

THE



HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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THE CROSS: OUR TREE OF LIFE

Most people today do not seem to be influenced by the crucifixion which took place nearly 2000 years ago. Yes, they know a good man named Jesus was executed. They see the blood-stained cross and the two thieves who were killed with Him. They will even acknowledge this event as a foundation of the Christian religion. But to say that salvation and eternal life can be found in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ has become of little effect to the world. As Paul once wrote: *"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness"* (1 Cor. 1:18).

Friends, think about this carefully. What do you see at the cross? Was it really important?

THE HARVESTER
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Does it affect your life today? As Christians, we should see the beginning of our faith. God's only Son came to this earth to pay the price for our sins. Because He died and arose three days later, Jesus Christ made possible our reconciliation with God. If we obey His commands, our soul can go to heaven! *"Unto us which are saved it is the power of God"*.

There is one other vision to see in the cross which many have overlooked: the tree of life. What? Are we to believe that the tree of life was part of the crucifixion scene? Could it be possible that the cross which our Saviour was nailed to was like the tree of life? In the spiritual sense, I truly believe this is what the New Testament writers wanted us to visualize.

Notice in particular how the apostle Peter described the crucifixion, as recorded by Luke. Peter accused the Jews of crucifying Jesus, the Son of God, whom they *"slew and hanged on a tree"* (Acts 5:30 and Acts 10:39). The apostle Paul also substituted the word 'tree' for the word 'cross' in Acts 13:29 where *"they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre:"* In another place Paul spoke of the fact that Christ was *"made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"* (Gal. 3:13). From these scriptures it is evident that the writers wanted us to see more than just the physical wood which made up the cross. They wanted us to picture a tree, a living and growing plant with branches and leaves. But the "tree of life"? Let us explore further into God's word and see if there are any comparisons.

In Genesis 2:9 we find the first mention of the tree of life. Adam and Eve had access to this tree for it was in the middle of the garden of Eden. Like the other trees, the tree of life was pleasant to the sight and good for food.

To eat of this tree (Gen. 3:22) meant living for ever! Appropriately it was called the tree of life.

To say that our 'tree', the cross, is pleasant to the sight might sound disgusting to the world. They only see the gruesome sight of a dead human body hanging there. But to the sinner seeking reconciliation with God it is a most welcome and lovely sight (Eph. 2:16). The vision of Jesus hanging on the 'tree' and dying for my sins represents the very heart of gospel salvation. Spiritually speaking, it is also good for food. The message of the cross is the only thing that can satisfy our starving souls. The Lord who was resurrected from the cruel cross of Calvary is the only One who can fill our hunger and thirst for righteousness. That is why Paul preached nothing but *"Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:2).

It is also easy to see that the cross is symbolic of the tree of life in that it is a fruitful 'tree'. Like the tree that bears twelve manners of fruit and yields her fruit every month (Rev. 22:2), the cross constantly produces Christians. When a person is baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3,4), he becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17) and is called a Christian (Acts 11:26). That person becomes a product or 'fruit' of the cross for without the crucifixion of Christ, there could be no Christians.

Whereas the leaves of the tree of life were used for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2), the leaves of the 'cross' have a healing effect, too. They destroy the old body of sin *"that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Rom. 6:6). Sin is like a cancer in our lives. If we do not get rid of it immediately, it will spread throughout our body and consume us. The only known cure for sin can be found at the

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Ray McManus
 3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.
 Gadsden, AL 35901-9130
 Phone: (205) 442-4181

cross. We must ever look to the cross to be spiritually healed. Now is the picture of the tree of life becoming more clear?

Finally, those who do the commandments of Christ have a right to the tree of life and may then enter through the gates into the holy city described by John (Rev. 22:14). At the cross, we are faced with the same exact privileges. Those who will do God's commandments and will obey the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) have a right to the tree of life. Those who are figuratively baptized into the death of Christ will be in a saved condition (1 Pet. 3:21) and, if they remain faithful (Rev. 2:10), should one day enter through the gates of heaven.

Is it not beautiful to picture the cross of Christ as Genesis' and Revelation's "tree of life"? But let us beware that we do keep the proper perspective in this matter. Some religious groups have gone to the point of making the 'cross' into an idol. They worship actual replicas of the cross failing to recognize that the cross is merely a symbol today. It stands for something important, just as the bread and fruit of the vine on the Lord's Table represent the body and blood of Christ. The bread and fruit of the vine do not become the actual body and blood. Neither does a physical cross itself contain any amount of saving powers for mankind.

God's word has provided us with a richer and deeper insight into the cross of Christ. No longer should it be thought of as just two pieces of lumber tied together. It is symbolic of so much more. To the Christian, it is the tree of eternal life! With joyous hearts we can sing: "At the cross, at the cross

Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!"

Thanks be to God for the love He showed me at the cross: our tree of life!

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Whose sin did Jesus say had caused blindness, the blind man's or his parents?
2. How many days after birth was it before a male child was circumcised?
3. What did Jesus have the people to do before He fed them in the feeding of the 5000?
4. Who volunteered when the voice of the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"
5. In Zechariah 8, what two things does the Lord tell the house of Judah that He hates?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Which person of Pharaoh's household found Moses when he was hidden in the bulrushes?
PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER (Exo. 2:5-6)
2. To where should one look to see the source of his help? THE HILLS (Psa. 121:1)

3. How long did Paul wait in jail at Caesarea before coming before Festus? TWO YEARS (Acts 24:27)
4. From what did Elijah get food during the drought? RAVENS (1 Kings 17:4)
5. What two tribes of Israel were from Jacob's grandsons rather than sons? MANASSEH AND EPHRAIM (Josh. 14:4)

CHRIST IN THE BIBLE

In the four accounts of the Gospel story we finally meet the Messiah in His earthly body. What a thrill for the reader of the Bible! This is what each Old Testament book pointed toward: the arrival of the Prince of Peace.

MATTHEW, the tax collector, is the first one to let us know the name of the Anointed One; He is called "Jesus". Furthermore, Matthew furnishes the proof that Jesus truly was Israel's promised messianic King by the use of several OT quotations and prophecies. He also uses such descriptions as "the Son of man", the "servant" of the Lord, the "son of David" and references to Abraham to appeal to his Jewish audience. Clearly this Jesus fulfilled the qualifications to be the Messiah!

The Gospel for the Romans is the book of MARK. He presents the Lord as an active, compassionate, and obedient Servant who constantly ministers to the physical and spiritual needs of others. These were the traits that the Roman mind considered as being powerful. The Roman did not care about prophecies. Thus, Mark tells the story of a Messiah who has power and authority as the Son of God. This is a book showing the busy

public ministry of Christ, whose kingdom would conquer all nations.

LUKE is the only Gentile writer of books in the Bible. It is only fitting then that his account is geared toward the Gentiles by stressing the humanity and compassion of the Messiah. To the Greek the characteristics of universality and perfection had to be seen in Christ. So Luke pictures Jesus as the ideal Son of Man in human perfection. He is the son of Adam and the Saviour of all mankind. From Luke it is easy to identify with the Christ who carried our sorrows and sins to the cross and offered us the priceless gift of salvation.

The last account of the Messiah's earthly life was written by JOHN. As the Beloved Disciple, he presents the most powerful case for the deity of Jesus. He shows Christ to be the Word in the beginning; the bread of life; the light of the world; the door; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; and the true vine. Within this spiritual record the humanity of Jesus can also be seen in His weariness, thirst, dependence, grief, troubled soul, anguish, and death. All of this John wrote so there would be no doubt that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah sent from God the Father.

Luke continues his narrative of Christ with the book of ACTS. In Acts we find the history of the early Church, the spread of Christianity and examples of how people were converted and saved from their sins. The theme of Christ is now seen in the revealing acts of the Holy Spirit and in the various sermons and defences of the apostles. The fulfilling OT Scriptures, the historical Resurrection, the apostolic testimony, and the convicting power of the Holy Ghost all bear witness that Jesus is both Lord and Christ.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Aug. 1-4	Antioch Church near Piedmont, AL	Rufus Williams (Montgomery, AL)
Aug. 4-9	Owens Road Church Prattville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Aug. 4-9	Oak Grove Church Pulaski County, KY	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Aug. 4-11 (Su-Su)	Louisville, KY	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS) & John Clark (San Angelo, TX)
Aug. 9-11	Fairview Church Oxford, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Aug. 11-16	Rainsville, AL 7:00 pm	V. W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
Aug. 11-17	Jigger, LA	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Aug. 19-23 (M-F)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:30 pm	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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WHO SHALL BE SAVED TODAY?

Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13) and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) and repents with a contrite spirit (Psa. 34:18) AND confesses the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10:9) AND submits to the figure of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21) AND is added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47) AND endures to the end (Matt. 10:22), then that person shall be saved!