his ministry he was ever aware of the baptism with which he must be baptized—a baptism of blood. Now it is successfully finished.

It is a word from the first creation when God finished his work on the sixth day before entering into rest. So it echoes forth now on the six day before the Son rests from hi labors of re-creation. The term befits a great work, a difficult work, and a perfect work. Twice more he will utter the words, once when his work of intercession in heaven ceases, and once when the new heaven and the new earth stand forth complete (Rev 16:17;21:6).

Believer, rejoice! Your redemption is finished. All that was necessary to break down the barriers between you and God has been done.

#### 7. THE WORD OF CONTENTMENT TO HIS FATHER

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

This was the child's goodnight prayer Jesus had been taught by

Mary. Again we see Christ's respect for Scripture, for he is quoting Psalm 31:5. Here is Christ's view of death. He implies that he is giving his life away in the certain hope of finding it again. No wonder Polycarp, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Luther, Melanchthon, and many others made these their last words also. It is good to remember that those who know how to pray continuously in life find it much easier to do so in death.

The record says that he cried with a loud voice. This is uncommon for a dying person in such a weakened state. Similarly, we read that "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" [expired]. "Who is He who thus easily falls asleep n He wills?" asked Bernard of wrvaux. Here we have no helpless broken victim whose life ebbs away. What we have is the infinitely strong One choosing to die, purposefully depositing his life in heaven's charge. The word for "commit" was used for the placing of something valuable in the charge of a friend. The word translated "bowed" is one used for resting one's head on a pillow for sleep. The cross becomes God's pillow.

#### The Science of Living and Dying

We have here the science of living and dying. All is to be done by faith in the infinite God. Neither life nor death has terrors for the one trusting in the God who is . There can be *no final failure* for the Christian. Neither does he ever say goodbye for the last time to any who also believe.

As Christ bows his head, he seems removed from the title above it. At death we must all leave our titles and our "goods." Is it not, therefore, best to deposit much of them with God beforehand?

This last word from Christ invites us to follow his example. Whenever anything distresses or alarms us, it is our privilege to commit it to God in prayer, practicing the continual realization of his presence and sufficiency, and resting in him. Why should we not be confident? Has not Christ defeated all our foes? Does he not now live to intercede for us? If Christ be for us, who can be against us?

#### Summary of the Seven

In simple, grateful terms we could say that all the sayings of Christ on the cross, as in his whole ministry, amount to one simple thing—God loved sinners enough to die for them. Are you a sinner? He died for you.

#### **A Memory Device**

Dr. J.J. Given has suggested a mnemonic for the seven words as follows: prayer, promise, provision, position, pain, perfection, presentation. Think of them as peas in a pod of our Lord's last will and testament.

#### THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

Now let us look at Christ's offices as reflected in his sermon headings:

- 1. Priest—"Father forgive them."
- 2. King—"Verily I say . . . thou shalt be with me in Paradise."
- Human—"Woman, behold thy son."
- Substitute—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
- 5. Sufferer—"I thirst."
- 6. Worker-"It is finished."
- Faith's Exemplar—"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

At death we must all leave our titles and our "goods." Is it not, therefore, best to deposit much of them with God beforehand?

#### A GOSPEL CREED

We also find our creed in this sermon from the cross. It does not have twenty-six or thirty-nine articles, but only seven.

- 1. The forgiveness of sins.
- 2. The eternal reward for all who hang their helpless souls on Christ, trusting only in his personal merits.
- The church (symbolized by Mary) appointed to care for believing children and to be

cared for by them.

- 4. The death of their Representative and Substitute alone guarantees that believers will never be forsaken. That death honors God's law more than the obedience of the whole human race could ever have done. The Son of God fulfills the precepts and the penalty of the eternal code.
- 5. The Scriptures are trustworthy and must be fulfilled.
- 6. The atonement is complete, and the justification of the race has been secured.
- 7. The dying do but sleep in God, and their resurrection is certain.

#### **CHRISTIAN DUTIES**

More important than creed is behavior, though the latter usually issues from the former. The sayings of Christ teach us that our primary Christian duties are those of:

- 1. Forgiveness.
- 2. Faith and penitence.
- 3. The hallowing of family and church relationships.
- 4. Holding on to God though apparently rejected.
- 5. Trust in Scripture.
- 6. Perfect obedience.
- 7. Resignation and contentment.

In essence, the duties of a Christian as expressed in the sayings of Christ from the cross amount to the simple precept, "Trust and obey."

The brilliant light streaming from the altar of Calvary is summed up in Christ's sayings, and that light is sufficient to guide the steps of any sinner, however weak and guilty, to the kingdom of God.

#### NOTES

1. Peter Green, Studies in the Cross, (London, 1917), p.101. The names for the seven last words are from Arthur Pink.

[This two-part series on the seven sayings from the cross was adapted from Desmond Ford's A Kaleidoscope of Diamonds: The Jeweled Glories of the Cross Revealed, Volume Two, pp.79-95. Available for \$8.95 (plus \$1.50 postage/handling) from Desmond Ford Publications, 7955 Bullard Drive, Newcastle, CA 95658.] **F**REDERICK WILLIAM the first, king of Prussia, collected giants. Not little people. Peter the Great of Russia collected little people. No, the 'soldier-king' collected giants.

By 1730 Frederick had 2,400 giants at his palace in Potsdam, the largest collection of tall soldiers in history. All of the giants were in the grenadier guards, the king's own bodyguard.

There was nothing the king enjoyed more than to take a sergeant's stout stick, and march up and down inspecting his tall men. Voltaire, the French writer, saw the guards and wrote that those on the front row were all over seven feet tall. The king's agents traveled all over Europe and Asia looking for giant guards.

One of the king's agents (a sergeant in civilian clothes) entered the small town of Julich, in what is now East Germany. As he ate some bread and cheese at the inn, he began to speak about the strong, powerful, *tall* men he had known.

Into the cold, dark tomb he went. But though the lid was tightly locked by the devil, after three days Jesus stood up. How could a box hold the Lifegiver?

"Ah," said the innkeeper. "You have not seen a giant until you have seen our Zimmerman." "Zimmerman?" asked the

sergeant. "Who's Zimmerman?" "Only the biggest and strongest

man in these parts," said the innkeeper. "He is the town carpenter."

On the street outside the inn, the sergeant asked the first person he met where he might find the carpenter's shop. As he entered, a tiny bell rang above the door. A curtain that hung between the shop and the back workshop was pushed aside, and ducking through the doorway came a giant of a man!

"Good day, sir. I'm Zimmerman, the carpenter. Can I help you?"

You can indeed, thought the



sergeant. You are perfect for the king's collection. "I need a box," he said aloud. "A strong, secure box for transporting valuables. The box must have a lid— with hinges—that can be locked."

"What size box?" asked Zimmerman.

The sergeant eyed the giant up and down. Zimmerman must be at least six feet six inches. Not tall enough for the front row of the guards, but certainly perfect for the third. "It must be at least six feet six inches long," he ordered. "About three feet wide, but definitely not shorter than six feet six."

"It will be ready in three days," answered Zimmerman politely.

Three days later the king's agent returned. He had several strong men with him, but he left them outside the carpenter's shop. The little bell rang as he pushed open the door, and the curtain parted to reveal the giant Zimmerman. "Please come through here, sir," the carpenter said. "The box is in the workshop, on sawhorses."

The box was beautifully made. It was resting on two sawhorses, with the lid open. It looked strong and sturdy. "Oh, dear," said the sergeant. "You've done a wonderful job, but I can't take it. It's too short. I said at least six feet six inches."

"But it is six feet six inches," said Zimmerman. "I measured it several times."

"No, you must be mistaken. It is too short."

"Look," said the carpenter. "I'm

six feet six inches." With the quiet agility of a cat he jumped up into the box. "You can see that when I lie down I fit in the box comfortably. I'm six feet six. The box *must* be the right size."

"It is!" shouted the sergeant, and shut the lid and padlocked it. He called for his strong men to hurry into the shop and Zimmerman was hurried away to the palace.

Sadly, the sergeant had neglected to order ventilation holes bored in the box. By the time Zimmerman arrived at the palace, the box had become a coffin. The giant had suffocated and died.

It's a sad thought, but each one of us is destined to end up in a box. Though that may seem very remote to a young person, it is nc remote to those of us who are older. And a terrible waste—to grow, to learn, to work, to understand—and then to end up in a box.

But here's some good news. There was a spiritual Giant in heaven named Jesus who came down to earth. He lived the kind of life that could only be rewarded with everlasting, joyous life. Yet, for us, he chose to go into the grave. Into the cold, dark tomb he went. But though the lid was tightly locked by the devil, after three days Jesus stood up. How could a box hold the Lifegiver?

And because Jesus stood up, we too shall stand up out of the grave. Because Jesus took our place in death, we shall share his resurretion life. Though we die, we shall live again and be part of the victorious army—tall grenadiers—of that spiritual Giant, King Jesus.



**ROY GEE** 

Christ Is Risen!

He's Alive! By Colin T. Greenlaw

[Colin is a retired M.D., living in Springfield, OR, certified in Preventive Medicine and Public Health. Many know him as the compiler of the index (Volume 3) to Dr. Desmond Ford's commentary on the Book of Revelation, **Crisis!** Dr. Greenlaw is a grandfather and great grandfather. This article is a condensation of Dr. Greenlaw's more thorough treatise. The full study, with complete references, is available on request to: Dr. Colin Greenlaw, 39970 Meadowglen Drive, Springfield, OR, 97478, USA-Ed.]

WO DISTURBING events were destined to threaten an already tenuous calm and shaky peace in Judea. Why 'destined'? Because both disturbing events were fulfillments of prior prophetic disclosures written in Scripture. The first, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord''' (Is 40:3). The second, the arrival of God's singular Suffering Servant.

#### **Two Prophetic Events**

The first prophetic event was fulfilled in the life of John the Baptist, who went into the desert and preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 3:2). The second prophetic fulfillment lay in the arrival of Jesus, the "Holy One of God," "the Rock," "the Savior," who, immediately following the incarceration of John, began to preach, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:15). In these words Jesus picked up John's message, and thereby prolonged John's ministry and introduced his own.

In a tumultuous national milieu of contempt for Roman vassals, competing religious sects, strict observance of the Torah (with its hundreds of regulations), conspiracies out of the Sanhedrin and temple hierarchies, God began to work. Amid burgeoning commerce, trade, and agriculture, the Lord began to "lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations" (Is 52:10).

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1. PARALLELS BETWEEN JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

### Parallels Between John the Baptist and Jesus: Birth

The New Testament plainly shows us parallels in the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus that could not be mere coincidence. Annunciations of their births initiated a series of revelations. The angel Gabriel appeared to the elderly priest Zechariah, and announced that Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth (also well along in years), would have a son and call him John (Lk 1:5-13). In Elizabeth's sixth month, Gabriel appeared to Mary, a virgin, announcing she, too, would have a son, as "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" and "you are to give him the name Jesus" (vv.35,31).

Both mothers-to-be were full of praises to God. Elizabeth, upon realizing that her barrenness had been lifted and "her disgrace among the people taken away," said, "The Lord has done this for me. In these days he has shown his favor" (Lk 1:25). When Mary visited her, she asked, "Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"(v.43). Mary responded, "My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"(v.46).

#### Parallels Between John and Jesus: Before Birth

John's and Jesus' positions before the Lord were revealed prior to their births. John was to be "filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth," and "great in the sight of the Lord"(Lk 1:15). Jesus "will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (vv.32,33).

Did Jesus become angry with King Herod and the king's satanic impulses to kill? Did John's sufferings and death prefigure Christ's own passion to come? Did Jesus long for an end to sin? Did he long for victory over the power of death for finite man?

Their adult roles in life were similarly set by God before birth. Of John it was said, "Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous-to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:16,17). Of Jesus it was said, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (vv.32,33).

Naming the infants followed circumcision. On the eighth day Elizabeth's son was circumcised and named John by both his parents (Lk 1:59,60). On the eighth day after Mary delivered, her son was circumcised, dedicated, and named Jesus, "the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived" (Lk 2:21).

#### Parallels Between John and Jesus: Childhood

The life of each of the infants was the subject of further prophecies. Following John's circumcision, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied of his son, " "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation . . . to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Lk 1:76-79). Simeon, a righteous and devout man, held Jesus in his arms, and moved by the Spirit, praised the "Sovereign Lord . . . . For my eyes have seen your salvation (Lk 2:29,30)." He said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too'' (vv.33-35).

Their childhoods were each distinguished by physical and mental strength, and they were spiritfilled. Of John it is recorded, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel" (Lk 1:80). Of Jesus, "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him" (Lk 2:40).

#### Parallels Between John and Jesus: Early Ministry

Along with their parallel growth, one might expect their learning periods and learning resources to be similar. The evidence turned up in their initial ministries. Both knew Scripture. Did awareness of a mission come to each in youth? At the age of twelve Jesus was obliged to ask his parents a question, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). John, though living in the desert, could have had sources there for learning Scripture. He certainly responded to the prophecies of Zechariah.

During John's ministry he preached ''in the Desert of Judea'' (Mt 3:1), and ''went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3,4). Jesus, walking from Galilee to Jordan for baptism by John (after forty days in the bleak desert of temptation), began his early ministry in Judea and Galilee. His kingdom message was similar to John's (Mk 1:9-16).

#### 2. CONTRASTS BETWEEN JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

#### Parallels Between John and Jesus Give Way to Contrasts

To this point, the Baptist's life had been a theological forerunner and likeness to our Lord. *Parallels* in their lives and ministries now gave way to *contrasts*. First, in the approval of Jesus by God at his baptism (Mt 3:16,17). Second, ir John's own testimony to the crowas, Scribes and Pharisees, priests and Levites, that elevated Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). Third, in Jesus' acknowledgement and identification of himself as the Person John recognized (Mt 11:2-6).

Following the imprisonment of John, the Master began to *preach* John's message. Jesus went back into Galilee, leaving behind the one who had paved his way. However, as if in cadence with John, he extended that message throughout his own ministry.

In those crucial times of Christ's ministry, with humanity's relationshif to God at stake, his disciples could not understand the meaning of the coming events so plainly communicated to them.

## After John's Imprisonment and Death

The full flowering of Jesus' service began after John was imprisoned. During the two or more years of his incarceration, John heard many things about Jesus. At one time he inquired of Jesus, seeking to confirm that his forerunner's messages had correctly referred to Jesus. Jesus responded to the questions, then

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highly commended John to the listening crowd (Lk 7:28).

In the third year of Jesus' ministry, following a visit to his hometown where he found himself unwelcome, Jesus ''went around teaching, from village to village.'' His disciples also were going about (two by two) preaching repentance, and healing the sick. John's disciples came to Jesus and told him of the diabolical act of King Herod in beheading the Baptist (Mt 14:12). Jesus' reaction was immediate, both subdued and dynamic (vv.13-34). He ''withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.''

Crowds followed Jesus. He fed five thousand, when his disciples thered together again after their reverses. As evening approached, he sent the disciples away in a boat, and went up into the hills, by himself, to pray. A storm arose on the sea and the disciples' trip ended with Jesus walking on the water and saving Peter before they both climbed into the boat. Then the disciples worshiped him, "the Son of God" (v. 33).

#### **Thoughts and Questions**

What do we say of Jesus' experiences that day and night? What were *some* of his thoughts? His immediate response to the horrible news was that of a deeply troubled mind, a condition repeated several times on his way to Gethsemane (Jn 11:33,38; 12:27).

e Jesus attempted seclusion for prayer—that was the all-man. Twice he returned in compassion for people—that was the all-God. And all within a twenty-four hour period following the news of the death of John.

Did Jesus become angry with King Herod and the king's satanic impulses to kill? Did John's sufferings and death prefigure Christ's own passion to come? Did Jesus long for an end to sin? Did he long for victory over the *power of death* for finite man? While troubled over the death of the only man he had commended as the greatest of those born of women—and the Elijah who was to come— Jesus must have thought *back* to words spoken to Nicodemus before John was imprisoned, "the Son of Man must be lifted up" (Jn 3:14). Could he then have thought *ahead* to the night when he would say, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"? (Mk 14:34).

If the above thoughts and questions went through the heart and mind of Jesus, feeding the five thousand during that late afternoon must have lifted his spirits. In the secluded hills that evening, he may have committed the spirit of John to God. In feeding the crowd and later saving Peter from the waves, Jesus must have regained composure, confidence, and the real power that will save us all from death.

Death, as represented in the heinous crime that killed John, provides the maximum contrast to what was to come in the crossresurrection event of Jesus the Christ. John died the death of all men; Jesus would provide for the eternal salvation of all men.

#### 3. JESUS, HIS DISCIPLES, AND THE RESURRECTION

#### Preparing the Disciples for Christ's Death and Resurrection

But how would Jesus prepare his disciples for an event that would rock the universe?

Jesus must first find out if the disciples understood who he was. They must experience some of the power and authority he was endowed with. They must witness people being raised from the dead. They must see sinners-tax collectors, prostitutes and adulterersforgiven. They must share in his frequent withdrawals into privacy for prayer. They witnessed all these things, and many more, as Jesus went about the land west and east of Jordan proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease. Prior to the Transfiguration—and immediately after-Jesus told them of his sufferings, betraval, rejection, death, and resurrection (Mt 16:21).

He also explained that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). "I am the resurrection and the life," he said (Jn 11:25). The *meaning* of all these things were hidden from the disciples, however. "They did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it" (Lk 9:45). In those crucial times of Christ's ministry, with humanity's relationship to God at stake, his disciples could not understand the meaning of the coming events so plainly communicated to them. Curtains were still drawn over windows of knowledge.

#### The Meaning of the Disciples' Puzzlement

What does that fact mean to us today?

Opening the curtains drawn over the windows of knowledge is the best way to understanding. Opening events occurred before the disciples' eyes and within their hearing! The moment Jesus died "the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mk 15:37,38). The Most Holy Place and God's throne were opened to the view of those in the temple.

Jesus himself supplied interpretation of these final events after his resurrection—first on the road to Emmaus, then in Jerusalem later the same day. "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Lk 24:45, 27).

lesus earlier foretold everything would happen as had been previously decreed. Perhaps the above can be better understood by again contrasting the death of John and the death-resurrection of our Lord. The endings of their lives become strikingly significant: 1) The violent death of John prefigured the death of Christ. 2) The drama of the power of death versus the power of life and resurrection was unfolded. 3) The cross-resurrection event answered any challenge previously posed as to why human beings must die.

Luke in the Acts, and Paul in nine of his epistles, interpret the cross-resurrection event with great clarity. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). "Let us

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# The Crusade of Love by Gillian Ford

ROM THE EARLY eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth, nine wars (called the Crusades) were waged. The purpose of the Crusades was to secure Jerusalem for Christians— to try and make it safe for pilgrims to visit the Holy Land. Except for brief periods of time, Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Turks.

As often happens, there was a lot of bloodshed for very little return. God hates war, but men must think God likes it: they are always using religion as an excuse to fight. Not only millions of lives were lost on both sides (many Crusaders, many Jews, and many Turks were slaughtered), but the wars cost a fortune. An enormous amount of treasure was sacrificed for these enterprises.

One night she gave him money, opened the door of his prison, and set him free. They kissed goodbye. Somehow they knew they would meet again.

At the end of the Crusades, the Holy City remained in the hands of the "infidels" (the word means unfaithful)—the name the Crusaders called the Turks. Perhaps the only real blessing that came out of these

crusades was the mixing of the cultures—the world of art and literature benefited a lot from the meeting of East and West.

Our story is about a young merchant with a French name who left the shores of England to join the Crusades. He wanted to fight and win back the Holy Land from the heathen. Like most people who start out to war, he did so with good intentions—he wanted to fight evil and return God's holy city to God's people.

While at war, Gilbert a Becket was taken prisoner and sold as a slave to a very rich, but cruel, Saracen prince. Gilbert was put to work in the beautiful royal garden by day; by night, to stop him escaping, he was shut in prison.

One day he was working hard pulling weeds. The prince's daughter entered the garden. She was fascinated by this young man with the attractive face and lovely white skin. When no one was watching she came up to him. He could tell by her face that she was sorry he had been captured. It wasn't long before the beautiful princess and the handsome crusader fell in love.

She wasn't a selfish girl, who thought only of keeping him near. One night she gave him money, opened the door of his prison, and set him free. They kissed goodbye. Somehow they knew they would meet again. Gilbert left the garden and the beautiful princess he loved.

Before he left, he had taught the fair princess two or three words— London, and a Becket. That was all she knew in English—London á Becket. Weeks and months passed, and she could wait no longer. She set off to find Gilbert.

In those days going by sea was long and dangerous. But our princess was going to find the man she loved, so to her the journey was an adventure.

Finding an English ship, she could only say, "London a Becket." The sailors knew London, but who or what was "a Becket"?

The ship set sail. In those days going by sea was long and dangerous. But our princess was going to find the man she loved, so to her the journey was an adventure. The ship came to shore, but London was far inland and there were no good roads. The way was rough and full of robbers. She just kept saying "London a Becket," and gradually found her way to the city. How strange she looked to Londoners, with her Eastern clothes and her sunburnt skin. How they stared at her.

10 April 1988 GNU

Because she kept on saying, "London a Becket," people began to realize she was looking for someone. Before long the word was carried from house to house until it reached the home of Gilbert a Becket. Gilbert began to look for his princess. He soon found her. When he saw her, he ran and caught her joyfully in his strong arms. He took her home where they soon were married. They really did live together happily ever after.

This Eastern princess became the mother of one of Britain's great men, Thomasa Becket (considered by many Christians to be a saint). Thomas was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury (the

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fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'' (Heb 12:2).

#### The Sabbath Between

From the time of our Lord's death to the resurrection was approximately forty hours, overlapping three days. The day of his sufferings and death, and the day of the resurrection, were distinct from, but united to, the Sabbath day in between. That rest day was not a vacuum. It was earth-shaking and cosmological (Mt 27:50-55).

That Sabbath must have allowed not only earlier sorrow in heaven over the sufferings and death of the Lamb of God, but later shouts of joy at the resurrection. Such joy was a celebration-in-expectation of God's final victory to come, even over death itself. Imagine the heavenly host of angels exclaiming, praying, and singing:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

#### "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power"

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and highest position in the Church of England) in 1162. But he quarreled with King Henry II over important matters. The king sent men to murder Thomas. To everyone's horror, the Archbishop was killed in Canterbury Cathedral (1170)! You can still see the spot where Thomas died when you visit the Cathedral.

The famous unfinished poem, *Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, is a collection of twentythree stories by pilgrims journeying to Canterbury to honor the memory of Thomas, and to visit his shrine.

The Bible says that its word is a light for our path and a lamp unto our feet. The story of Princess a Becket illustrates how

wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Rev 4:8,11; 5:12).

One of those singing angels, perhaps Gabriel himself, "going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it." He said to the women, "he is not here; he has risen" (Mt 28:2,6). The most important Sabbath rest in history was over.

#### **Reflections About That Sabbath**

Reflecting on that day nearly two thousand years ago, we readily find the Sabbath to be a joyous day, a celebration of the expectation of *our own* life eternal. We bow at the foot of the cross, sharing reconciliation to God through Christ. In his victory over death, we then lift up our heads and hands in expectation of life eternal (Jn 6:40).

Is it not through knowing "Christ and the *power of his resurrection* and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" that we also will attain resurrection? (Php 3:10). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (Jn 11:25). The cross, on the one hand, and his resurrection on the other, are distinct but not separate. They are a complete event, and our Lord spoke of them both together (Lk 9:22). The cross-resurrection event is Christianity's reason for being. that can be. She set out on her own crusade—a crusade of love. Yet all she had with her were two or three words. They illuminated her way overland, on dangerous paths, and through rocky ravines. They lit up the dark, storm-tossed waters that threatened her frail ship. They led her to the man she loved. Those words were certainly a lamp to her feet.

God says if we will listen to his words in Scripture—words about Jesus and the good news of what he has done for us—they will lead us through life. They will guide our steps and extinguish the darkness, because they are about Jesus, and he, you see, is the light of this world.

## The Excitement Continues in Each Generation!

The Christian church (initially called The Way), is based on the historical reality, the excitement, and the rapid spread of the knowledge of our Lord's resurrection.1 Today, we are still backed by that historical reality. The excitement, renewed with each new generation that learns that history, cannot die out. The knowledge of that salvific and cosmological event should be uppermost in our speaking and writing. Knowing we are reconciled with God at the cross, and lifted to life eternal at Christ's resurrection, should we not pour forth praise and confidence? Should not that praise and confidence emerge from our evangelism and be found in our fellowships?

The power of finite death has been destroyed. The power of Christ's resurrection—and our fellowship in sharing in his accomplished reconciliation—these are the *sine qua non* and the glory of our salvation. Why? Because

#### CHRIST IS RISEN! HE'S ALIVE!

#### NOTES

1. Josephus, Antiquities, Book xviii, Chapter 3-3; Eusebius, History of the Church, Book 2-2, p.75. All Scriptures from NIV. Emphases supplied.