

The Mind of Christ

Looking at the Cross

Part One

INTRODUCTION:

- I. After spending six hours on the cross of Calvary, Jesus eventually approached the end of this horrible ordeal.
 - A. As the time drew near, the Scriptures say Jesus cried with a loud voice, and said, *"IT IS FINISHED!"* (**John 19:30; Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46**)
 1. This wasn't a cry of pain or of DESPAIR, but rather a cry of TRIUMPH!
 2. He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do.
 - a. The job of bearing the SINS of the world was FINISHED.
 - b. The work of becoming the LAMB OF GOD was COMPLETED.
 - c. And the task of PAYING THE AWFUL COST FOR OUR SINS was now ACCOMPLISHED.
 - B. Then, Jesus uttered His final words.
 1. It was a SIMPLE prayer – a prayer every Jewish mother taught their child to pray before going to sleep. The words were, *"Father,*

into Your hands I commit My spirit. Having said this, He breathed His last. " (Luke 23:46)

2. And so, with the words of a child's prayer on His lips, Jesus bowed His head and died.
 3. Jesus was now on His way home!
- II. We are all familiar with the EVENTS of the crucifixion – we all know the horrible DETAILS of the torturous death of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.
- A. But what do we REALLY KNOW about JESUS during those moments as He hung on the cross?
1. What does the crucifixion actually tell us about HIM?
 2. What do we REALLY SEE when we look at JESUS on the cross?
 3. And, perhaps more important, what message was God trying to send to us THROUGH this horrible scene?
- B. Unless we come to fully understand the SIGNIFICANCE of the cross, we will never fully appreciate what Jesus DID there.
1. He accomplished MUCH more than simply die – a LOT of men died on the cross.
 2. His death was FAR more meaningful – FAR more significant.

- C. Therefore, for the next few lessons, I want us to turn our attention to the cross, and see what we can learn from the cross and from all it represents.
 - 1. When we spend these moments looking at the cross, we'll begin to see some things about JESUS that perhaps some of us have never really noticed before.
 - 2. So, let's carry ourselves back in time some two-thousand years and place ourselves at the foot of the cross on that terrible day when Jesus was crucified.

BODY:

- I. As we stand there and gaze at Jesus suffering and dying on the cross, what do we actually SEE?
 - A. The FIRST thing we should see is the great COURAGE of Jesus.
 - 1. Crucifixion was considered the most TERRIBLE and AGONIZING form of execution invented.
 - a. While most forms of execution brought death relatively quick – CRUCIFIXION VICTIMS often lingered for HOURS and even DAYS in complete and unimaginable agony.
 - 2. In his article on crucifixion in SMITH'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE, F. W. Farrar quotes from the work of a physician called

Richter who wrote a treatise on the PHYSICAL effects of crucifixion.

- a. "The unnatural position and tension of the body made every moment a pain. The fact that the nails were driven through those parts of the hands where the nerves and the tendons are, made every movement the most exquisite torture. The wounds of the nails and welts of the lash (scourge) soon became inflamed and even gangrenous. The position of the body hindered circulation, and caused a pain and tension in the body which is described as more intolerable than death itself. The agony of crucifixion was the worst kind of agony, lingering, gradually increasing every moment. And to all this must be added the burning thirst which soon began to torture the victim."
2. These are certainly NOT pleasant facts, but this is what crucifixion was all about – and Jesus KNEW it.
 - a. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian who lived during the first century, tells us that in the political unrest that followed the death of Herod the Great, Varus, the Roman general, captured those who were responsible for the uprising in

Galilee, and lined the roads of Galilee with more than two-thousand crosses.

- b. Every Jewish boy, like Jesus, who grew up in Galilee would have heard that story perhaps a hundred times, or more.
3. Therefore, Jesus knew all about crucifixion.
 - a. No doubt, He had even WITNESSED crucifixion with His own HUMAN eyes.
 - b. He would have seen all the torturous agony, and heard the wailing cries of pain and anguish from those who were slowly dying from this most terrible form of execution.
 4. But that didn't stop Jesus. Knowing the fate that awaited Him if He returned to Jerusalem, He nevertheless walked straight into the hands of His enemies.
 - a. Any other man, with even a DEGREE of mental stability, would have simply disappeared into obscurity – but HE didn't.
 - b. And while He was on the cross, rather than suffer the full intensity of the pain, Jesus COULD HAVE drunk the medicated wine laced with an opiate that was offered to Him while He was on the cross – but He DIDN'T.
 - c. And rather than allow Himself to be mocked by His murderers, He COULD HAVE escaped from the cross by

calling down legions of angels to avenge Him – but He
DIDN'T.

5. Rather than do ANY of these things, Jesus faced the cross with
COURAGE!
 6. It's been said there are TWO KINDS of courage.
 - a. ONE is an act of bravery done on the spur of the moment
WITHOUT having time to think about the consequences.
 - b. The OTHER is an act of bravery done with FULL
KNOWLEDGE of the consequences, AND the TIME to think
ABOUT those consequences.
 - c. The LATTER is the kind of bravery and courage JESUS
displayed on the cross.
 - d. He knew FULL WELL what He was about to suffer, and had
PLENTY OF TIME to contemplate all the HORROR of that
suffering – and yet, He COURAGEOUSLY went to the cross
anyway.
- B. Second, as we stand at the foot of the cross and watch this terrible
scene unfold, we also see the HUMANITY of Jesus.
1. Throughout the centuries, and ESPECIALLY in our own day, there
are those who maintain that the BODY of Jesus was only a
PHANTOM or an APPARITION, and not a REAL body.

- a. They maintain that Jesus did not actually COME in the flesh. The apostle John encountered this kind of teaching in his day as well.
 - (1). **1 John 4:1-3** – *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*
- b. To THESE people, the body of Jesus was NOT REAL, and therefore they believed that He only "APPEARED" to suffer.
- c. Some even maintain that the Son of God came INTO the body of Jesus at the BAPTISM by John in the Jordan, and then LEFT the body of Jesus shortly BEFORE the crucifixion.
- d. OTHERS have even gone so far as to claim that Jesus had a SUPERNATURAL BODY, and NOT a body of flesh and bones like you and me – but rather a body that was NOT

subject to the laws of physics, human desire, emotion, and especially pain.

2. However, the gospel accounts paint an entirely DIFFERENT picture. The Scriptures VIVIDLY portray the REAL HUMANITY of Jesus.
 - a. We saw Jesus staggering under the weight of the cross, so much so, that another man (Simon of Cyrene) had to be compelled to carry the cross for Him.
 - b. We also saw Jesus so physically exhausted that He had to be half-carried up the hill to Calvary where He was crucified.
 - (1). **Mark 15:22** – "*they BROUGHT Jesus,*" meaning, "to bear or to carry."
 - c. We saw His pain and agony as the iron spikes were driven through His hands and feet, and we heard Him cry out, "*I THIRST*" – all purely HUMAN feelings and desires commonly experienced by those being crucified.
3. The gospel accounts of the life of Christ show the REAL and FULL MANHOOD of Jesus, AND vividly depict the complete REALITY of His suffering.

- a. There was no PHANTOM body on the cross – and no SUPERNATURAL body that somehow escaped all the pain and suffering of the cross.
 - b. This is God the Son, wrapped in HUMAN flesh, feeling HUMAN pain, and suffering HUMAN torture.
 - c. Jesus was NOT putting on some ACT. He was suffering REAL AGONY.
- C. And, as we stand at the foot of the cross and gaze up at Jesus, we ALSO see the IDENTITY of Jesus with sinners like you and me.
1. It was no coincidence that He was crucified between two thieves.
 - a. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this very thing centuries before.

(1). **Isaiah 53:9, 12** – *And they made His grave with the wicked – But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth... Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*
 - b. In fact, Jesus had always been seen as the FRIEND of tax-gathers and sinners – a friendship that SHOCKED the

orthodox Jewish religious leaders of His day. (cf. **Matthew 11:18-19** -- "*a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*")

(1). **Matthew 9:10-13** – *Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

- c. Being crucified between two criminals (thieves) was SYMBOLIC of His WHOLE LIFE-LONG WORK – a work of coming into the world to bring sinners like you and me back to God.
- d. He came to bring RECONCILIATION between sinners and God.

- e. And by offering Himself on the cross, He became our HIGH PRIEST ("Pontifex" – or "bridge-builder") to rebuild the bridge between us and the God of heaven.
- D. And as we stand at the foot of the cross, there is NO WAY we can ESCAPE seeing the unbelievable FORGIVENESS of Jesus.
- 1. Even as the iron spikes were being driven through His hands and feet, He prayed, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* (Luke 23:34).
 - a. It's as if Jesus was saying, "I don't care what you do to Me, I will STILL forgive you!"
 - 2. This great act of merciful forgiveness tells us something ELSE about Jesus.
 - a. In Jesus, we see the TRUE CHARACTER OF GOD FULLY DISPLAYED.
 - b. We KNOW BEYOND ANY DOUBT WHATSOEVER that there are NO LIMITS to the LOVE, the GRACE, the MERCY, and the FORGIVENESS of God.
 - c. The forgiveness that God extends to all mankind throughout the ages, is VIVIDLY DISPLAYED in the FORGIVENESS of Jesus on the cross.

- E. But as we stand at the foot of the cross, we ALSO see the SELFLESSNESS of Jesus.
1. During moments of INTENSE pain and suffering, WE tend to think only of OURSELVES – OUR needs, OUR desires, OUR comforts.
 2. But, even when Jesus was at the HEIGHT of His pain and suffering, He looked down from the cross and saw the sorrow and loneliness of His mother, Mary.
 - a. He knew that someone responsible and trustworthy would need to care for, and comfort, her in the days ahead, and so He committed her to the care of John, the disciple whom He loved. **(cf. John 19:26-27)**
 - (1). **John 19:27b** – *And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.*
 3. It's been said that NOTHING in the story of Jesus is more extraordinary than His ABSOLUTE REFUSAL to use His divine powers.
 - (1). He REFUSED to use His powers for His own gain, His own profit, and for His own comfort.
 4. But what may be even MORE extraordinary is the fact that Jesus continued to focus all His attention on the needs of OTHERS.

- F. And, as we stand at the foot of the cross and gaze up at Jesus, we most ASSUREDLY see the DEEP SUFFERING of our Savior.
1. At the darkest hour, Jesus suddenly cried out, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (**Matthew 27:46**)
 - a. The moment Jesus dreaded the most had finally come.
 - b. It was a moment filled with INDESCRIBABLE HORROR – human words can't even BEGIN to express the sheer horror of that moment.
 - c. Almost universally, Biblical scholars believe THIS was the VERY MOMENT when Jesus bore the horror and guilt of EVERY SIN committed since the BEGINNING of time, and every sin YET to be committed until His return.
 - (1). Unless you've carried the TREMENDOUS BURDEN OF GUILT for some terrible sin YOU'VE committed, you can't really relate to this.
 - (2). But the psalmist David could. In one of his most moving psalms, David describes the physical and emotional pain he experienced when he tried to hide his sins of having committed adultery with Bathsheba, and of murdering

her husband in an effort to cover up the fact that David had gotten Bathsheba pregnant.

- (3). **Psalm 38:1-18** – *O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the*

day long. But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; and I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. Thus I am like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth is no response. For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. For I said, "Hear me, lest they rejoice over me, lest, when my foot slips, they exalt themselves against me." For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

3. But, Jesus not only, "BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY on the tree," (**1 Peter 2:24**), and He who "KNEW NO SIN", not only BECAME SIN for us (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), but WORSE YET, there was SOME KIND of MOMENTARY SEPARATION between God and Jesus at THAT very moment.
 - a. We may NEVER fully understand what ACTUALLY happened at that moment – nor FULLY grasp the significance of that separation – but it must have filled the heart of Jesus with INDESCRIBABLE HORROR.
 - b. Perhaps Jesus experienced, in just ONE BRIEF MOMENT OF TIME, the horror WE WILL EXPERIENCE, if we are

separated from God for ETERNITY because of the guilt of
OUR UNFORGIVEN SINS.

- c. Perhaps He experienced ONLY BRIEFLY what it would be like for YOU AND ME to be HURLED into eternity, SEPARATED from the love and mercy of God FOREVER.

(1). Unimaginable, indescribable horror!

G. As the end came for Jesus, we also can see the VICTORY for Jesus.

1. The cry, "IT IS FINISHED!" was a cry of VICTORY.

- a. As we said at the beginning of the lesson, His task had been ACCOMPLISHED, and His work was FINISHED.

- b. He had come into the world SINLESS, and now He was leaving the world in the same SINLESS condition.

- c. The SINLESS LAMB OF GOD had taken away the sins of the world – that was the reason He came into the world, and now, that work was done.

- d. The VICTORY was complete – and the price was paid!

H. And finally, as we stand at the foot of the cross, gazing up at the lifeless body of Jesus, we see His PEACE.

1. As we mentioned in our last lesson, Jesus prayed a simple child's prayer, and then bowed His head and died. **(cf. John 19:30)**

- a. The word “*bowed*” is a word that describes someone who peacefully lets his head sink back, as one might place his head on a pillow to sleep.
2. When death finally came for Jesus:
 - a. There was NO DISAPPOINTMENT as though He had somehow failed.
 - b. There was NO BROKEN HEART over having been cruelly mocked.
 - c. There was NO UNCERTAINTY about the future.
 - d. And there was certainly NO FEAR of the grave.
 3. When death FINALLY CAME for Jesus, there was only PEACEFUL CONTENTMENT of One who KNEW He had FAITHFULLY FINISHED the work the Father had given Him to do, and NOW Jesus was on His way home to the GREATEST HOMECOMING in the history of the UNIVERSE.

CONCLUSION:

- I. In 1939, just two years before the death of her husband, Mrs. E. M. Bartlett copyrighted a song her husband, Eugene Bartlett, had composed just a few years earlier. Although Eugene Bartlett would only live two more years,

dying at the age of 56, his song has continued to this day to stir the hearts of everyone who hears it.

A. The words are familiar:

*I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me;
I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning,
Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.*

*O victory in Jesus, My Savior, forever,
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him,
He plunged me to victory, beneath the cleansing flood.*

(Eugene M. Bartlett, 1885-1941)

B. "He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood!" How true!

1. Jesus came to this world to seek and save sinners like YOU and like ME, and He redeemed us through His blood shed on the cross of Calvary.
 - a. That means Jesus has ALREADY paid the price for your sins.
 - b. You don't OWE a thing – you're DEBT FREE.
 - c. The debt for EVERY SIN you've EVER committed has been PAID IN FULL!

2. All Jesus ask of you now is to simply COME TO HIM and accept the GIFT of SALVATION He wants to give you.
 - a. He gave HIS life for you.
 - b. And now, He wants you to give your HEART to HIM.
3. If you've never come to Christ in complete obedience, repenting of your past sins, confessing your faith in Him, and being buried with Him in baptism, then you need to do that this very moment.
4. And if you've already done that, and yet the debt Jesus paid for your sins hasn't meant that much to you, and you've gone back into a world of sin, all He asks is that you come back with a heart of repentance, so He can cancel the debt of THOSE sins as well.