

The Mind of Christ

Looking at the Cross

Part Two

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Last week we turned our attention to the Cross of Christ.
 - A. We took a close look at Jesus while He was on the Cross of Calvary, and learned quite a lot about His character
 1. On the Cross:
 - a. We witnessed His COURAGE, as well as His HUMANITY.
 - b. We saw the way in which He IDENTIFIED Himself with SINNERS.
 - c. We also saw the UNBELIEVABLE FORGIVENESS of Jesus.
 - d. Then we witnessed the SELFLESSNESS, as well as the deep SUFFERING of our Lord.
 - e. And finally we saw the PEACE and the VICTORY of Jesus as he breathed His last.
 - B. But there's a great deal more we can learn about Jesus.
 1. More specifically, when we focus our attention on the Cross of Calvary, there's a great deal revealed about the WORK He came to do.

- a. I think it's true that the more we THINK about the Cross, and UNDERSTAND IT, the more LOVE and APPRECIATION we will have in our hearts for God and for our Savior.
2. So, I believe there's an OBLIGATION here – an obligation to understand as much about the Cross and what happened there as we possibly CAN.
3. And so, as we begin taking a close-up examination of the Cross and all it REPRESENTS, we'll once again see things that perhaps we've overlooked in the past.

BODY:

- I. One of the FIRST things we need to understand about the Cross is that Jesus went to it WILLINGLY.
 - A. There have been those who believed the Cross was NEVER a part of God's plan.
 1. They looked at the early days of Jesus' ministry – at the time when things were going well – as an indication of how God INTENDED for the rest of Jesus' life to be lived.
 - a. At that time in the life of Jesus, He was very POPULAR.
 - b. However, His popularity didn't last.
 2. In time, opposition to Jesus began to grow.

- a. People began to turn away from Him – especially when He began to place a greater emphasis on His TEACHING over His MIRACLES.
 - b. He was ALSO perceived as a THREAT by the Jewish religious leaders of the day.
 - (1). The scribes and Pharisees denounced Jesus because He refused to follow their long-held traditions.
 - (2). The Chief Priests and Elders of the people hated Him because He exposed their hypocrisy.
 - (3). The Sadducees mocked Him because He taught the resurrection from the dead.
 - (4). And the Herodians (Jews loyal to the Herods' and to Rome) feared Him as a trouble-maker, and political agitator.
 - c. So, it's believed by some that Jesus began to realize men would eventually reject Him totally – leaving Him no way OUT except the Cross.
3. Those who hold this view, believe Jesus went to the Cross because circumstances COMPELLED Him to go.
 - a. To them, it was a matter of FATE.

B. However, the gospel accounts paint an entirely DIFFERENT picture.

They assure us Jesus ALWAYS knew the Cross awaited Him at the end of the road. There are several incidents that point out this fact.

1. Toward the END of the ministry of Jesus, there was the ANOINTING IN BETHANY by a woman who anointed Jesus with a very costly ointment.

a. **Mark 14:3-9** – *And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."*

- b. When others present criticized her for wasting such an expensive item, Jesus sharply REBUKED them, saying this was being done in preparation for His burial. **(cf. Matthew 26:12; Mark 14:8)**
- c. Jesus had no doubt about the fact that He would soon die.
2. Shortly before THAT incident, Jesus spoke a parable about the wicked vinedressers. **(Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18)**
 - a. He concluded the parable by saying the wicked vinedressers killed the son of the vineyard owner – the HEIR.
 - b. It was clear to Jesus that HE was HEIR, and that the wicked vinedressers who would eventually kill HIM were the wicked religious leaders of Israel.
 - c. Again, there was NO DOUBT in His mind but that His life would end in an act VIOLENCE prompted by BITTER HATRED.
3. And even before THAT parable, following Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus CONTINUALLY talked about His impending death.
 - a. **Mark 8:31-32a** – *And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders*

and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly.

- b. **Mark 9:30-32** – *Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*

(1). The phrase in verse 31, *"He taught His disciples and said to them,"* is a verb phrase in the IMPERFECT TENSE – a tense that expresses the idea of REPEATED, CONTINUOUS action.

(2). In other words, Jesus REPEATEDLY and CONTINUOUSLY spoke openly to His disciples about His coming death on the Cross.

4. Early in the ministry of Jesus – during the so-called "Galilean Springtime" – He was asked by some why His disciples didn't fast.

- a. **Mark 2:18-20** – *The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the*

bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.

- b. Jesus portrayed Himself as the Bridegroom who would eventually be "*taken away from them*" – a clear reference to His impending death. **(cf. Matthew 9:14f; Mark 2:18f; Luke 5:33f)**
 - c. Jesus was saying that this time of JOYOUS FELLOWSHIP would be followed by a time of GREIVIOUS SEPARATION – a separation brought on by His death on the Cross.
5. Even at the moment of His baptism by John in the Jordan River, the voice of God said, "*You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" **(Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22)**
- a. That saying is composed of two quotations from the Old Testament.
 - (1). "*You are My beloved Son,*" is from **Psalm 2:7** – a coronation Psalm, when the Messiah is triumphantly enthroned to rule over the nations of men.
 - (2). "*In whom I am well pleased,*" is from **Isaiah 42:1** – part of Isaiah's description of the Servant of the Lord Who is

eventually wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, according to Isaiah chapter 53.

- b. Therefore, from the BEGINNING of His ministry to just days before His death, Jesus thought of Himself in TWO WAYS.
 - (1). First, Jesus thought of Himself in terms of being the Messiah – the King of kings who was to usher in the Kingdom of heaven, and who would rule among the nations from the Holy Hill of Zion.
 - (2). And second, Jesus thought of Himself in terms of being the Suffering Servant – the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world, and by whose stripes we would be healed.
 - c. Even at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus knew the Cross waited for Him at the end of the road.
6. But we can go back even FURTHER in the life of Jesus and see predictions regarding His end. We can go back to the time of His dedication to God in the Temple of Jerusalem – when Jesus was one month old.
- a. Simeon, the old man who had been waiting to see the Messiah, as the Lord had promised, saw Jesus and spoke to Mary.

- b. He warned, *"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."* (**Luke 2:34-35**)
- c. He warned of a time when Mary's heart would be pierced with sorrow as if it had been pierced with a sword – the VERY SORROW she experienced when she stood at the foot of the Cross and witnessed the death of Jesus.

C. Therefore, we can safely say the Gospel accounts CONSTANTLY PORTRAY the life of Jesus as heading TOWARD the Cross.

- 1. Jesus was NOT DRIVEN to the Cross by the force of some UNCONTROLLABLE CIRCUMSTANCE.
- 2. The Cross was NOT the result of some original plan having FAILED and ending in DISAPPOINTMENT.
- 3. From the very beginning, Jesus VOLUNTARILY took a path that would lead DIRECTLY to the Hill of Calvary.
 - a. In fact, John gives us GREAT INSIGHT into the thinking of Jesus.
 - b. **John 10:17-18** – *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from*

*Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down,
and I have power to take it again."*

- c. Jesus laid down His OWN LIFE on His OWN TERMS.
- d. NO ONE took it from Him. He GAVE His life you you and me
– VOLUNTARILY.

II. But there is SOMETHING ELSE we need to understand about the Cross.

Although Jesus VOLUNTARILY accepted it, He ALSO saw it as an
ABSOLUTELY NECESSITY.

A. Matthew, Mark and Luke record Jesus REPEATEDLY warning His
disciples, "*the Son of Man MUST suffer many things, and be rejected
by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after
three days rise again.*" **(Mark 8:31; Matthew 16:21; Luke 9:22)**

1. Jesus also said, "*...the Son of Man goes as it has been
DETERMINED...*" **(Luke 22:22)**

2. Later, on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter will say that
Jesus was, "*delivered by the DETERMINED PURPOSE AND
FOREKNOWLEDGE of God...*" **(Acts 2:23)**

B. But how could Jesus think of the Cross as being His own VOLUNTARY
CHOICE, and at the same time think of it as being an ABSOLUTE
NECESSITY?

1. The answer is because Jesus understood that the Cross was part of the ETERNAL PURPOSE (or PLAN) of God!
2. Even before ADAM was created, and even before the FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD were laid, God knew mankind would EVENTUALLY SIN and would need a way of being made FREE from those sins.
 - a. Since the penalty for sin is death, the only way WE could hope to escape that penalty would be for someone to die in OUR place.
 - b. WE would never be able to have our sins removed by the shedding of our OWN blood, because OUR blood is stained with our own SINS.
 - c. Therefore, it would take the blood of One whose life was NOT stained by sin – One who could offer HIS life as a ransom for many.
3. Therefore, it was ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY for a SINLESS person to die in OUR place. And that sinless person was none other than Jesus Christ.
 - a. One of the basic teachings about the death of Jesus is found in the writings of the apostle Paul.

b. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** – *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...*

(1). When Paul wrote that Jesus Christ died *"FOR"* our sins, he used a Greek word that means, "on behalf of, or for the sake of."

(2). Kenneth Wuest (Greek scholar) says the meaning of this passage is that Jesus died in order to, "do something on behalf of our sins."

(3). In other words, our SINS and Jesus' DEATH are
INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.

C. Perhaps the best way of looking at this is to think of the term "atonement."

1. When we look up the word in various Bible dictionaries, here's what we find:

a. ATONEMENT (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary): *The act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts which express this great truth in simple but profound terms: "at-one-ment." Through God's atoning grace*

and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of at-one-ment with God, in spite of our sin.

- b. ATONEMENT (The New Unger's Bible Dictionary):

Atonement is the covering over of sin, the reconciliation between God and man, accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. In Old Testament times, the High Priest was required to make an "atonement" for his OWN sins and THEN for the sins of the PEOPLE.
- a. This "atonement" was accomplished by sacrificing an animal according to the Law. (Leviticus 16)
- b. The High Priest would gather the blood of the sacrificial animal in a bowl, enter the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle, stand before the Ark of the Covenant where the Mercy Seat was located, then sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat (located between the two cherubim).
- c. This offering for the sins of the people had to be done EVERY YEAR – year after year after year – generation after generation.
- d. Why? Because, according to Hebrews chapter 10, the blood of bulls and goats could not PERMANENTLY remove sins.

3. However, when Jesus the Christ came to earth, He came to become OUR High Priest – appointed by God, to make an offering for sins, ONCE FOR ALL.
 - a. **Hebrews 7:25-27** – *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*
 - b. **Hebrews 9:24-28** – *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another – He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as*

it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

CONCLUSION:

- I. And so, when WE look at the Cross, we see SO MUCH MORE than simply the suffering of our Lord and Savior.
 - A. We see the ETERNAL PURPOSE (the ETERNAL PLAN) of God being carried out by Jesus Himself.
 1. We see Jesus KNOWINGLY and WILLINGLY taking the path that would lead from a MANGER to a CROSS.
 - a. We see Him KNOWING FULL WELL that the Cross was in His future, and that the Cross was CLEARLY part of the plan of God Jesus had come to complete.
 - b. It was all part of the, "*DETERMINED PURPOSE and FOREKNOWLEDGE of God...*" (**Acts 2:23**)
 - B. And we ALSO see Jesus viewing the Cross as an ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.
 1. Without the Cross, there could be NO remission of sins.
 - a. There could be no "atonement" – no opportunity to be "AT ONE" with God.
 - b. And now, He wants you to give your HEART to HIM.

2. Therefore, Jesus WILLINGLY left heaven, took upon Himself the form of a man, and DIED on the Cross to TRULY become, "The Lamb of God that takes away the SINS of the world."

C. Are YOU "at one" with God?

1. Have YOUR SINS been COVERED OVER by the BLOOD OF CHRIST?
 - a. The ONLY way your sins can be COVERED, and the ONLY way you can truly become "AT ONE" with God is to have come to Jesus Christ in an obedience faith, confessing your faith in Him before men, and by being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.
2. And if your sins HAVE been COVERED OVER by the BLOOD OF CHRIST, and you've turned to go BACK to the WORLD, let me ask you this: what GREATER sacrifice could God give for your sins than the sacrifice of His Son Jesus the Christ?
 - a. Every day you DELIBERATELY choose to LIVE IN SIN, you are declaring the blood of Christ, by which you were redeemed, as nothing more than a common thing – it doesn't mean any more to you than the blood of any ordinary man.

- b. How do you expect to stand before Jesus Christ on the day of Judgment, knowing that His sacrifice for YOU was NOT AS IMPORTANT to you as YOUR LOVE of the world?
- c. There's still time to change. Come back to Christ in genuine REPENTANCE, CONFESSING your sins and REKINDLE your FIRST LOVE – and His grace and mercy will CLEANSE you ONCE AGAIN from ALL sins.