

The “Cross” Road

There are many crossroads we will have to pass through in life that go in different directions taking us into varying situations that life will send our way. Sometimes we take turns that we often end up regretting but there is one road that has been in existence for almost two thousand years which leads the way to eternal happiness where there will be no regrets. And the sooner we get on that road the better. Nevertheless, it has to be entered “by the gate that is narrow and the way *[that]* is hard”. Ultimately it “leads to life, [but] those who find it are few” (*Mat 7:14*) since “the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by **it** are many” (*v.13*). Therefore we are to “strive to enter through the narrow door” (*Lk 13:24*) if we ever wish to approach “the God of all grace, Who has called [us] to His eternal glory **in** Christ [and] will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish [us]. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (*1 Pet 5:10-11*)(*Emp. added*) So, with that said, what’s the best way, actually the only way, to find that road? We first have to find its Architect, Who alone knows the way since Jesus Himself said “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (*Jn 14:6*)

Luk 11:9 ... I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

- Since God “alone has immortality, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no one has ever seen or can see” (*1 Tim 6:16*) He has given us the only Way in which we can approach Him. And that’s through having “sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (*1 Jn 4:9*). But what makes Jesus so qualified to be our only access to the Father? There are several reasons that answer this question. First...

Christ’s Pre-existence

Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

- Jesus has always been with God His Father even before all things physical were created, including the angels who are spirit beings.

Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

- How much closer can a relationship be than that?

Joh 17:5 And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You **before** the world existed. (*Emp. added*)

- Next, there had to be order in the creation so that chaos would not exist. In the garden such order prevailed until Adam and Eve fell from God’s grace and were cast out into such disorder as to deal with “thorns and thistles” (*Gen 3:18*). They were perfectly able to “eat of every tree of the garden” (*Gen 2:16*) but because of their desire to “be like God, knowing good and evil” (*Gen 3:5*) they were made subject to such a hardship of having to work in order to eat. But work was not for the purpose of atoning for their sin. How could they atone for their iniquity but for a sacrificial system. Such a system required order so that it would be acceptable to God. Thus it required law. And not just any law...

The Law

- Along with a sacrificial system there has always existed a law, even before the Old Testament Law was given through Moses. It has existed as a moral code of conduct which man was never to break since it originated with God. Whether a person who was a Jew under the Old Covenant, or a Gentile living in the nations surrounding Israel, that moral code covered everyone.

Rom 2:11 For God shows no partiality. 12 For all who have sinned without the law (*of Moses, i.e., the Gentiles*) will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the Law (*i.e., the Jews*) will be judged by the Law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the Law, by nature do what the Law requires (*this is the moral code referred to*), they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law.

- The moral law of God applied to every single person since the beginning of time and continues to apply to **everyone** now via the Gospel. Again, the Law of Moses was given only to Israel to perfect them in order to send Christ during the Mosaic dispensation. He came at the end of that era to fulfill the scheme of redemption for mankind's chance to become children of God.

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born **under the Law**, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- Along with Gentiles, Jews alike needed to be “adopted” into the new family of God, the church of Christ, which was built by Him (*Mat 16:18*). Everything created has purpose and performs in its own way by a system of laws, either natural or otherwise. Likewise with man. God has given certain moral laws by which man can live in “order”. Without order there is chaos.

1Ti 1:8 Now we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ... 11 in accordance **with the Gospel** of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (*Emp. added*)

- Jesus gave “a new commandment [that we are to] love one another” (*Jn 13:34*) and the laws that conform to this new mandate from Christ, that are in harmony with the Gospel, are laws that are good, including nine of the ten, as relating to the ten commandments, in the Law of Moses. Any law **not** in harmony with the Gospel is not to be obeyed. Man-made laws that include those on MDR (*which go against the seventh commandment concerning adultery*), and other laws such as state sanctioned abortion (*which concern the sixth commandment against murder*), do not fulfill Christ's charge to love one other. But even before Christ gave such a commandment, long before He even came, there were many prophecies spoken concerning His arrival that seem to have fallen on deaf ears. One such prophecy concerned His birth, even narrowing it down to the exact place.

Mic 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me One Who is to be Ruler in Israel, Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Anticipating His Arrival

1Pe 1:20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

- And only the humblest of Israel knew when He came. One such man was “Simeon [who was] righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel” (*Lk 2:26*). Notice his response when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple “to do for Him according to the custom of the Law” (*v.27*).

Luk 2:29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; 30 for my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

- Jesus was not to be the typical conquering king that the Jewish people were led to believe He would be by those who didn't accept Him as the prophesied Messiah. They looked on the outward man not considering carefully what the scripture foretold of His humble arrival. After all, how could the son of a lowly carpenter lead Israel against the mighty Roman Empire? Obvious to them it couldn't be someone of such a status or appearance.

His Outward Appearance

- How many paintings, statues or even handsome Hollywood actors have we seen with Jesus being portrayed as a dashing, rugged specimen of a man? People can be so shallow. As though the outward appearance is what makes the person within.

Isa 53:1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.

“He does not appear in the form which we had anticipated.

In regard to the personal appearance of the Redeemer, it is remarkable that the New Testament has given us no information. Not a hint is dropped in reference to his height of stature, or his form; respecting the color of his hair, his eyes, or his complexion. In all this, on which biographers are usually so full and particular, the evangelists are wholly silent. There was evidently design in this; and the purpose was probably to prevent any painting, statuary, or figure of the Redeemer, that would have any claim to being regarded as correct or true.

The image to the mind's eye is as obscure in the one case as the other; and in both, we are directed to his moral beauty, his holiness, and benevolence, as objects of contemplation, rather than to his external appearance or form.”

Albert Barnes

- We can only deduce from what we know of Him from being brought up in the carpentry business of that day, how He had to have been very strong, especially to have suffered a Roman scourging as He did only to have to barely endure carrying His cross to Calvary.

Isa 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as One from Whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed. Thus...

His Mission

- Christ did not come to disrupt what was orderly and good and He had no political aspirations where He could change things. His mission was to fulfill the demands of the Law. Any law that doesn't require restitution for lawlessness is a law that will soon fail to do what it was created for and chaos would be the result. For instance, there's a law that states we shouldn't murder. In time a majority of people begin to kill other human beings, thus breaking the law. Everyone doing it doesn't make it legal. And just being remorseful should never be the final payoff for a crime committed against another person or the state. Incarceration, and or a fine or other punishment, needs to be implemented as restitution for committing such lawlessness.

Mat 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

- In order to fulfill the demands of the Law where sin required restitution, Jesus became our restitution. We cannot stand before a judge without having our go-between, our lawyer who knows the law when it comes to civil matters. So why would we want to face the ultimate Judge without the ultimate Advocate Who has paid our "legal" fees with the ultimate price of His own blood. He now works pro-bono for those who have accepted His terms.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us **in** Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as He **chose us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. 5 In love He predestined us for adoption as sons **through** Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, 6 to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us **in** the Beloved. (*Emp. added*)

- Only those **in** Christ who have accepted the terms of the agreement are included in the "chosen" to be represented by Christ at the final judgment which **all** will attend.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people? 9 And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief;

when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

“The Lord was ‘pleased’ with his sufferings, not because he has delight in the sufferings of innocence; not because the sufferer was in any sense guilty or ill-deserving; and not because he was at any time displeased or dissatisfied with what the Mediator did, or taught.

In accordance with this, the Messiah is promised that he shall see a numerous spiritual posterity.” Albert Barnes

- Jesus would witness the results of His sacrifice in all that would accept Him.

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall the righteous One, My Servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities.

“Because these sorrows would result in the pardon and recovery of an innumerable multitude of lost sinners, and in their eternal happiness and salvation.”

Albert Barnes

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

“It was from language such as this that the Jews obtained the notion, that the Messiah would be a distinguished conqueror, and hence, they looked forward to one who as a warrior would carry the standard of victory around the world. But it is evident that it may be applied with much higher beauty to the spiritual victories of the Redeemer, and that it expresses the great and glorious truth that the conquests of the true religion will yet extend over the most formidable obstacles on the earth.”

Albert Barnes

- Strength comes in many forms. But the most powerful army on the face of the earth is no match to the resolve of a faithful Christian. Many godly martyrs have lost their lives for the sake of truth by those who would attempt to destroy the faith. But they all have ceased to exist as the faith continues on, thus fulfilling what Daniel prophesied concerning the kingdom that would “bring them (*all other kingdoms*) to an end, and it (*the church*) shall stand forever” (*Dan 2:44*). Thus it was Jesus’ mission to establish such a kingdom, built on “the covenant He mediates [*which*] is better, since it is enacted on better promises” (*Heb 8:6*).

Luk 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

- Once He proclaimed the Gospel message it was His time to fulfill His mission to go to the Roman cross, the most barbaric form of execution ever to be administered by any state. He knew what He would have to endure beforehand but only aimed to please His Father in order to bring “many sons to glory [and to] make the Founder of their salvation perfect (*Gk.5048-to complete, that is, accomplish*) through suffering” (*Heb 2:10*).

“Complete by means of sufferings; that is, to render him wholly qualified for his work, so that he should be a Saviour just adapted to redeem man. This does not mean that he was sinful before and was made holy by his sufferings; nor that he was not in all respects a perfect man before; but it means, that by his sufferings he was made “wholly suited” to be a Saviour of people; and that, therefore, the fact of his being a suffering man was no evidence, as a Jew might have urged, that he was not the Son of God.”

Albert Barnes

- The fact that Jesus did not respond to or lead an army against His accusers or the Roman army, was not to be understood as though He was not the Messiah the Jews had watched for since the first prophesy concerning His arrival. And on top of that, His departure didn't convince them either.

His Departure

- There were many incidents where Jesus mentioned His death as being imminent. But He also mentioned leaving a part of the Godhead to those who followed Him, through which they would then be able to continue His work of spreading the Gospel.

Joh 7:37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this He said about the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

- Jesus' glorification came when He returned to Heaven to receive “from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit” (*Act 2:33*) which was to be King over the “kingdom, [in which] all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him” (*Dan 7:14*) a.k.a., the church. This was fulfilled early in the first century (*Act 2:1*) “when the day of Pentecost arrived [and] they (*the 12*) were all together in one place... [and] (*v.4*) were all filled with the Holy Spirit”. The 12 apostles received a miraculous outpouring of the Spirit through Whom they were able to preach the Gospel until “the perfect [came and] the partial [passed] away” (*1 Cor 13:10*). Such gifts were necessary back then to prove what the apostles, along with those they “laid their hands on” (*Act 8:17*), were saying **was** from inspiration until the complete written word was finished. But the apostles weren't the only ones to receive an ‘indwelling’ of the Spirit, although not a miraculous one. Speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Sychar...

Joh 4:13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this (*physical*) water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

- We cannot deny that a Christian receives an ‘indwelling’ of the Holy Spirit once forgiven of his sins. Scriptures are replete with this information.

Act 5:32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, Whom God has given to those who obey Him.

- So when is a person a candidate to receive the indwelling of Holy Spirit?

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- They were first told about Jesus as being the promised Messiah (*v.36*), they realized their lost condition, they then asked what they needed to do to be forgiven (*v.37*). At that point Peter interrupted his sermon and gave them the answer. They would obtain their much wanted forgiveness, along with receiving "the gift of the Holy Spirit". So how exactly does the gift we receive from Holy Spirit work **with** us or **in** us once we've obeyed the Gospel in baptism?

Eph 1:13 In Him you also, when you **heard** the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and **believed** in Him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory. (*Emp. added*)

- It has been said the Holy Spirit doesn't make one a child of God but is given to him once he becomes a child of God. Notice the order; hear, believe then sealed. But also notice Peter's words to his Jewish audience at the feast of Pentecost. They also heard the Gospel Peter was proclaiming, believed what Peter said, which was evidenced by their repentance, and then they were to be baptized **before** they could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Only with Holy Spirit's sealing as a down payment, or guarantee, could we ever wish to make the claim that Heaven is our eternal destination. In the meantime, we are to "present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship" (*Rom 12:1*).

1Co 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, Whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

- Other things Holy Spirit does for the faithful Christian include being...

Eph 3:16 ... strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, (*reason*) 17 so that (1)Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, (2)being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may (3)have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and (4)to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be (5)filled with all the fullness of God.

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit (1)helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself (2)intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And He Who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

- Therefore, in order to have all the above and then some, we must conclude the necessity of the Spirit's indwelling even though it is not for the purpose of performing miracles. We have something better than even the apostles had. We have the inspired, written word of God which is "the sword of the Spirit" (*Eph 6:17*) which should be the Christian's first weapon of choice in spiritual warfare to protect his "temple of the Holy Spirit within". It can only be in such a way that we can ever think of...

Anticipating His Return

- Jesus made it very clear that He's coming back!

Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.

- There is only one other choice as to where one will spend eternity. And ultimately, nobody wants to go there.

Tit 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.

- Just as God prepared His people Israel for their Messiah's coming, He is now preparing His spiritual Israel for Christ's return. But are we ready? Ask yourself, are you ready? Do you understand what it means to be a part of spiritual Israel? Have you entered the "gate that is narrow" or are you still on the wide road "that leads to destruction"?

Luk 9:23 And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (*Emp. added*)

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April 25, 2025
www.truthdiscovered.net