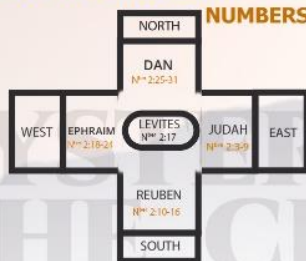


## MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

Rather than engaging in endless debates about the mystery of the cross of Christ, this book aims to provide a prophetic understanding of this fundamental teaching in the life of every Christian. The cross, in fact, stands as the most powerful symbol in the world. The death of Jesus Christ marks a pivotal moment in history; it is the rock, battered by the waves, that remains unshaken in the sea of time. No technology can replace it. It is our sole and eternal hope. Christ died for us. This event is a cosmic eruption of love and grace that shatters the fortresses and iron gates of every form of enslavement that has long tyrannized humanity; it opens the doors to God's eternal purposes. The average Christian experiences a quality of life that no other religion can offer, even to its most devout followers. Only Jesus saves, for only Jesus died and is capable of offering us what he has to offer. No one in the world can compare to him.

### THE CAMP OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL NUMBERS 2



Kalala Kongolo Joseph (Golf) is a graduate of the Université Libre de Kinshasa (ULK), holding a degree in Private Judicial Law. With a broad and open mind, he has pursued various courses in France and Canada. He is a pastor and the legal representative of the LE JOURDAIN church and community. Known for his respect for sound doctrine, this man of God makes biblical teachings accessible to the public through scholarly writings.

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Kalala Kongolo Joseph (Golf)

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Editions Ted William's Lapidus

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Lapidus

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Tome I

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**Kinshasa 2024**



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**DEDICATION**

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*To my beloved wife, my biological and spiritual children, and my spiritual mentors —Pastor Innocent Ilunga and Pastor John Majila—without forgetting the Church, the Body of Christ.*

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## PREFACE

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As we introduce this work—both theological and spiritual—we feel as though we are being ministered to and taught at the same time. Indeed, the strength of this work lies in its contribution to the field of theological reflection, as the man of God, Joseph Kalala, avoids the endless debates and rivalries surrounding the power of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, he prophetically and convincingly unveils its significance from the Old Covenant to the New. From a spiritual perspective, this book brings genuine value to the faith of those who still doubted the foundational truth of the mystery of the cross.

The author makes no detour in declaring that whoever believes in Christ passes from death to life, while whoever rejects Him or continues in sin remains in spiritual death. On the other hand, the one who turns away from spiritual death—having once been like a corpse because of sin—and clings to Christ is often seen by former companions as someone who is ‘dead.’ Thus, the cross can be both a place of blessing and a place of judgment. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who made our deliverance possible through His redemptive death.

According to the author, the power of the cross was already at work in the Old Testament. Indeed, the encampments of the children of Israel were arranged in the shape of a cross. This was the reason for their victories over the nations during their journey through the wilderness. However, as the author points out, the moment Israel departed from the form of the cross to join the Moabite celebration, they lost the battle. In other words, the cross was the prophetic symbol that foreshadowed the redemptive work Christ would accomplish decades later. That same cross is the place where Jesus offered Himself to deliver us from the law and from sin. To walk in this divine favor, we must live in alignment with it, so that we may partake in the full benefits of the work of the cross.

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We already carry within us the firstfruits of a nature that will be fully revealed in heaven. This very nature—of which we already have the firstfruits—is to be like Him! 1 John 3 : 1-2 : See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, [a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

This is why those under the Old Covenant could not receive the fullness of the Spirit as we can today, because they had not yet been fully redeemed—since the blood of goats and bulls could never bring complete redemption. We can receive it because the blood of Jesus has fully redeemed us to God. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit has sealed us in this way: we already carry within us the full first fruits of the perfect nature of what we are yet to become. In simple terms, we carry within us the very nature of God—we share His ‘DNA,’ and we belong to the very family of God!

To further confirm that we are already, in essence, what we will one day fully become, the Bible says in Ephesians 2:6 that we are already reigning in the heavenly realms: 'And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. In Christ, we already possess the beginnings of full sovereignty and divine authority. Even if it is only the beginning, we must be aware of it and walk in it, because God's nature—though still in its embryonic form within us—enables us to surpass every other power and authority on this earth.

With these few, non-exhaustive reflections, we believe we have conveyed our understanding of the Word of God as preached in this book by Pastor Joseph Kalala. We wholeheartedly recommend this book to all segments of the population in general, and to all of God's children in particular.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The message of the cross remains one of the most controversial subjects in the entire Bible. Indeed, it was through the cross that God revealed Himself in the very place where no one expected Him. Paul's declaration that the crucified Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah—both surprised and offended Jews and Greeks alike. In the Christian faith, the cross of Christ is seen as the instrument of salvation for all humanity, for through His death, He redeemed mankind from sin in general, and from original sin in particular. The wide range of interpretations has led some of God's servants to refrain from preaching on this mystery, in an effort to avoid the endless controversies that trouble society—yet this message remains essential for the salvation of souls. Be that as it may, the mystery of the cross is framed by two major events in human history. These are death and resurrection, which correspond to the two covenants: the Old and the New. The Law—a sign of death; Grace—a sign of life.

Although the Bible explains it, many still fail to grasp the true significance of the cross and the mystery of God hidden within it. The cross is the place of death—and the passage from death to life. Yes, it is also the site of a death that remains controversial in both its meaning and its nature. Whoever believes in Christ passes from death to life, but whoever rejects Christ or sins against Him remains in spiritual death. On the other hand, the one who turns away from spiritual death—the walking corpse he once was because of sin—and attaches himself to Christ is often seen as 'dead' by his former companions in a life of sin. The cross, therefore, can be both a place of blessing and a place of curse. It is a place of blessing when, by being there, we freely surrender ourselves to crucifixion so that the flesh may be put to death—then we pass from death to life. It becomes a curse when one refuses to embrace the cross as the path to life. The cross is the ultimate point of transition—toward either a joyful eternity or a sorrowful one. It is also the place where human history was forever changed.

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definitive authority over the world, until the fulfillment of what is written: *“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet.” [c] Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.*” (1 Cor 15, 25-28). Yes, the mystery of the cross has been revealed—but have we truly understood it?

The cross is the most powerful symbol the world has ever known. The death of Jesus Christ is a pivotal moment—like a wave-beaten rock that stands firm in the midst of history’s raging sea. No technology can ever replace it. It is our only hope—an eternal hope. Christ died for us—this is the heart of the gospel. This event is a cosmic explosion of love and goodness, shattering the strongholds and iron gates of every form of bondage that has enslaved humanity—it opens the way to God’s eternal purposes. The average Christian enjoys a quality of life that no other religion offers—even to its most devoted followers. Only Jesus saves, because only Jesus died and is able to offer what no one else can. No one in the world can compare to Him.

The most glorious mystery of all is the redemptive death of Christ. We will never fully comprehend its depth, for what took place flowed from the very heart of Jesus and the Father. The cross points to another reality for each and every one of us. Some believe that Jesus was merely a rejected figure—a martyr. Others see Christ’s agony as a reflection of a world in its death throes. He certainly embodied all of that. In solidarity with our condition, He brought God into our world and into our suffering. There is no need to ask the question: “Where is God?” We look to the cross and see Him there—sharing in the brokenness of our hearts, our shame, and our suffering. But what impact did the cross truly have? Beyond its emotional impact, did it truly have any lasting repercussions?

In this book, we will explore several key aspects: the accomplishments of the cross, its significance, and its power to lead humanity into divine transformation—for the cross is the very heart of

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Christianity. We believe this book will make a true difference when read through prophetic lenses, for the Bible declares that solid food is for the mature. And so, beyond being viewed as a natural death on the cross, it is also a great mystery—one that the prophets spoke of at various times without contradiction, but rather in a coordinated and complementary way. The cross we will encounter in this book is the cross of Christ—the one that gives us eternal life. However, to fully grasp this truth, we will—with the help of the Holy Spirit—approach the mystery of the cross through the following chapters:

- A Historical Theorization of the Cross;
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**CHAPTER ONE:  
A HISTORICAL THEORIZATION OF THE CROSS**

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Far from being a theory or a concept introduced only in the New Covenant, the mystery of the cross has been unfolding and taking shape since the Old Covenant. The symbolism of the cross can be found in the books of the Law, in Revelation, and throughout the writings of the prophets. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus compares His future death on the cross to the incident with the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:4-9). The deadly bite of the serpents was healed when the sons of Israel looked to the bronze serpent crafted by Moses and lifted up, not on a wood, but on a pole. The logic is that of exposing the defeated enemy: the serpent for the sons of Israel, and sin for every person who looks to Jesus. On the cross, we witness the violence of mankind exposed in the body of the only-begotten Son, giving us the assurance of victory, for Jesus is also the Lamb who *'takes away the sin of the world'* (John 1:29).

**I.1. The Lord's command to camp: a prophetic insight into the mystery of the cross**

The text of Exodus 3:7-8 foreshadows the mystery of the cross. Indeed, *'The Lord said: I have seen the suffering of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their cries because of their oppressors, for I know their pain. I have come down to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'* This text reveals the cross within the context of the Old Covenant. It is here that the Holy Spirit must have guided Moses and Aaron to align the encampments with the shape of the cross.

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To the north was Dan and his banner; to the south was Reuben and his banner; to the east was Judah and his banner; to the west was

Ephraim and his banner. This was the order of encampment as commanded by the Lord to Moses. In other words, the cross is like a camp, and within that camp, there are individual encampments. The cross is a whole life, a complete responsibility. The cross is a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. In Numbers 2:1-34, *The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: The children of Israel shall encamp, each by his standard, under the banners of the house of his fathers; they shall encamp opposite and around the Tabernacle of Meeting...* The strength of the children of Israel as they marched lay in the cross-shaped formation of their encampments, following God's command for their deployment.

All twelve tribes were grouped together in encampments, faithfully following their designated positions during times of rest and in battle. As the God of order, He did not want them to walk in disarray. It is important to remember that when Jacob blessed his children, he gave the scepter of leadership to Judah as a guide. That is why, when God assigned each tribe its camp, Judah was placed first in the east, followed by Ephraim in the west, Dan in the north, and Reuben in the south. God arranged them in the shape of the cross as they journeyed. Those in the lead had to maintain their positions. Judah, the leader, always positioned himself at the front. As they marched, the children of Israel left Pharaoh's Egypt to the west and journeyed east toward Israel, the Promised Land, maintaining the cross-shaped formation that was their strength.

From this, we, as Christians, understand that our strength lies in the cross. Without the cross, there is no victory, and no salvation. And yet, this was but a shadow of what was to come years later: the arrival of Christ. Israel, which marched in the shape of the cross, did not experience only easy times. Since human nature weighs heavily on our relationship with God, the children of Israel were not spared. They were tempted by the snares set by Satan and his followers. That is why they strayed and turned to practices that did not align with God's will. In other words, they turned away from the position of the cross to ally themselves with the gods and practices of other nations. This situation likely angered the Lord, who punished His people. This is what happened when Israel fell into the trap in Moab.

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### A. Trapped in Moab, Israel left the camps (Numbers 22:5).

Arriving at the plains, at the gate of Moab, beyond the Jordan and opposite Jericho, Israel requested to cross. The Moabites went to inform their king, Balak, saying, 'The Israelites are at the gate. The king panicked because he knew the strength of Israel, and what the people of Israel had done to Pharaoh in Egypt—the most powerful man on earth at the time—who lost many men and his army in the sea. Moreover, Israel had won many battles against the kings in the desert, and Balak was well aware of this. To avoid the fury of the Israelites, Balak knew of a prophet living in Moab, named Balaam, son of Beor. He was powerful—whatever blessing he pronounced came to pass, and whatever curse he cast was also fulfilled. Then King Balak sent messengers to summon the prophet to curse the mighty nation of Israel.

When the prophet Balaam arrived, the king asked him to pronounce a curse against Israel. However, instead of a curse, the prophet pronounced a blessing over Israel. King Balak's actions were influenced by the power of the cross, symbolized by the encampments of the children of Israel. It is also the image that affirms that at the cross, there was one who bore the curse of all humanity and replaced it with blessing. Noticing the prophet Balaam's speech impediment, King Balak was furious and demanded that the prophet curse Israel a second time. Nevertheless, it was always a blessing that came from the mouth of the prophet Balaam. For the third attempt, Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor, overlooking the desert. There, he saw that Israel was encamped according to the tribes, in the shape of the cross.

After pronouncing every form of blessing, the prophet Balaam found it difficult to turn them into a curse. But, faced with the king's fury and driven by his own desire for money, Balaam revealed a secret to King Balak in order to trap Israel. The prophet advised the king to organize a feast, inviting Israel in the name of kinship, for in the shape of the cross, they were invincible. Yet Israel's mission was to cross over, not to join in the feast with the Moabites at Shittim. As soon as the Israelites attended this feast, they were weakened because they had forsaken the position of the cross they had formed. That's why it's always important to be mindful of the celebrations when you are in

### A. Trapped in Moab, Israel left the camps (Numbers 22:5).

Arriving at the plains, at the gate of Moab, beyond the Jordan and opposite Jericho, Israel requested to cross. The Moabites went to inform their king, Balak, saying, 'The Israelites are at the gate. The king panicked because he knew the strength of Israel, and what the people of Israel had done to Pharaoh in Egypt—the most powerful man on earth at the time—who lost many men and his army in the sea. Moreover, Israel had won many battles against the kings in the desert, and Balak was well aware of this. To avoid the fury of the Israelites, Balak knew of a prophet living in Moab, named Balaam, son of Beor. He was powerful—whatever blessing he pronounced came to pass, and whatever curse he cast was also fulfilled. Then King Balak sent messengers to summon the prophet to curse the mighty nation of Israel.

When the prophet Balaam arrived, the king asked him to pronounce a curse against Israel. However, instead of a curse, the prophet pronounced a blessing over Israel. King Balak's actions were influenced by the power of the cross, symbolized by the encampments of the children of Israel. It is also the image that affirms that at the cross, there was one who bore the curse of all humanity and replaced it with blessing. Noticing the prophet Balaam's speech impediment, King Balak was furious and demanded that the prophet curse Israel a second time. Nevertheless, it was always a blessing that came from the mouth of the prophet Balaam. For the third attempt, Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor, overlooking the desert. There, he saw that Israel was encamped according to the tribes, in the shape of the cross.

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God's presence. It is during such times that we often stray from God's presence. Moreover, it has always been during the feasts that God's children have been slain. This is often where God's children forsake the essential for the trivial. The prophet Balaam knew that anyone who abandoned his camp would be powerless and eventually fall outside of divine protection.

As for the second trap, it is important to note that the Moabites brought meat sacrificed to idols, to the god Baal, along with women dressed indecently, dancing almost naked in their temple. Despite these evil practices, Israel indulged in drinking, dancing, drunkenness, and descended into debauchery with the Moabite women. As a result, Israel departed from the cross-shaped encampments, and God withdrew His presence from among them. The Bible tells us that when Israel abandoned the cross-shaped camp, 22,000 of its members perished. Numbers 25: 1-9. It should be noted that God did not promise death to the children of Israel; rather, it was Israel itself that chose death. In other words, when we detach ourselves from the cross, we become weak, and death begins to set in.

Moreover, the Bible declares: 'I have set before you two paths—life and death—but I urge you to choose life.' The cross is the center of eternal life for all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It was through the cross that we received salvation. This is why Jesus refused to meet the Greeks, who are part of the nations, saying, 'Let them wait until the seed is planted and dies, and then they will see Him' (John 12:22-24). So, Jesus was speaking of His death, which symbolizes the redemption of all the nations of the world. This is why the cross-shaped camp was only a shadow or symbol of the things to come, which God revealed to Israel. Given this, the cross concerns not just one nation, but all of humanity.

### **B. The cross on the universal scale**

Christians need to understand how the gospel has evolved from the early church in Ephesus to the present day. Indeed, Israel is located in the East, which means the first church, the Church of Ephesus, was also in the East. Thus, Luke presents the Word as the rising sun. The sun rises in the east. The gospel began to be preached in the East, in Israel, with the apostle Paul as its messenger. To the north is Europe, to the west is America, and to the south is Africa.

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This geopolitical position forms a cross, just like the one formed by the children of Israel in their encampments. This is the point to emphasize that the gospel of Christ is not for one nation, but for all the nations of the world.

Around the early 170s, the Apostle Paul left Israel, the East, and brought the gospel to the North, specifically to Rome, on the European continent. Based on the above, when the gospel left Israel, the East was in chaos. Thus, God had blinded the Jews so that the nations could be saved. In the same year (170), a Frenchman named Irenaeus became the bishop of the church of Smyrna. In 312, Martin, of German nationality, became the bishop of the church of Pergamum. In 606, Columbanus of Ireland became the bishop of the church of Thyatira. Around 1520, an Englishman named Luther became the leader of the Sardinian church, continuing in this role until 1750, when Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, brought the gospel to the West, to America, with his message of sanctification, where he eventually died.

In 1906, a great awakening began, similar to the Day of Pentecost, with a group of Black Americans. In this age of Laodicea, America has produced many servants, including the prophet Branham. When the gospel arrived in America, Africa was still in darkness. The sun had not yet set. Now, the sun must follow its natural cycle before returning to its original point; and its natural cycle is the passage through Africa across the equator. Among African countries, the DRC is the one crossed by the equator. Through the revival movement, Aidin Abala was among those who brought the gospel to the DRC around the 1960s, following several crusades and evangelism campaigns by foreign evangelists. That's why the DRC is blessed with so many men of God compared to other African countries. It's a dimension that must be understood through prophetic lenses.

Africa is entering a higher dimension that sets it apart from other continents where the gospel has already spread. In fact, Joseph, the perfect type of Christ, was sold in Egypt, in Africa. It was in Egypt that he served as governor. Among Jacob's children, Reuben did not join in when they wanted to kill Joseph. Reuben protected Joseph. This symbolized truth, and truth is the Word of God. According to the encampments, Reuben was located in the South, in Africa.

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Prophetically speaking, just as Reuben protected Joseph, Africa guards the truth that is God's Word. The same applies to Jesus Christ, who came to take refuge with His family in Africa. This is evident in Africa's rejection of the diabolical practices of homosexuality, bestiality, and other deviations originating from the West. Africa remains obedient to the Holy Scriptures, reflecting the symbol of Reuben, who opposed the death of Joseph, the image of the Word of God.

## **I.2. THE PATH OF THE DIVINE PROCESS**

God, in the reality of His manifestations, leads us to actively participate in the principles of His kingdom, progressively guiding us into the full revelation of His redemptive plans. After man's bitter failure in the Garden of Eden, God, far from losing hope, saw everything moving toward the perfection of His plans. Man will not only be the image of God (Genesis 1:27), but in Christ, he will be the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). It is here, after the Fall, that God reveals, in a veiled manner, His mystery to the man He has created. Sin must lead man to physical death, but through faith in the Son of Promise (Genesis 3:15), his status will change as he appropriates by faith the divine promise made to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as expressed in Genesis 3:15. From an earthly dweller, after his resurrection, he will become an eternal inhabitant of God's heavenly kingdom.

But our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state, conforming it to His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20) From the gracious sentence in the Garden of Eden after the Fall, the following aspects of temporary suffering emerge:

### **➤ For women :**

- increased suffering during pregnancy;
- giving birth with pain ;
- her desires will turn to her husband;
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➤ **For man:**

- curse of the soil because of man ;
- endless toil to get food from the ground every day of his life;
- the ground will produce thorns and thistles;
- he will eat the grass of the field;
- he will return to the dust from which he was taken (Genesis 3:17-19).

Thus, the journey begins here, along a winding and sometimes incomprehensible, yet certain path. We must never forget that all divine promises and prophecies are manifested in us through our unwavering commitment to God's plan, by means of our faith. To reach the goal of the kingdom of heaven (or of God) in our lives, the journey will begin from the stage of untested innocence and unwarranted holiness in the Garden of Eden at the Fall, where man, in his first attempt to make a decision despite contrary advice, revealed his incapacity. Having fallen without hope, man found himself in a state where the devil believed he could establish his absolute reign on earth, claiming to become god forever. After the Fall, man will have to navigate his way under the vigilance of his conscience, so that, once separated from God, he will experience the danger of breaking communion with the Creator, his source of life.

On the contrary, hardening of the heart, unbelief, and refusal to repent have their devastating effect, driving him further and further away from his Creator. After the Flood, God will guide man to care for his neighbor and to give an account of him to God. The unfortunate and humiliating specter of the Tower of Babel reveals that man, rather than humbling himself to recognize God's ways that would lead him to the purpose of his existence, will create his own methods of worship and self-exaltation to proclaim himself god. Man's ambition, as seen in the Tower of Babel, is nothing more than a copy of Lucifer's rebellion against God, as expressed in the Holy Scriptures: *"You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."* (Isaiah 14:13-14). But God's response was fitting, as seen in the fulfillment of verse 15 of the same Isaiah 14 passage.

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So, God decided to choose a man, Abraham, through whom He would implement His plan for the undivided rule of His theocratic kingdom. Things will face obstacles on man's part, and God will subject Jacob's descendants to 400 years of slavery, so that through suffering they will learn to seek help from on high and submit to His principles and methods, transforming their minds to live in purity of heart and thought. But Israel's miraculous deliverance did not stop them from murmuring and complaining at every stage of their journey to the promised land. God ultimately decides to make a covenant with His people through the law, which would guide them toward a life governed by a theocratic regime.

While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, God's people were indulging in spiritual idolatry by making a golden calf to worship as the god who delivered them from Egypt. Filled with righteous anger, Moses, as a seasoned leader, took responsibility for these despicable acts by breaking the tablets of the Ten Commandments he had brought back from God's presence. He knew full well that its enforcement would result in the death of everyone, for from the very first law, the people had offended God. And so, after much intercession, Moses witnessed God once again show mercy. He had to pay a heavy price by extending his fast for another forty days, enduring exhaustion as he returned to the mountain to carve two more tablets on which God would rewrite the law to be established later.

The sacrifices established to bring the people closer to God, though intended to be models, will themselves become real stumbling blocks for the people, who, in turn, will continue to rebel against God's principles, sadly imitating and living like the other nations. This attitude will persist until the day when, under the judge Samuel, Israel will ask God for a king like those of the nations, forever rejecting the theocratic regime God had established over them. Still under the law, the reign of royalty will reveal its inefficiency. Then God, through the Prophets, announces that a true King will come, ruling as God wills, establishing the kingdom of heaven in the hearts and lives of men, and among them. This person, Jesus Christ, who came from heaven, knowing the life of heaven and the government of God in His

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kingdom, is the One chosen by heaven. His two purposeful natures express a fundamental truth:

- Like every human being, the man Jesus would experience the inevitable sufferings of life on earth—fatigue, thirst, suffering from a hostile climate, temptation, and a worldly lifestyle contrary to that of God and His kingdom, etc.
- Like God, He must hate sin while loving the sinner, even though He detests the sin itself. He must also love justice and integrity, desiring to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven.

These two natures of Christ play a crucial role in the work of salvation. To intercede for our cause before God, He will know how to justify His prayer: "when he says: I will proclaim Your name to my brothers; I will praise You in the midst of the congregation. And again: I will place my trust in You. And again: Here I am, with the children God has given me. So, since children share in flesh and blood, He Himself also shared in them, so that through His death He might destroy him who has the power of death—that is, the devil—and free all those who, through fear of death, were held in bondage all their lives. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but the descendants of Abraham. Consequently, He had to be made like His brothers in every way, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to atone for the sins of the people. For, having been tempted Himself in what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

"Therefore, holy brethren, you who share in the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of the faith we profess, Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, just as Moses was faithful in all His house. For He has been judged worthy of a glory so much greater than Moses, as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself" (Hebrews 2:12; 3:3). In other words, God the Father does not experientially know the effects of temptation, famine, fear, shame, fatigue, and other factors that can easily negatively influence the course of our decisions. Thus, Jesus, in His plea for us, will say: "Father, he succumbed to such and such a fault, it's true, but now he has admitted it; forgive him, for the pressure from parents, friends, and circumstances was such that he broke. Father, You don't

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Crucified without personal sin, Christ triumphed in many respects:

- Over the sin that, since the Garden of Eden, has dominated Adam and his descendants;
- Being the incarnation of God, as His birth did not follow biological law, Christ becomes the Son of Promise through whom victory over Satan's torment will come: "He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel" (Genesis 3:15);
- The law, which had been perfect until then, will come crashing down on Him, condemning Him unjustly. In fact, He becomes God's righteousness for the fulfillment of every good work. In this way, He satisfies God's demands in the realm of justice;
- Satan, who had since then shown himself to be the formidable adversary of man and of God's plan in man's life, found himself weakened when Jesus, stronger than he had been during the 4,000 years of his undivided reign, manifested Himself. From then on, Satan and his kingdom of darkness were in the minority, and were ultimately and forever rendered powerless.
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- The abode of the dead, a source of terror for all mankind because no one had ever entered it and returned, was vanquished by the resurrection of Jesus. Then the words are fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Cor. 15:54-56)

As Christ Jesus died on the cross according to God's purposes, the tombs lost their power to hold the saints who had died before the crucifixion. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were resurrected. “the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had died were raised’ (Matt. 27:52), and the dead of old entered the City: “Having come out of the tombs after the resurrection of Jesus, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people. The centurion and those with him guarding Jesus, having seen the earthquake and what had just happened, were filled with great fear and said: Surely this man was the Son of God’ (Matt. 27:53-54).

Satan, who had opposed all since then, was pitifully defeated in his own camp—first in all the trials and temptations he subjected Jesus to, and also in the great battle of Golgotha, which took place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with the infernal reinforcement of the powers of darkness from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. “From the sixth hour until the ninth, darkness covered the whole earth” (Matt. 27:45). Jesus, identifying Himself with the sinful man for whom He became a substitute, cried out to God, 'And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is: My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? Some of those who were standing there, hearing Him, said: He calls Elijah” (Mt 27.46-47). The veil of the temple, symbolizing the fragility of human flesh, lost its strength over the man crucified with Christ: “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom” (Matt. 27:51)

The testimony of the earth: The spectacle was so terrifying that not even the earth stood still—there were earthquakes, rocks split open, and the sun and moon lost their brilliance: “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split” (Mt 27.50-51) In this way, we realize that

- The abode of the dead, a source of terror for all mankind because no one had ever entered it and returned, was vanquished by the resurrection of Jesus. Then the words are fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Cor. 15:54-56)

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creation, which had witnessed the horrific desolation when it, along with man its ruler, was sold to Lucifer by sin, now witnesses the public defeat of its executioner. Jesus' victory over Hades: The dead rising from the tombs symbolize the release of prisoners who, spiritually, had been held captive, unable to experience the wonders of God's kingdom: "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had died were raised" (Matt. 27:52).

Their new life after death demonstrates the new birth through the experience of a life free from the oppression of the devil, and in complete freedom from human laws and constraints: "When they came out of the tombs after the resurrection of Jesus, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people" (Matt. 27:53) Our new life in Christ will visibly demonstrate the effects of God's kingdom among men through those who have believed, establishing the testimony of God's power and the creative force of the Almighty.

### **I.3. THROUGH THE CROSS, CHRIST RECONCILES MANKIND TO HIMSELF**

Indeed, Jesus Christ will restore the communion of permanent intimacy and communication that once existed in the Garden of Eden: "... the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day ..." (Gen. 3.8). "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelations 21.3-4).

*Satan*, who had opposed God since his revolt in heaven and wreaked great havoc against God's creation, was humiliatingly defeated at Golgotha. From then on, he knew his days were numbered. He knows that his final destination is now hell: "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelations 20:10)

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**Man**, who, because of his unfortunate choice in the Garden of Eden, was forever a loser, finds favor in God's eyes and enters the process of complete restoration. Thanks to his reconciliation with God, he is no longer destined for death or merely life on earth, but is now an eternal inhabitant of heaven, where he will go after the final judgment, which will cast Lucifer and his angels into hell: “ *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.*

*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelations 21:19-27; 22:1-5)*

The law, which served as a guide and a safeguard, is now, due to its inefficiency, replaced by Christ: the Justice of God, the Way to lead all things according to God's principles, the Truth to guide all things in divine truth, and the Life to impart the life of God to everyone who believes in Him. “Jesus answered: I am the way and

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the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) To better understand the meaning of this verse, let us listen to: “I am the Way of Truth that leads to Life.” Sin, through the unjust indictment of Jesus, fulfilled its work of divine wrath upon Jesus, the righteous. Because Christ bears sins and their consequences on the cross, sin and its power die with Him: *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The sacrifice for sin had to occur for every sin committed (Lev. 5:5); but Christ, in accordance with divine foreknowledge, became the sacrifice for the sin of mankind, and thus the animals and other offerings for atonement are abolished, Christ having been the perfect sacrifice once and for all. “But Christ came as the High Priest of the good things to come; He passed through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation; and He entered once for all into the Most Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who are defiled, sanctify and purify the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works, so that you may serve the living God!

And this is why He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, having died to redeem the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance promised to them. Where there is a will, the death of the testator must be established. A will is only valid in the event of death, for it has no force as long as the testator lives. That is why even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood. Moses, after speaking all the commandments of the law before all the people, took the blood of the calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop; and sprinkled it on the book itself and on all the people, saying: This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you. In the same way, he sprinkled the blood on the tabernacle and on all the utensils of worship. And almost everything, according to the law, is cleansed

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with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:11-23)

Grace, which was impossible because everyone who sinned had to die, found its manifestation through God's mercy. *“salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. (Luke 1: 71-75).*

Redemption, substitution, and justification have become effective, because in Christ we fully possess all of them:

- From being lost, we are now redeemed and saved;
- Christ, having taken our place, means we no longer have to suffer for our sins;
- From unjust histories, we have inherited Christ's righteousness

*“But now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus Christ. If we are united with Him, we need fear no sentence to the contrary, for we now live under a new regime, that of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit gives us the life that was in Christ Jesus and brings us into communion with Him. This life-giving power of the Spirit lifts me out of the vicious circle of sin and death; this new order enables me to escape the regime of evil that was leading me to ruin” (Romans 8:1-8)*

The death of death has become a reality because we have passed from death to life: "I have been crucified with Christ; and if I live, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And if I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, and now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and hell. (Revelations 1:17) Jesus is our Savior and Lord, now our new Master, and this forever, for Satan, sin, death, and the power of evil are eternally dethroned: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) “that at the name of Jesus every

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knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

As a result: We now live to love Jesus, because of all He has done for us, a debt we can never repay. So we are slaves to Jesus, not out of compulsion, but out of love for all He has done and is for us.

#### **I.4. BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE CONTEXT**

To highlight the transformation that the Lord works in us through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures use a form of expression that contrasts the past with the present: “Dead in your offenses.” Indeed, in the spiritual death the sinner experienced before his conversion, a separation from God was in effect, as the sin committed had caused the rupture of communion with the source of life, who is God. A state of spiritual death had thus been established, and man was nothing more than a walking corpse. The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, uses the expression ‘the uncircumcision of your flesh.’ True life is inseparable from a right relationship with God; an understanding of God’s method of forgiveness is essential. The metaphor of an official deed describes ‘an IOU,’ which had to be signed by the debtor as an acknowledgment of what he owed, since it was impossible for him to repay his debt.

Debts, in fact, are always compounded by legal provisions, as every fault is a violation of God’s law. The only hope in the face of this unpayable debt was to find someone who could cancel it. Paul depicts God taking the deed written against us and nailing it to the cross of Christ, vividly illustrating that the Lord’s death is the foundation of God’s forgiveness for man’s sin. One of the most important aspects of debt cancellation is that the debt statement must include both exclusive and inclusive details of the debt. A forgotten debt not listed on the statement must eventually be paid, or else the law will be on our heels. This highlights the importance of confessing all our sins in detail, one by one.

Presidential pardons can also be used to cancel prisoners’ sentences. Once the presidential decree canceling prison sentences is promulgated, the prison governors will be notified. As soon as he receives the presidential decree, the Registrar will pass it to the Prison

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Registrar, who will review each criminal file and note 'sentence handed down by presidential decree, with references and date of signature. At this point, the prisoner's release was signed, and he was publicly freed during a ceremony marking the collective release of prisoners granted a presidential pardon. As long as a prisoner's case has not been systematically processed, they will remain in prison, even though they are theoretically free. Let us understand here that the confession of sins, a sign of repentance, is essential for salvation. Ultimately, confession of faith in the Risen One and conversion are inseparable from the process.

The spiritual effects of victory through debt cancellation are best understood using metaphor to explain the masterstroke achieved solely by God in Christ. The metaphor refers to the triumphal procession of the victorious general, where prisoners of war were displayed to enhance the victor's personal glory. In fact, what happened when a dissident general succeeded in overthrowing the emperor? The victorious general had to bind the hands of the defeated emperor, as well as those of the soldiers who had remained loyal to him. The bound hands of the defeated emperor were tied behind the victorious general's chariot with a long rope. While the people on both sides of the road cheer the victor's procession, the bound vanquished are dragged shamefully, with all the humiliation this entails, through the streets of the city (Colossians 2:13-15).

The enemies here are spiritual—principalities and powers—but they have been stripped, meaning they are deprived of any further ability to do harm. God publicly made a spectacle of them, not only in the sense that everyone could see, but also as an act of defiance against the powers that challenged His authority. These enemies now present a pitiful spectacle, completely defeated by the cross. The English version translates 'in Him' (or 'through Him, Christ'), which seems preferable, as God is the subject of the entire sentence. The text of Isaiah 14:15-17 precisely describes this spectacle: "But you were cast into Sheol, into the depths of the pit. Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world a wilderness, who ravaged its cities and would not release his captives?"

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**CHAPTER TWO:  
THE CORE MESSAGE OF THE MYSTER OF THE  
CROSS**

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As we saw in the first chapter, the mystery of the cross has a prophetic dimension that should not be underestimated. Indeed, without the cross, the gospel loses its essence, for Jesus Christ had to take on human nature to come and save all humanity. In this sense, the central message of the mystery of the cross is to show humanity how the Messiah, possessing divine attributes, became man to bear the sin and burden of the universe. To benefit from the Messiah's work on the cross, one must accept the message of Christ's gospel and, above all, believe in His death and resurrection—the very acts through which He died and rose again to deliver us from the law that condemned us.

The event itself is profoundly moving. He, the only perfect person in the world, endured the unbearable out of love. It's a spectacle that still breaks our hearts today. We can say: "*When I contemplate that marvelous cross where the Prince of Glory died, I consider the most precious things as vain, and my pride is annihilated.*" Certainly, nothing on earth has stirred as many emotions as the death of Jesus Christ. But was the cross merely a touching, spectacular event? Does this emotion have the power to transform a drug addict or a murderer? Does crying at the sight of this spectacle bring conviction of sin or forgiveness? As we can see, the sight of the cross may humble our pride and compel us to give of ourselves; but did Jesus die only to humble us? If His death was exemplary, what kind of example was it?

Simply dying isn't an example in itself. There must be a purpose behind it. In doing so, the purpose of Christ's death is the redemption of mankind. The former, who lived in sin—both general and original—has a vested interest in clinging to the Messiah to make their life exemplary, in the light of Christ's life. Jesus chose to suffer and die for sins, even though He had never sinned. His coming and suffering were foretold in the Old Covenant, which represents the Law. He came in the New Covenant, which represents grace. In this second chapter, we will discuss several points, including: Christ's

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sufferings as described in Scripture, death as Christ's ultimate goal, and the truth of the gospel...

## **II.1. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AS DESCRIBED IN SCRIPTURE.**

The coming of Jesus Christ was the central message of the Old Testament prophets. He had to come to deliver mankind from the grip of sin. Alas, this visit was no accident, nor was it a sightseeing tour of the world. Rather, it was for the fulfillment of the saving mission. This was to be accompanied by suffering and death on the cross, symbolizing Christ's acceptance of the human condition. Judged, beaten, and crucified by humans, Christ showed us on the third day that He is God, for, having accomplished His mission, He had to reclaim His place in heaven. Hence His resurrection, manifestation, and ascension to heaven in His divinity.

Isaiah 50: 6 underlines : *“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”* Here, the prophet Isaiah was already foretelling what the Messiah would endure at the hands of the humans for whom He would die on the cross. Christ did not refuse for a single moment to give His body to the ill-treatment reserved for Him by men, even though He had the power to avoid it. Everyone used whatever means they could to hurt Him. Yet Jesus Christ did not refuse to surrender Himself to His executioners, who kept inventing insults to humiliate Him, the one who had accepted to bear the sins of the whole world on the cross.

Next, we need to explain the causes of the Passion to make the greatness and strength of God's love for us even more striking. Now, if we seek the motive that led the Son of God to undergo such a painful Passion, we will find that, in addition to the hereditary fault of our first parents, it was the sins and crimes committed by humanity from the beginning of the world to this day, and those that will continue until the consummation of the ages. Sinners themselves were both the authors and instruments of all the pain He endured.

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On the other hand, we must consider those who continue to fall back into their sins as guilty of this dreadful offense. Since it was our crimes that caused our Lord Jesus Christ to undergo the ordeal of the cross, surely those who continue to plunge into disorder and evil, as described in Hebrews 6:6, crucify the 'Son' of God anew in their hearts through their sins, and cover Him with shame. We must admit that our crime in this case is greater than that of the Jews. For as the Apostle Paul testifies in 1 Corinthians 2:8, if they had known the King of glory, they would never have crucified Him. We, on the other hand, profess to know Him. And when we deny Him by our actions, we are, in a sense, laying our murderous hands on Him. ”

Bearing in mind the historical complexity of Jesus' trial as reflected in the gospel accounts, and whatever the personal sins of those involved (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate), which only God knows, responsibility cannot be attributed to the Jews of Jerusalem as a whole, despite the cries of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches in the calls for conversion after Pentecost. Jesus Himself, by forgiving on the cross, and Peter, who followed, remedied 'the ignorance' of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders (Acts 3:17).

Jesus Christ crucified is the symbol of the faith of all who believe in Him. The Roman soldiers looked on in horror, yet they did not convert. Paul complained to the Galatians: "‘Jesus Christ was portrayed as crucified,’ but the image did not save them (Galatians 3: 1). They lacked faith and had turned to legalism. According to the Apostle Paul, the cross is the most powerful symbol in the world. Christ's death is a central moment; it is the wave-beaten rock that remains unshaken in the sea of history. No technology can ever replace it. This is our only hope—an eternal hope. Christ died for us—this is the heart of the gospel. This event is a cosmic explosion of love and goodness that shatters the fortresses and iron gates of every form of enslavement that has tyrannized humanity; it opens the doors to God's eternal purposes.

Paul did not dramatize the cross to impress his listeners, hoping that his eloquence would make the event austere and real, turning pagan sinners into Christian saints. How could he? There had to be a greater power behind it all. Paul preached and described the death of

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Christ, who died for our salvation, bearing our sins. This is what made Paul who he was. Galatians 2 : 20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” The power of the cross went far beyond mere emotional impact. Something happened at the cross that nothing else in the world could have accomplished.

#### **A. Let’s consider a few biblical truths.**

One day, Jesus said to His disciples (Luke 9 : 22) *the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.* Note the small phrase 'had to.' Why did He have to endure such suffering? He took three disciples up a mountain with Him, and something extraordinary happened. Jesus was gloriously transfigured, and two figures from the past appeared: Moses and Elijah. The disciples were overwhelmed by what they saw; they heard the divine beings speaking to Jesus about His imminent death, which would be an extraordinary event. It was clearly a divine conversation. We read (Luke 9 : 31), they spoke about his departure,[a] which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

The Greek version translates this word 'departure' as 'exodus' (exodos), reminding us of the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt, a powerful manifestation of divine power. Death is described as an 'exodus' in Scripture twice; the second time, when Peter—who had been with Jesus on the mountain—spoke of his own death. Here, he had learned that death is truly a triumphant event. When Jesus died, He let out a loud cry. Apart from Jesus, no human being in agony has ever done such a thing. At that moment, He gave His life to God, crying out: "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." The Roman centurion heard these words. He had seen many people die before, but never with such triumph. Matthew 27 : 54 : When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

Many centuries before, the prophet Isaiah had described Christ's sufferings, saying: (Isaiah 53 : 7) : He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the

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slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. He submitted to the will of His enemies, even though He could have destroyed them with a single word. Jesus seemed to be dying like a helpless victim, but in this very act lay all His greatness and love. He went to the cross in our place, a victory against all odds—God in Christ triumphing over evil. On the cross, Christ did much more than stir our emotions. He fulfilled a purpose He had chosen and spoken of throughout His ministry. He frequently spoke of His imminent death.

John 12 : 27 Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. My soul is deeply troubled. 'This hour'—there had been great moments when Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and taught the multitudes. But throughout all those moments, He referred to 'the hour' when the destiny of His life would be fulfilled—the climax of His entire existence on earth. This hour was His final hour, as He died to make propitiation.

### **B. Death was his mission**

He came to confront this foe. He came to destroy the works of darkness. We avoid death by making provisions against accidents, illness, and other dangers, but death pursues us, as Scripture says: 2 Corinthians 4 : 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. Jesus was not pursued by death; He Himself pursued and defied death. He forced the king of terror to come and face Him, demanding a duel. He cornered the enemy, confronted the dreadful reality, and 'suffered death for us all' (Hebrews 2:9). The image of Christ is that of a champion, a warrior who enters the realm of death, overcomes it, and brings about the 'death of death.'

The first reference to the battle of the cross is found in Genesis 3:15: the woman's offspring will crush the serpent's head, but his heel will be wounded. Jesus also spoke of being 'saddened.' The word here means to be under pressure, compelled, or seized with a strong intention. He constantly anticipated His encounter with death, the ultimate enemy. In the Garden of Gethsemane and at Golgotha, He seized the serpent of death, strangled it, and returned from the battle

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three days later-scarred and scarred from the struggle, but crowned with victory for us all.

2 Timothy 1: 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Hebrews 2 : 14 : Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death-that is, the devil. The Greek word *katargeo*, translated as 'to annihilate,' means to be drained of vigor, rendered inactive, and useless. "The day of victory came through Jesus' triumph, when "Death has been swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:54)

The serpent of death has lost its venomous fang. What venomous sting is it? 1 Corinthians 15 : 55-56. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. For every human being, the true horror of death is dying in sin and passing into the afterlife burdened with guilt. It's difficult for us to comprehend, but Christ died in our place to spare us from this horrible death and put an end to it. He died, not only to destroy death, but also to abolish our sins. On the cross, He drew the poison from the serpent's venomous fang, and now we can proclaim: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? "

### **C. The truth of the gospel**

What does sin mean? This is the effect of human rebellion on God's heart. Iniquity affects God. He feels every injustice, every act of ruthless cruelty, hatred, falsehood, and evil. He feels it because He loves us all. His reaction is not that of offended dignity, but that of a Father. 'I have sinned against You alone,' says David. (Psalm 51:6) As an absolute monarch, David was above the law, but not above God. God is not indifferent to what happens on earth. He is bruised, pierced by human obstinacy, hostile to His infinitely holy heart and being. The polluted streams of iniquity flow into God's wounded heart.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross, He, the Son of God, had always borne our sins, but as the Son of Man, He took away our sin. He knew that this burden was formidable, familiar with both its

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physical horror and the spiritual darkness that accompanied it. But He became sin for us, endured our hellish judgment, standing between us and the fate that was meant for us. Jesus brought us eternal forgiveness. God did not reject Him or make Him guilty, but bore the judgment for us as our great 'Second Adam,' our representative.

Indeed, the Second Adam, the New Adam, and the Last Adam are all titles given to Jesus Christ. It is primarily based on chapter five of Romans, although none of these expressions are mentioned, and on chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, where the 'last Adam' is indeed a title attributed to Jesus Christ. In the Apostle Paul's understanding, then, this concept clearly answers that Christ came to remove the original sin carried by the first Adam. He lived under the law, whereas the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, came to deliver us from the law—specifically, from original sin in general and personal sins in particular. This is a correction of past wrongs on the part of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, God's only Son and the only sinless person to ever live on earth, was the only one capable of making atonement for mankind. One of the reasons we are here on earth is to learn to obey God's commandments. Apart from Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life, everyone who has ever lived on earth has sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). We sin when we willingly break God's commandments, and every sin carries a punishment. When we sin, justice demands that we face punishment. Ultimately, the consequence of all sin is separation from God. This separation is so severe that we cannot repair it ourselves.

## **II.2. THE FULL EXTENT OF HIS LOVE.**

The truth of the Gospel is not that sin has merely been forgiven, but that it has been mastered and overcome. Jesus defeated the worst-case scenario that Satan could have imagined. The promise was (Jeremiah 31 : 34) : *No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.* He no longer remembers our sins to torment or condemn us. The image of Christ's agony on the cruel cross profoundly affects us. We weep. But He did not die to make us weep; He offered Himself to God on the

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cross to bring us eternal salvation. He accomplished a shift in the divine order and rendered sin and death powerless.

2 Corinthians 5 : 19 *For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's trespasses against them, and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation.* If we preach another gospel, it is not the gospel of Christ. To omit the horrors of the cross or diminish the significance of these events is to deceive the world, for it would perish without knowledge of them. No other message in any religion or book can comfort our consciences and bring us the hope that is found in God.

Nailed to the cross, Christ displayed the full extent of His love. How? If a man were to say to his wife: If a man were to say to his wife, 'I love you and I'm going to prove it by killing myself,' this man would truly be crazy. How could suicide prove that a man loves his wife? It would do him no good. However, if he were killed while trying to protect her, losing his life for her, that would be love. This is how Christ died for us—not simply to die, but to die in our place and save us. Our sin would destroy us, but 'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross' (1 Peter 2:24).

This gives us an understanding of the curse that sin brings; God Himself had to step in and bear the weight of all wickedness. God maintains the order of nature. In this, He shows His love for His creatures, without ever having to mention it. One thing He said (John 3 : 16) *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* God gave what was most precious to Him: His son. This was the only true sacrifice God could offer. Creating other worlds would pale in comparison. Giving the value of an entire planet for each of us would have cost Him nothing; but in giving His own Son, He gave everything He had.

A billionaire may show a bit of his love by buying his son a Rolls Royce, but he shows much more by giving him his time and affection. God didn't just give us gifts; He gave Himself (1 Jean 4 : 10) *And this love is not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

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2 Corinthians 5 : 19 *For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's trespasses against them, and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation.* If we preach another gospel, it is not the gospel of Christ. To omit the horrors of the cross or diminish the significance of these events is to deceive the world, for it would perish without knowledge of them. No other message in any religion or book can comfort our consciences and bring us the hope that is found in God.

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This gives us an understanding of the curse that sin brings; God Himself had to step in and bear the weight of all wickedness. God maintains the order of nature. In this, He shows His love for His creatures, without ever having to mention it. One thing He said (John 3 : 16) *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* God gave what was most precious to Him: His son. This was the only true sacrifice God could offer. Creating other worlds would pale in comparison. Giving the value of an entire planet for each of us would have cost Him nothing; but in giving His own Son, He gave everything He had.

A billionaire may show a bit of his love by buying his son a Rolls Royce, but he shows much more by giving him his time and affection. God didn't just give us gifts; He gave Himself (1 Jean 4 : 10) *And this love is not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

It's heartbreaking to realize that it cost God everything to save us! Jesus had to come to earth to weep and pray for us in the Garden of Gethsemane; He was arrested, subjected to the worst treatment, and had to endure the sword of divine judgment piercing His body. That's what He did, and it shows us just how desperate our situation was. Only God could save us. That's why we preach Christ crucified. It's the promise of salvation, guaranteed by this tremendous act of God in Christ, not cheap forgiveness. God has come down to earth to reach humanity, and our duty is to proclaim this Good News to all creation.

Years pass, but the Cross remains standing, and it is in it that men find glory. Indeed, it is a symbol of eternity, manifested by Jesus Christ on the cross. He offered Himself so that anyone who believes in Him and His gospel may have eternal life. The cross remains an incredible source of power for Christians. Just as Moses needed to stretch out his hands to pray while leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, so his outstretched hands represented the symbol of the cross. In other words, Moses was a forerunner of the power of the cross, foreshadowing the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's mission in the New Covenant.

When the Apostle Paul went to the great Greek city of Corinth, he said: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) When someone asked him what his message was, Paul replied: "but we preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23). For the people of Corinth, the preaching of the cross was foolishness. But the apostle Paul says: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:25)

In the great intellectual center of Corinth, the Cross of Christ was a stumbling block to the children of Israel and pure foolishness to the Gentiles. The unregenerate Corinthians sought a philosophical system; but, says Paul, we who are born again know better. Our eyes have been opened to a higher philosophy that places Jesus Christ at the center. The gospel of Christ crucified is still madness to millions of people who are perishing in the world today. So few people recognize that the answer to all human problems lies at the foot of the Cross!

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In this Cross, amidst a world in confusion and panic, we hear God asking the question: “Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:20-21)

#### **A. "We preach Christ crucified."**

This is the central point of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the image of the blood flowing from Christ's body as He is nailed to the Cross. This message of spilled blood is repugnant to many, who turn away from it, believing their delicate sensibilities have been outraged. Thousands of people accept the person of Christ but reject the Crucifixion. The people of Corinth were indifferent to Christ's crucifixion and the significance of this act. For them, this death was foolishness. The idea of a world saved by Christ crucified was indeed madness to those who were self-assured and believed the wisdom of the world belonged to them. What a contrast to those who simply believe in Christ crucified!

For them, and for us, the Cross is God's power and God's wisdom. The world is stumbling blindly toward judgment and destruction, unaware that it is rejecting Christ crucified, the only path to salvation. When we look at the Cross, we see many things. Firstly, it is the undeniable evidence of the world's guilt. Sin reached its peak at the Cross of Christ; it was at Calvary that it reached its pinnacle. It has never been darker or more hideous. We see the human heart laid bare, its corruption openly exposed. The Scriptures say that man's heart is deceitfully wicked.

Many people have claimed that man has improved over the centuries, and that if Christ came today, He would not be crucified but gloriously received. Christ comes to us every day—in the form of the Bible we don't read, the church we don't attend, and the human needs we pass by unaware. If Christ were to return today, He would be crucified even more quickly than He was two thousand years ago. Sin can no more disappear than a cancerous tumor. If He were to return, the Savior would receive the same reception He did two thousand years ago.

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He had committed no sin and had spent His whole life doing good. Yet, in the courtyard of Pilate's palace, the crowd shouted: "Crucify Him." The people had seen His miracles, heard His words full of grace, and witnessed how He relieved the suffering of mankind. Why this cry of hatred? Why this thirst for murder? The answer lies deep within the human heart. Man's nature has not changed, and as we stand here looking at the Cross, we see clearly that man is inherently evil, and we hear the threatening verdict of God Himself:

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) It is at the Cross that we have the strongest proof of God's hatred for sin. God has repeatedly said that the soul who sins is the one that will die. He also said: "For the wages of sin is death". (Romans 6 :23) To truly understand God's attitude toward sin, we need only recall the purpose of the Cross. The Bible says: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22) It's a clear statement that our sins cannot be forgiven unless our debt is paid.

God cannot tolerate sin. He condemns it and demands that it be atoned for. God could not remain a just God if He tolerated sin. His holiness and justice demand the penalty of death. Today, we tend to view such an attitude from God as too harsh.

### **B. Christians and the Gospel**

Only those whose understanding of the true nature of sin is distorted would take this position. We may say that sin isn't so bad, but God says it's so awful that it demands a death sentence. Many people today attribute sin to psychological causes. Many claim they are not responsible for their actions, but God says we are accountable. The Cross demonstrates God's severity toward sin. The Bible says: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21)

At the Cross, we see a marvelous manifestation of God's love. To understand our guilt, we look to the Cross; to grasp how God views sin, we look to the Cross; and to see the greatest proof of God's love for poor, destitute sinners, we look once more to the Cross. In the nature that surrounds us and in God's plans for our happiness, we see a revelation of His love. The same is true of God's goodness to us in our daily circumstances. And yet, as wonderful as these things are in revealing divine love to us, they pale in comparison to the sacrifice of Calvary. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only

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Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

The Cross still shows us the path to victory. There have been times when we’ve all been defeated by Satan. We are bound by sin and under the power of the devil. The Cross is the instrument by which God delivers us from the condemnation of sin and the grip of Satan.

God overcame our carnal nature at the Cross. If we align ourselves with Christ, this nature no longer has power over us. The Bible says that our old nature was crucified with Him. We are no longer slaves to sin. Scripture promises that sin will no longer have dominion over us.

### **C. The Cross: a separation between the believer and the world.**

We may be among the thousands of Christians who struggle with temptation and sin. Satan uses jealousy, pride, gossip, overeating, sensuality, homosexuality, and other sinful desires to dominate us. However, the Cross has the power to overcome these temptations and sins. We have experienced that, in our countless spiritual struggles, God is more than able to grant us daily victory through the Cross of His Son, until we can say with the Apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Finally, it is in the Cross that we find the foundation of true fellowship. There’s a lot of talk these days about the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men. The majority of appeals for peace are based on this concept. In a certain sense, through creation, God is the Father of all; yet nothing in the Bible indicates that the human race forms a family, with God as its spiritual Father.

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The world doesn't seem to realize that God's fatherhood is conditional upon faith.

It is only when we accept Christ for our personal salvation that we are born again and enter into the family of God. In political language, the term is 'a united world'; in religious language, it's 'a united Church.' Both ideas are based on the concept of fraternity. However, the Bible states that God separates people into two categories: the saved and the lost, those who go to heaven and those who go to hell. His fatherhood extends only to those who trust in Him. When He says: In John 8:44, Jesus makes it clear that many people cannot claim God as their Father, saying, 'Your father is the devil.'

But the Bible also says that there is a glorious brotherhood and fatherhood at the Cross. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:14-15) Apart from the work of the Cross, there is bitterness, intolerance, rebellion, division, resentment, prejudice, and hatred. Through the Cross, there is love and communion between people, a new life, and a new brotherhood. The only hope for peace that humanity has is found in the Cross, where people, regardless of their race or nationality, become brothers.

A prominent figure recently stated: "Two problems will never be solved: racism and war." We believe they could be resolved, but only at the Cross. The Cross of Christ is not only the foundation of our peace and hope; it is also the means of our eternal salvation. The gift of the Cross is not only complete and free forgiveness; it is also a transformed life, lived in communion with God. We are no longer surprised by what the Apostle Paul said two thousand years ago: "We preach Christ crucified."

This is the message the world needs now. It's a message of hope, peace, and brotherhood. This is what the world calls 'foolishness,' but what God calls 'wisdom.'

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### II.3. WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Historically, from a human perspective, the answer seems quite simple. The Jewish leaders plotted against Him, Judas betrayed Him, Herod and Pilate tried Him, and the Roman soldiers executed Him. Several individuals and groups were responsible for His death. "Wicked men put Him to death by nailing Him to the Cross."

But we need to view things from another perspective. As also says Acts 2:23 Jesus "was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge" To get to the heart of the matter, why did Jesus die? We must adopt God's perspective. Theologically, from God's perspective, there are two main reasons.

#### A. Jesus died to bring us closer to God.

Christ died for sins once and for all, the just for the unjust, to bring you back to God. (1 Peter 3:18). The plan to bring us back to God implies that, before Jesus died, we were far off; on this point, both the apostles Paul and Peter agree: "You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13).

Our sin had to be dealt with in order for us to be brought closer: "Christ died for sins" (1 Peter 3:18). The Bible doesn't mince words when it comes to human disobedience and its consequences. Jesus can describe His disciples as evil (Matthew 7:11), and Paul says in Romans 6:23 that 'the wages of sin is death.' All humans are condemned before God; our sins separate us from the One whose character is absolute purity and perfect righteousness."

The substitutionary nature of Jesus' death is key to understanding how God deals with sin and offers us forgiveness. To bring us closer, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Peter 3:18). If 'the unrighteous' represent us all, 'the righteous' refers to Jesus Himself. He who 'had no sin to be sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21)—our sin—so that we could receive mercy.

The New Testament uses several vivid images to emphasize that Jesus died in our place. "For example, Jesus paid the price for our redemption when He 'gave His life as a ransom for many.' (Marcus 10:45). Jesus reconciled us to God by bearing our sins Himself (1 Peter 2:24). 'God presented Christ as an atoning sacrifice through the

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shedding of His blood' Romans 3:25), exhausting God's wrath against our unrighteousness.

Paul reminds us that Jesus' death in our place is of the utmost importance and was in accordance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 15:3). His death fulfills the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, including the sin offering, the Passover lamb, and the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. "He is the Suffering Servant who was 'pierced for our transgressions'(Isaiah 53:5). Sometimes well-meaning preachers give the false impression that, by dying for us, Jesus persuaded His reluctant, vengeful Father to show mercy. The truth is that it was out of love for us that God sent His Son, and the Son willingly gave up His life: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "Christ offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14). As Graham Cole puts it: Christ is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

#### **B. Jesus died to reveal the nature of God**

This is not to say that we knew nothing about God before Christ's death. His providential care for creation reveals His love. And His promises to Abraham demonstrate His concern for the whole world. But at the Cross, we see the culmination of His covenants with Israel and witness the final, dramatic proof of His love and justice. Two passages from Romans make this very clear: "God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). Christ's death removes any doubt about God's love for us. It assures us that, no matter what life throws at us, we can trust that "he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all... will also graciously give us all things" (Romans 8:32).

"Jesus also died to demonstrate God's *justice*: "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement . to demonstrate His justice" (Romans 3:25–26). At the Cross, we see not only God's love, but also the seriousness with which He views our sin. God does not forgive us by turning a blind eye to our sin or by ignoring it. Forgiveness is costly for the one against whom the wrong was committed. Elsewhere in the New Testament, we learn that Jesus died to demonstrate God's wisdom, power, and glory.

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There are many other reasons why Jesus died. These include victory over evil, the inauguration of the New Covenant, and the setting before us of an example of sacrificial love. But two essential reasons are to bring us to God and to reveal God's character. Where would we be if God hadn't sent His Son to die for us? Without the cross we would be : "darkened in our understanding of God and alienated from the life of God." (Ephesians 4:18). We are all familiar with the slogan: "A pet is for life, not just for Christmas." We can come up with another: "Jesus' death is for life, not just for Easter." Because the cross : "dominates the New Testament."

After many years as Christians, we are more and more convinced that Jesus' death changes everything. We pray that each of you may join Paul in saying: "I will glory in nothing but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14).

#### **II.4. THE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CROSS**

As we can see, for Christians like ourselves, the cross of Christ is the instrument of salvation for mankind. According to Christianity, Christ, through His death, redeemed humanity from their sins, particularly original sin. The central message of the gospel is rooted in the cross, which represents God's redemption and reconciliation with His people. This is why, from the Old Testament to the New, the cross is represented in different forms. The cross is a "trace" to "mark": To show, to identify, to remember... Long before the Christian era, people used the cross. Firstly, as a universal sign for marking objects, places, paths, animals, and so on—much like today, when we place a cross on a map or check a box on an administrative document.

The cross is, first and foremost, a cosmic sign. It refers to the four cardinal points (a cross with equal branches) and the solar cycle (the swastika, originally from Mesopotamia and later co-opted by the Nazis). It responds to man's need to mark his encounter with divinity. The upright stone, the tree, the cross—these are all symbols that unite the sky, the seat of the gods, with the earth, the home of human beings. Thus, in a vision where God manifests Himself to him, Jacob sees a ladder extending from heaven to earth (Gen. 28:10-22), and as a memorial, he 'erects a stele.' Thus, at each stage of his journey, Abraham marks the space by building an altar and offering a sacrifice

There are many other reasons why Jesus died. These include victory over evil, the inauguration of the New Covenant, and the setting before us of an example of sacrificial love. But two essential reasons are to bring us to God and to reveal God's character. Where would we be if God hadn't sent His Son to die for us? Without the cross we would be : "darkened in our understanding of God and alienated from the life of God." (Ephesians 4:18). We are all familiar with the slogan: "A pet is for life, not just for Christmas." We can come up with another: "Jesus' death is for life, not just for Easter." Because the cross : "dominates the New Testament."

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(Gen. 12:6-9). The cross is a crossroads. It deploys movement in space, radiating outward (centrifugal force) and gathering at the center (centripetal force). Thus, to mark space, indicate a crossroads, and also to mark bodies, it was meant to invite spirits, ancestors, and divinities to aid in decision-making, discernment, protection, and to invoke blessings or even curses.

In the Old Testament, the cross, a mark of election. In Ezekiel 9:2-6, we are told of a vision of the prophet Ezekiel: God calls a man dressed in white and instructs him to 'mark with a cross the foreheads of those who groan and weep,' thereby allowing them to be spared. The cross, or the Hebrew sign 'tav' (or 'tau' or 'T'), becomes a mark of God's choice, echoing Isaiah chapter 42: 'You are Mine... you are precious in My sight' (Isaiah 43:1, 4). We find the same ritual in the Exodus account of the departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:13), where the destroyer will 'spare the sons of the Hebrews.' In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation (7:3 and 14:1) echoes this at the end of time, when 'God will send His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven' (Mark 13:27).

The Crucifixion of Jesus: The Christian cross now refers to a historical event—the death of Jesus of Nazareth around the year 30. For three centuries, it was forbidden to depict it as a sign of ignominy. Worse still, in the Jewish mentality of the time, crucifixion—the 'hanging'—was, according to Jewish law, a sign of God's curse. Symbols are created by and for humans, not for God; they remind us of what gives us life, allow us to signify it today, and help build a community among those who recognize it.

Other believers have used the symbol of the cross in various ways. For Catholics, representations of the cross can be found in their places of worship. They even sign themselves with the formula: 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the famous sign of the cross, which, for Catholics, represents the Trinity. Without intending to criticize any particular tradition, we believe that the cross should not be used alongside any other symbol. Rather, it should remind us of our relationship with our Savior, helping us avoid returning to the sins that render the work of Christ crucified ineffective in the face of our human nature. A true Christian is one

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who reflects on the mystery of the cross in order to make the right decisions and avoid sin.

Like all symbolic signs, when their meaning is not reactivated, the sign of the cross can devolve into magical practices, superstition, and even curses that bind us to a certain destiny. There are many well-argued and well-illustrated histories of these representations. Let's try to outline some key points to help us understand the use of the cross by Christians. Until the 4th century (with the rise of Constantine in 312), the cross was only subtly represented—through symbols like the anchor, dolphin, trident, and fish in a dish. With Constantine, however, the cross became a symbol of victory over death, salvation in Christ, and glory. 'By this sign you will conquer' is the message from Constantine's vision before his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312. This is how he chose to adorn the labarum of his legions with the cross. Constantine's victory became the victory of the cross.

The discovery of the true cross in Jerusalem, traditionally attributed to the emperor's mother, further amplified the veneration of the cross: a gilded, jeweled, pattée cross that symbolized salvation rather than serving as a reminder of Jesus' ignominious death. Crosses thus proliferated in the apses of Ravenna's churches. Ambrose in Milan had his cathedral built in the shape of a Latin cross: *By its form,* he says, *it is the temple of Christ's victory.* It would also mark bodies: necklaces, vestments, especially liturgical ones. It becomes the sign of salvation that we wear and invoke in difficult times. It becomes a sign of identity and belonging to the Christian community. Later, it would adorn the shields of the Crusaders and even the oriflammes of the inquisitors.

Between the 4th and 6th centuries, theological disputes over the identity of Christ (Is He a man-made God, a God made man, or a God 'pretending' to be man?) led to the emergence of representations of the crucified Christ on the Cross, emphasizing Jesus' human nature. Roman art resolved the paradox (cross/resurrection) by depicting a Christ scarcely marked by suffering, clothed in a royal tunic, and often crowned. It was around the 13th century, especially with Saint Francis, that the painful humanity of Christ was most vividly expressed: we became sensitive to a God 'who took the form of man

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and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross' (Phil 2). The cross then becomes the quintessential sign of our salvation. "It is through His sufferings that He saved us."

The Reformation, initiated by Luther in the 16th century, ushered in a new iconoclastic era. Luther did not disdain images, but he was wary of them, as human nature is prone to idolatry, as he stated. His disciples, Calvin and Zwingli, were more radical, and crosses, along with other images, disappeared from churches—at least for a time. In response, the Council of Trent initiated the 'Counter-Reformation,' emphasizing greater fidelity to biblical texts and ecclesiastical control over images used in places of worship. Moreover, in reaction to the rigor of the Reformed, dramatic depictions of the crucifixion developed, aiming to touch hearts and bring about conversion.

From the above, proponents of the doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ, like Luther and many others, fought to bring Christ's people back to Him, rather than clinging to hollow and unfounded representations that strip the work of the cross of its true meaning. This is where our faith originates. The cross of Christ should not be confused with representations or symbols. It refers to the reconciliation of God with His creatures. Each of us must understand this dimension in order to place Jesus Christ at the center of our lives.

Throughout this second chapter, we have explored the central message of the cross within the gospel. Indeed, it is undoubtedly clear that the cross represents the reconciliation of every Christian with God made Man, who came to save us. This reconciliation remains eternal as long as the Christian avoids living in sin and rejecting the work accomplished by Christ. Therefore, idolatry and all other forms of sin must be avoided by anyone who desires to walk in the footsteps of the One who died and rose again. In the third chapter, we will explore the power of the cross of Jesus Christ.

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## **CHAPTER THREE: THE POWER OF THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST**

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God is an almighty Father, meaning He is so intelligent and powerful that He can bring good out of even the greatest evils! The cross is the ultimate paradox: by dying, crucified for the sins of men, Christ saves us from sin and death. The cross is the sign of God's boundless love, where His omnipotence is displayed in humility. Everyone can experience this mercy in their life, as powerful as it is unsettling. Based on real-life examples that demonstrate how the cross becomes a source of life.

Today, more than ever, it is crucial to speak about the work Christ accomplished on the cross. A lack of understanding of this truth unfortunately leads many Christians to live in bondage, defeat, and fear. Yet, the cross of Christ is the power of God for the salvation of all believers. It is God's solution for humanity. The Church of Jesus must therefore proclaim this essential message to reveal the significance of this Christian symbol. For the cross of Christ is the eloquent declaration of God's love; it is there that Jesus took upon Himself our punishment and our curse. God's justice was fulfilled at Golgotha. The cross is the place where the Adamic nature is crucified and the starting point of a new life in Christ. It is the place of our reconciliation with God, our acquittal, and our victory over sin, the devil, and the world. Understanding these truths leads us into a fulfilling and victorious Christian life. All this is possible only to the extent that we are willing to die to ourselves and allow Christ to live His life in us.

### **III.I. OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CROSS.**

The cross is often perceived as a symbol of defeat, abandonment, and death. However, it is essential to recognize other important dimensions in the cross that are waiting to be discovered. We often view the cross as a symbol of suffering and death. In fact, crucifixion was a punishment reserved for criminals and rebels. The symbol of the cross is often found in cemeteries or at the bedsides of the sick in hospitals. In the early centuries, Christians did not use the cross as a symbol or representation of their faith. Instead, they favored images like the shepherd, the lamb, the fish, the palm tree, or the

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anchor. It was only much later that the cross became a prominent Christian symbol.

A first reading of the Gospel accounts might suggest that the cross symbolizes death and suffering, as seen in Matthew 27:33-50. We see the cross as a place of bitterness (Jesus is offered wine mixed with gall), a place of shame and contempt (His clothes are gambled away, and He is surrounded by two criminals who insult Him), a place of mockery (passersby and religious leaders blaspheme against Him), a place of abandonment (Christ cries out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'), and, finally, a place of death ('He cries out with a loud voice and gives up His spirit').

Yet, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 'the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.' We are not transformed by the cross, but through the cross. So, let's explore together the true values that emerge from this place, which for many is merely a symbol of abandonment and death.

#### **A. The cross: place of signs and wonders**

The crucifixion of Jesus was unlike that of others, as it was accompanied by signs and wonders. A sign is not just a miracle, but a remarkable phenomenon — a manifestation of God's presence, an extraordinary event that disrupts the natural course of things, often foretelling past or future events. When Jesus lets out a cry of expiration. It is not a mere sigh, but a powerful cry: "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit" (Matthew 27:50). This cry tore the veil of the temple, the earth shook, and the tombs were opened.

This sign demonstrates the power and divinity of the crucified Jesus. These signs and wonders astonished the centurion, who had witnessed many crucifixions. The next day, the priests requested that Jesus' tomb be guarded. *'Tetelestai,'* in Greek, means 'It is accomplished' or 'It is finished.' These were, in fact, the words spoken by slaves to their masters once their tasks were completed. Here, it must be acknowledged that by accepting the crucifixion, Jesus Christ fulfilled His ultimate mission: to save humanity from sin and restore hope to it.

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On the cross, many extraordinary signs and wonders occurred. However, security was increased to prevent Christ from escaping once more. But that overlooked His divine nature, which ultimately thwarted the plans of His detractors. The risen Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise for all who believe in Him. Certainly, Jesus' executioners could still propose the theory that His disciples had come to steal His body. However, when they heard and saw His appearance to the Apostles, their doubts were dispelled. Jesus Christ had just performed wonders that no other crucified person had ever been able to accomplish.

### **B. The Cross: A Place of Holiness**

The cross is also a place of holiness. Galatians 6:14: *"As for me, certainly not! May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* What a peculiar statement from Paul when he says: "I am crucified to the world." "To be crucified to the world" means dying to our vices, bad habits, and individualistic, vengeful, materialistic mindsets. In this passage, the Apostle Paul summarizes what the life of someone who follows Christ's example should look like. Indeed, if He died on the cross for our sins, we must not continue living in them. We must rid ourselves of sin and follow Jesus Christ, who desires to see us as pure as snow. The right way to follow Him is by doing His will, while avoiding being consumed by the world, as those who have not yet encountered the One who saved us.

The cross is a place of holiness, not through the force of morality, but by the work accomplished by Jesus on Calvary. The cross is the place where God sees us as righteous. It is also the place where we receive the power to overcome our addictions. Yes, we must overcome our addictions to sin in all its forms. Moreover, by reflecting on what Jesus Christ endured on our behalf, a true Christian can only embrace a life of holiness, striving to become more like their Savior. He who is without sin chose to bear our sins so that we might be made pure.

### **C. The Cross: A Place of Freedom**

Paul writes to the Colossians, *"Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead. You, who were dead in your*

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Indeed, everything was paid for us on the cross. This price far exceeds the blood of the animals sacrificed for the atonement of sins under the old covenant. For once, God, in the form of flesh, chose to come and live among men, shedding His precious blood. Now, in Christ, man is set free. He is no longer condemned to offer the blood of animals to find mercy before his Creator. There is a spiritual connection between the Creator and His creation. All condemnation was taken upon by the Redeemer. To truly benefit from the sacrifices of the risen Jesus, we must live according to His precepts and the love He demonstrated to us on the cross.

#### **D. The cross: a place of victory over darkness**

Colossians 2:15 "... *having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*" The expression "It is finished" was a crucial declaration. We encounter this expression again at the end of victorious battles, when the general would also declare "*tetélestai.*" He was declaring that the battle is over and the enemy has been defeated. Now, the formidable adversary that Jesus Christ chose to confront and demonstrate His power over is death. He overcame death, which had been the barrier preventing all those who had died from moving forward. But before the power of Jesus, death was forced to give way.

At the cross, Jesus crushed the head of the ancient serpent. Through His death, He "destroyed the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil." » Jesus confronted the devil in his final stronghold—death. The dark realms of death, accustomed to darkness, were suddenly illuminated by the Light of Jesus Christ, the Risen One.

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At the cross, Jesus crushed the head of the ancient serpent. Through His death, He "destroyed the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil." » Jesus confronted the devil in his final stronghold—death. The dark realms of death, accustomed to darkness, were suddenly illuminated by the Light of Jesus Christ, the Risen One.

This marks a powerful symbolism: the Savior's triumph over the devil and his reclamation of everything that once empowered him.

Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." With Jesus as our General, we are joined by a heavenly army, and victory is within our reach. Indeed, Jesus leads this celestial army, which continually triumphs over all evil and sin. By His grace, mankind has been granted the exceptional privilege of sharing in this victory through Jesus Christ. Now, by living according to God's will, man also inherits Christ's triumph over darkness.

#### **E. The cross: a place of hope in suffering**

Hebrews 12:3-5: *"So let us also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your struggle against sin."* Many may feel like giving up in the face of suffering, but nothing could be further from the truth. Suffering is, in fact, a process that brings us closer to God.

For Jesus, suffering bore fruit, for He rose from the dead! God is the master of seasons; while one may be blessed, another suffers, yet God's perfect plan is fulfilled through us. His plan is set in motion ahead of time. Indeed, suffering can never be a reason for us to turn away from Christ. Instead, it should serve as a springboard for understanding and embracing the cross of Jesus, preparing us to face the devil and ultimately access the wonderful plans Jesus Christ has for us.

### **III.2. JESUS' RESURRECTION: TANGIBLE PROOF OF GOD'S POWER**

Many sects, like the Sadducees of Jesus' time, denied the reality of the resurrection. When Jesus spoke about His death and resurrection, the Sadducees were dismayed. He told them they did not understand the Scriptures or the power of God to "raise the dead."

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Like the Sadducees, most of the religious leaders feared the resurrection of Jesus. So, they asked Pilate to have His tomb sealed and guarded, to prevent His disciples from stealing His body (Matthew 27:62-66). But three days after His death, Jesus rose by the power of God and left the tomb, which remained “empty” despite the Roman soldiers guarding it.

As the women were on their way to anoint His body with spices, they encountered two men in shining garments, who told them: "He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee" (Luke 24:6). This was the greatest piece of good news humanity had ever received! Satan, greatly dismayed by the glorious resurrection of the Messiah, did not relent. He once again used the religious leaders to suppress the truth of the resurrection. They enlisted Roman soldiers to contradict the resurrection account and spread the story that Jesus' body had been stolen.

Matthew 28:11-15: *"While they were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep." If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day."*

This move by the religious leaders sowed doubt and confusion among many Jews, making it difficult for them to believe in the reality of Jesus' resurrection. This is why the primary focus of the apostles and disciples in the early days was to defend and proclaim “the resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus from the dead”.

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are not fairy tales or myths, particularly because He revealed Himself to many after His resurrection. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:4-8: *"...that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve."* Jesus, having risen on the third day by the power of the Holy Spirit, demonstrates the power of God: *"...he who (God) raised him from the*

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*dead will also give life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in us."*

Jesus once spoke to a man named Nicodemus and reminded him of an event from Moses' time: "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life*" (John 3:14-15). Here, Jesus is prophetically referring to His crucifixion on the cross. The importance of this connection is evident, as He directs our attention to the event in the wilderness. The account of this event with Moses is found in Numbers 21:7-9. It recounts that the people, having spoken against God and Moses, were punished by the Lord sending fiery serpents among them. The people, realizing their sin, came to Moses and asked him to intercede: "*We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord to take these serpents away from us.*" Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord instructed him to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole, telling Moses that "*whoever is bitten and looks at it will live.*" Moses obeyed, and those who looked at the bronze serpent were healed and lived.

It may seem like an irrational way to escape death, but it is God's way. If, by faith, we look to the cross, we too will be saved, for it is there that the entire mystery of creation's history unfolds. "*For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The cross of Christ is far more than two pieces of wood joined together—one vertical and one horizontal. We all have some conception of the cross, whether good or bad, yet it holds our future because it was on this cross that the Son of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, was nailed. This act released an immense power—the power of God for every person on this earth. Jesus declared that through this event, we are entering into a new covenant. Luke 22:19-20 records: "*Then He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'* In the same way, He took the cup after supper, saying, '*This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.*'" "

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*God, cleanse our consciences from dead works, so that we may serve the living God! And for this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, by His death, He redeems the transgressions committed under the first covenant, and those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance promised to them."*

### **A. The great mysteries**

The mysteries of the crucifixion open the door to the eternal inheritance that we receive—not through the works of the law, but through the power of faith, because of the blood of Jesus, the blood of the new covenant. Let us now explore the stages of the crucifixion and its significance for us today.

#### **1• The mystery of the power of forgiveness**

Luke 23:33-34 presents a crucial moment in Scripture, focusing on the crucifixion of Christ. *"When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there, and the two criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"* The first mystery revealed by the Cross is the power of forgiveness. Through the Cross, God grants us forgiveness, as evidenced by Jesus' words while being nailed to the cross: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Indeed, the Cross carries God's forgiveness for:

- The meanest thief or the cruelest murderer;
- Forgiveness is available for Peter, the backslider who denied Jesus;
- There is forgiveness for the disciples who abandoned Him;
- Forgiveness is granted to those who nailed Him to the cross;
- There is forgiveness for His murderers and persecutors.

There is forgiveness available for men and women, young and old, from all corners of the world. Yes, at the cross, Jesus offers us forgiveness. We have offended God, yet He reaches out to us and extends His forgiveness first. When we acknowledge our sins before God, ask for forgiveness, and commit to changing our behavior by forsaking those sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. As 1 John 1:7 and 9 states: *"But if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If*

*God, cleanse our consciences from dead works, so that we may serve the living God! And for this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, by His death, He redeems the transgressions committed under the first covenant, and those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance promised to them."*

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## **2° The mystery of salvation's power**

Salvation on the Cross! Two thieves were crucified alongside Jesus, and a significant moment unfolded between them. Here's the biblical account of this event: *“One of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us!' But the other answering rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:39-43) Yes, eternal salvation is offered at the Cross. That is where salvation is made available to you. What will you choose? Will you refuse salvation, or will you, like the repentant thief, turn to Christ and implore His mercy?

The Bible says of Jesus: *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29). If you desire freedom from sin and liberation from the devil's grip, come to the Cross and receive forgiveness for your sins and salvation for eternity. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 3:23-24). *“But to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”* (John 1:12-13). Today is the day of salvation. God speaks to you—do not harden your heart.

The Cross brings us into the covenant of salvation by grace. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). The blood covenant makes us sons and daughters of God, and heirs through grace. *“Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.”* (Galatians 4:6-7).

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### **3• The mystery of the power of love**

This is a pivotal moment—Jesus hanging on the cross, surrounded by crowds on every side. They all witness the one who voluntarily chooses to die out of love for us. *“At Golgotha, they crucified him, and two others with him, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a sign posted on the cross that read: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Many Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—the major languages known at the time.”* (John 19:17-20).

The Bible declares: *“Jesus Christ emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming like men; and when He appeared as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* (Philippians 2:7-8). *“But God demonstrates His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8).

The Bible declares: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”* (John 3:16-17). God doesn't merely talk about His love; He demonstrates it. *“...not with perishable things, like silver or gold, were you redeemed from the futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.”* (1 Peter 1:18-19)

It is up to us to reflect on and embrace this great love because, as 1 John 4:9-10 declares: *“God's love was revealed among us in that God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* For God is good: *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:8; Psalm 51:8)

### **4• The mystery of reconciliation's power**

Terrible events unfold during the crucifixion, marking a profound moment in history: *“It was about the sixth hour, and darkness covered the whole earth until the ninth hour. The sun was obscured (as if it were midnight at noon), and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.”* (Luke 23:44-45). Matthew adds, *“The earth*

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“*At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'* (Mark 15:34). In that moment, Jesus cried out, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* It was then that Jesus took on the role of the sinner, bearing our guilt and paying the price for our redemption. In that very moment, He experienced the agony of separation from God—the cry of a lost soul—so that you and I would never have to be lost again.”

The agonizing cry that Jesus uttered on the cross was the fulfillment of His mission to die for us, taking our place, so that you and I would never again be separated from God. Here was the Son of Man, the Son of God, nailed to the cross between heaven and earth. On one side, in His human nature, Jesus stretched out His pierced hand toward the sinner—separated from God and having offended Him, that is, you and me. With His other pierced hand, in His divine nature, He reached up to God in heaven, who had been offended by sin. With one hand, He pulled man up; with the other, He drew God down, bringing them together on the cross. At that moment, the cross became the most incredible meeting place between God and man, reconciling humanity with God.

*"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them."* (2 Corinthians 5:19). At the cross, God extends His hand of reconciliation to us, offering salvation and restoration through Jesus of Nazareth. *"We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God! He who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

### **5• The mystery of healing**

The Cross heals our physical, moral, and spiritual suffering. *"They offered Him wine mixed with gall to drink; but when He had tasted it, He would not drink."* (Matthew 27:34). This wine mixed with gall was intended to act as an anaesthetic. However, Jesus refused it because He did not just bear our sins and faults on the cross—He also took on our illnesses, weaknesses, and suffering. *"This*

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was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.’” (Matthew 8:17).

“Yet it was our sufferings He bore, our sorrows He carried; and we thought of Him as being stricken, punished by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds, we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5). “... Christ also suffered for you, ... He who committed no sin, and in whose mouth was found no deceit; He who, when reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly; He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we, being dead to sins, might live for righteousness; by His wounds, you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:21-24).

When the Gospel is proclaimed, signs, wonders, and miracles follow, in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise: “*These signs will accompany those who believe: in My name, they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will place their hands on the sick, and they will get well.*” (Mark 16:17-18). “*God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.*” (Hebrews 2:4). “*Wherever Jesus went—in villages, towns, or the countryside—people placed the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him to let them touch even the edge of His cloak, and all who touched it were healed.*” (Mark 6:56). “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*” (Hebrews 13:8).

### **6• The mystery of victory**

There is victory in the cross. The cross is not a defeat, but a place of triumph. Jesus declared, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). He was commissioned by the Father to complete our salvation: “*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do*” (John 17:3-4). “*The Father loves me because I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father*” (John 10:17-18).

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Here we see, side by side, the Father's love and His plan for our salvation, along with the authority given by the Father to His Son. Christ demonstrated His obedience and voluntary decision to die—no one had the power to take His life unless He allowed it. The Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled; redemption is complete. He has wiped out our transgressions and reconciled us to the Father, making us righteous through the blood of the cross. He has inaugurated the Kingdom of God and brought forth a new world.

*“Jesus blotted out the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:14-15) “And Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree,’ so that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, and so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:13-14) “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)*

*“Thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him in every place!” (2 Corinthians 2:14). He created the bridge between God and man, and from that moment on, many men and women have chosen to cross that bridge to meet God, who is full of love and goodness, and thus enter the Kingdom of God and live a new life. Yes, the cross is our victory over the powers of darkness!*

### **7• The mystery of faith**

The cross is our security, our assurance of faith. Jesus said: *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"* (Luke 23:46). Jesus had complete faith that his Father was watching over him, that he had nothing to fear, and that he would rise again on the third day: *“From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life”* (Matthew 16:21). It is not circumstances that dominate him, nor suffering, but the assurance of the Father's love. He places his trust in the Father; he has faith in the

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Father. What we're talking about here is faith—absolute trust in God and in the promises we discover in the Bible, the Word of God.

*“Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1) Faith is what pleases God: “And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Faith is simply believing God. Many people believe in God, but few truly believe what God says.*

Returning to Moses and the bronze serpent, God's instruction for the people to be healed from the snake bites was to look at the bronze serpent on the pole (foreshadowing the cross where Christ would be crucified, symbolizing victory over the defeated serpent). Those who lifted their eyes to gaze upon the bronze serpent were healed. The essence of their faith was simply in looking up and receiving the healing offered.

Jesus declares in Mark 11:22-24, *“Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Get up and throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Now is the time to put your faith into action and approach the Cross of Christ. At the Cross, there is forgiveness, salvation, God's love, reconciliation, healing, victory, and assurance. Christ's work is perfectly accomplished; today, He sits at the right hand of the Father, waiting for us. For He is: *“... the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)*

### **B. The power of the cross: the main theme of the sermon**

The central message of early Christian ministry and preaching was *"Christ crucified."* At the time, proclaiming *"Christ crucified"* was seen as foolishness. The term *"Christ"* refers to the *"anointed one,"* the promised Savior King chosen by God, as foretold by the Old Testament prophets. People anticipated that the Messiah would come with immense power and glory, something no one could resist. However, *"crucified"* refers to the cruel and humiliating punishment

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the Romans used for criminals, designed to result in the most brutal and shameful death.

Proclaiming "*Christ crucified*" was as absurd as extolling the virtues of "*dry water*." The Apostle Paul himself writes that this message was a "*stumbling block*" (something offensive) in the Jewish context and "*foolishness*" (something absurd) to the Gentiles. As Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, "*For the Jews demand signs, and the Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*"

Indeed, today, the message of Christ crucified still seems revolting and senseless to the world around us. Paul explains that "*the Jews demand signs*" because, in his time, they revered power and influence. They expected a mighty warrior to deliver them from Roman rule and were deeply attached to the grand rituals of the temple. Not much has changed in the world today. People continue to be classified based on their power, wealth, and possessions.

Our culture remains fascinated by celebrities and royal families, often discussing individuals not because of their virtue, but because of their fame. In religious circles, we tend to revere prominent leaders, like the Pope, who are seen as figures of power and authority. Even today, it's difficult to admire a man who chose to endure excruciating pain and dishonor on a cross for the sins of the world. The world finds it hard to respect churches that preach about such a man. Just as it was then, the message of Christ crucified seems like a "downfall" to many.

Paul also said that "*the Greeks seek wisdom*" because Greco-Roman society highly valued impressive knowledge — it was seen as a key to success in life. The culture of that time admired religious philosophers who were skilled scholars and captivating speakers. This, too, mirrors today's world. We still revere those with advanced education and prestigious degrees. Spiritual gurus who write bestselling books and promise well-being without challenging our moral views are often celebrated. Take the Dalai Lama, for instance. Similarly, it's still difficult for many to embrace a craftsman from Galilee who warned about hell and divided public opinion. Many

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people find it hard to respect Christians who follow such a man. Just as it was in Paul's time, the message of Christ crucified still seems like utter foolishness to many — a madness with no rhyme or reason.

Richard Dawkins, a brilliant Oxford biologist and atheist, describes Jesus' death in scornful terms in his bestselling book *The God Delusion* (French translation: *Pour en finir avec Dieu*). He refers to the doctrine of atonement, which lies at the heart of Christianity, as "vicious, sadomasochistic, and repulsive." He goes so far as to call it "furious madness." For Dawkins, the concept of atonement — the reconciliation of sinners with God through Christ's sacrifice on the cross — is a cause of downfall and madness. However, Dawkins' criticism reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the cross. The cross is not about a sadistic God who delights in suffering. On the contrary, the atonement represents God's extraordinary sacrifice for humanity. It is not about "furious madness," as Dawkins suggests, but about God's passionate love for mankind. Through the cross, we see God's love made tangible — a love so deep that He was willing to endure suffering for the sake of our salvation.

For many, Christ crucified will always be a stumbling block and foolishness. Some of our loved ones may find it absurd or offensive, and for some friends, it might seem pitiable or foolish. But none of that matters. What they most need to hear is the message of Christ crucified. Paul goes on to explain that God intentionally chose to save us through the crucifixion of Christ, undermining and humbling our high opinion of ourselves. God's plan has always been to reveal His divine power and wisdom in a way that seems strange and confusing to us. The goal is that we would place our trust in Him, rather than relying on ourselves. For Paul, the message of "Christ crucified" is nothing less than "the power of God and the wisdom of God." It is God's consistent and effective way of saving those from every nation who turn from sin and place their trust in Jesus.

### **III.3. THE BIBLE AND THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS**

Many Christians are likely familiar with the basic teaching about Christ crucified. However, the deeper our understanding of the cross, the greater our appreciation for God's incredible grace. This

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Christ crucified is at the heart of Christianity. The cross is central to all creation. It marks the turning point in history, the decisive moment at the core of the Bible and our faith. It represents the highest revelation of God's glory and the greatest joy of our eternal future. For all eternity, the vast crowds in heaven will worship the Lamb of God who was slain (Revelation 5:6-10)!

The cross runs through the entirety of Scripture, from beginning to end. For example, the word “*wood*,” used to refer to the cross (Acts 10:39 and Galatians 3:13), appears at the start of the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, it refers to the “*tree of life*,” which sustains God's children (Genesis 2:9). At the very end, in a glorious vision of God's new creation, we encounter the same “*tree of life*,” which heals and nourishes God's people eternally (Revelation 22:2). This vocabulary highlights the absolutely central role of Christ crucified in God's plan for creation.

An overview of the entire Bible reveals that through His death, Christ glorified His Father in many extraordinary ways. These achievements are too numerous to list in full here. For example, His death crowned an exemplary life that serves as a model for us. His death also nullified Satan's claims over us, as Jesus took upon Himself the penalty demanded by God's law in our place. Finally, His death saved us by introducing us into a new humanity. But the greatest accomplishment of Jesus' death was to satisfy God's holy justice. Like a lightning rod, Jesus chose to bear all of God's wrath towards our sin. Through faith in Him, our sin is no longer counted against us.

Three themes—three magnificent threads—run throughout the entire Old Testament, explaining this extraordinary work. This is why the risen Christ Himself turned to the Old Testament to explain His death to the two distraught disciples on the road to Emmaus: “*Then Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.*” (Luke 24:25-27)

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Paul also emphasized the central importance of the cross in the Bible: *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). Would you like to marvel more at the beauty of the cross? Do you want to proclaim more clearly who “Christ crucified” is? Then follow these three red threads from the Old Testament to discover how Christ's death brings freedom, forgiveness, and justice.

### **A. Freedom**

Most people desire some form of freedom, whether it's freedom from social constraints, political oppression, or addictive behaviors. The Bible teaches that true freedom begins when we are liberated from sin to serve God. This liberation is made possible through the sacrificial death of Jesus—what we refer to as *“redemption.”* We find the origin of this liberating redemption in the Passover story of Exodus 12. Through the blood of a lamb, God redeemed His people from slavery to Pharaoh and the death that threatened them. He gave them the joy of being free to worship Him. In this context, He instructed them to camp out under the cross, as we discussed in the first chapter. This event foreshadows the cross of Christ. Through His blood, God has redeemed us from the slavery of sin. And through the cross, we receive the joyful freedom to worship Him with our whole being.

### **B. Forgiveness**

We all know that overwhelming feeling of guilt and fear that comes after committing an act—whether isolated or repeated—that has irreparably damaged a relationship. The Bible reveals that if we are willing to turn away from our sin, God has made it possible to forgive all our transgressions, no matter how appalling, and restore our relationship with Him.

The origin of forgiveness of sins can be traced back to the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16. In this passage, we learn that God purified His people from guilt through a ritual in which the blood of one goat was shed, while the other goat—the scapegoat—was sent away. This ceremony served to turn away God's wrath, a process known in theology as *“propitiation,”* and granted the Jews the privilege of entering into the presence of the Lord.

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This story, once again, foreshadows the cross. It is through the shed blood of Jesus that God cleanses us from our sins, and by making Him our scapegoat, cast out into the distance. As a result, we experience the immense relief of receiving complete forgiveness and the privilege of constant access to God in heaven as His forgiven people.

### C. Justice

When someone accuses us of wrongdoing, we are often tempted to justify ourselves. The Bible shows us, first of all, that we are guilty of many sins. If it were up to us, we would have no chance of God declaring us righteous on the day of judgment. However, the Bible also reveals that God has provided a way for us to be declared righteous without compromising His justice. This is what we call being “*justified*” by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

Several texts trace this concept of justification back to the Old Testament, and one of the most profound is the passage about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. In this text, we learn how God plans to admit us to heaven, despite our guilt according to divine law. God accomplishes this through an innocent servant who lives a righteous life, only to be punished for our sins. Then, He rises again, giving us the right to enter heaven, based on the righteous life He led on our behalf. Once again, this text points to the cross. It was there that God crowned, in Jesus, the perfectly righteous life that we all lack. This righteousness is “*imputed*” to us, meaning it is credited to us, making us fit for heaven without altering God's perfect righteousness.

## III.4. UNDERSTANDING THE EXCHANGE OF PLACE AT THE CROSS

The Paschal Lamb, the goats of the Day of Atonement, and the Suffering Servant all serve as illustrations of the profound exchange that occurred during Christ's sacrifice. At the cross, a divine and extraordinary exchange took place between Christ and His people. God the Son, in His infinite love and mercy, became one of us—an ordinary man—so that He could take our place on the cross. There, He was treated as one of us, taking on the full measure of our punishment: the torment, shame, and the hell that we deserved. In doing so, He made it possible for us to be treated as if we were Him—worthy heirs of heaven, God's holy children. This incredible act of substitution is both simple and beautiful. Jesus came to exchange places with us,

This story, once again, foreshadows the cross. It is through the shed blood of Jesus that God cleanses us from our sins, and by making Him our scapegoat, cast out into the distance. As a result, we experience the immense relief of receiving complete forgiveness and the privilege of constant access to God in heaven as His forgiven people.

### C. Justice

When someone accuses us of wrongdoing, we are often tempted to justify ourselves. The Bible shows us, first of all, that we are guilty of many sins. If it were up to us, we would have no chance of God declaring us righteous on the day of judgment. However, the Bible also reveals that God has provided a way for us to be declared righteous without compromising His justice. This is what we call being “*justified*” by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

Several texts trace this concept of justification back to the Old Testament, and one of the most profound is the passage about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. In this text, we learn how God plans to admit us to heaven, despite our guilt according to divine law. God accomplishes this through an innocent servant who lives a righteous life, only to be punished for our sins. Then, He rises again, giving us the right to enter heaven, based on the righteous life He led on our behalf. Once again, this text points to the cross. It was there that God crowned, in Jesus, the perfectly righteous life that we all lack. This righteousness is “*imputed*” to us, meaning it is credited to us, making us fit for heaven without altering God's perfect righteousness.

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bearing the weight of our sins and giving us the glorious opportunity to share in His righteousness. At the cross, He took on our guilt, and in return, we receive His holiness and the promise of eternal life with God.

Christ came down from heaven to save His people in peril. Jesus didn't merely risk His life for the sake of others; He knew He would lose His life after enduring not only physical suffering but also spiritual anguish. He emptied the cup of His Father's wrath, experiencing what was like a glass of acid poured into His soul. Yet He did this to offer us the freedom, forgiveness, and justice we desperately needed. Why did Jesus do such a radical thing? Because, despite everything, Jesus loves us—passionately! The fact that God allowed such a sacrifice is grace. That God provided such a sacrifice is infinite grace. And that God Himself became that sacrifice is a grace we could never have hoped for, even in our wildest dreams.

**Freedom, forgiveness, and justice.** Three powerful words that reflect God's response to the deep wounds of our hearts and the significant issues in the world. These three magnificent words bring us joy when we meditate on the meaning of "Christ crucified." They are words full of life, hope, and grace, and this book aims to apply and explain them to our lives today.

But there's a fourth word: **meaning**. Jesus calls us to follow in His footsteps, living, as He did, for the good of others (Mark 8). We are called to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him—not in a pointless self-denial, but for the salvation of the lost. This brings us to the fourth word: **meaning**. In a world gripped by existential crisis, the cross of Christ provides meaning for our lives and for our churches. It gives us a mission that demands everything from us but also gives us a deeply fulfilling reason for our existence. This is the essence of why we have been created and recreated: to take up our own cross and follow Jesus in a life of service, a life of sacrifice for the salvation of others.

As Christians, we aim to love those around us in every way the Bible commands. We stand against injustice, prejudice, and environmental harm. We seek relief for victims of crime, poverty, and human trafficking. We advocate for freedom of expression, the protection of the unborn, and stand against homosexuality. However,

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the most precious gift we have to offer the people of this world and our cities is the saving message of “Christ crucified.” It is the power of God to save sinners from the horrors of hell and lift them to the sanctity of heaven, where they will be eternally happy.

It is our sufferings that He bore, it is our pains that He took upon Himself... and it is by His stripes that we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5). On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself all the wounds of our souls and all the pains of our bodies. Sometimes, these two sufferings are linked. Believe this and allow yourself to be overwhelmed by the Lord's peace. Let His feelings of forgiveness and love fill your heart. Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross so that you could be freed from feelings of hatred, destructive rebellion, pain, and more. You may have suffered injustice, or been the victim of a terrible tragedy. You may have experienced violence and abuse that has left deep scars. Your wounded soul and aching body may bring you great suffering, but Jesus took it all upon Himself on the cross.

#### **A. The power of Christ's finished work on the cross**

It pleased God to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching—the foolishness of the cross, which is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but the power of God to those who are called (1 Corinthians 1:18-24). The preaching of the cross is the very foundation of Christianity, and it is through it that we have salvation. Any preaching centered on miracles, healings, daily provisions, material wealth, or anything else is not the message by which we are saved. We must not deviate from the central message of the cross, as the Apostle Paul himself declared, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Miracles and healings may accompany the preaching of the cross to confirm the Word of God, but they are not the source of salvation (Mark 16:20). One may attend an evangelistic crusade, receive healing from physical ailments, or experience miracles, yet still leave unchanged, without being born again and still in their sins.

#### **B. Knowledge of sin through the law**

By the law comes the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). Sin is the transgression of the law, and without the law, sin is dead (1 John 3:4; Romans 7:8). For sin is not imputed where there is no law

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(Romans 5:13). So, the knowledge of sin comes through the law, for I would not have known lust, except the law had said, "You shall not covet" (Romans 7:7). Before the law, man lived without the knowledge of sin; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and man died (Romans 7:9). The law, therefore, is the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). The law entered so that the offense might increase (Romans 5:20).

### **C. The end of the law and sin through the cross of Christ**

Christ, through the cross, has abolished in His flesh the law of commandments that was made up of ordinances (Ephesians 2:15). He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and stood opposed to us, and He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). The cross has, therefore, made it possible for us to be freed from the law. The law brings the knowledge of sin, and as a result, the cross has also freed us from the power of sin.

Romans 6:15 says, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!" Romans 6:2: "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" From now on, sin will not have dominion over us because we are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14). For before the law, sin was in the world (Romans 5:13). But Jesus was manifested to take away our sins (by freeing us from the law). Therefore, whoever abides in Him does not sin; whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him (1 John 3:5-6).

But now we have been released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code (Romans 7:6).

### **D. Death to sin**

If Christ died on the cross, it was for sin that He died (Romans 6:10). All of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ have been baptized into His death (Romans 6:3). We have therefore been united with Christ in the likeness of His death (Romans 6:5). In other words, we are regarded as crucified and dead with Christ; we are identified with Him (Galatians 2:20). Having become conformed to His death, we too have died to sin (Philippians 3:10). For He died, and it is for sin that He died once for all. Christ indeed bore our sins in His body

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Therefore, we must reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). For he who is dead is freed from sin (Romans 6:7). As a result, we can no longer willingly present our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but rather we must present ourselves as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13). Romans 6:11: "So you also reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

### **E. The crucifixion of the old man**

The "old man" represents that part of our being which is corrupted by its lusts, which is carnal and enslaved to sin (Ephesians 4:22, Romans 7:14). This old man does not obey God and is constantly turned toward evil, incapable of doing what is good (Romans 7:18-20). The old man represents our flesh, in which sin is condemned (Romans 8:13). This flesh battles against the spirit, which represents the new man created in God's image (Ephesians 4:24, 1 Peter 2:24). Indeed, the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the flesh; they are in opposition to each other (Galatians 5:17).

Our old man (our flesh) was crucified with Christ, so that the body of sin might be destroyed and we would no longer be slaves to sin (Romans 6:6-7). Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24, 1 Peter 2:24). Having been crucified with Christ, we have the power to put off the old man by renewing our minds and to put on the new man (Ephesians 4:22). In other words, we must renounce the pleasures (lusts) of the flesh by changing our mindset and walking according to the Spirit. We must, therefore, put off the old man and his deeds (the works of the flesh), and willingly put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of God who created him (Colossians 3:9-10).

### **F. The stripping of the dark world**

The serpent seduced the woman in the Garden of Eden and introduced sin into the world. But God used the woman to crush the head of that serpent by raising up through her a son (Jesus Christ) who

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Just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, it was necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up so that whoever believes in Him might not perish (John 3:14-15). The serpent, a symbol of sin, had bitten the Israelites and caused many to stumble. But God lifted this serpent on a pole so that whoever looked at it might live. It was an image (a symbol) of Christ who was made sin for us and nailed to the cross so that whoever looks to Him may have eternal life. The cross thus served to judge the ruler of this world, who caused the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (John 12:31, John 16:11). Through the cross, Jesus Christ disarmed rulers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them (Colossians 2:15, Ezekiel 28:17).

In conclusion, the cross is the wisdom and power of God by which God has saved humanity (1 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Peter 2:24). This is a revelation that God has granted only to those who belong to Him because, for others, it is foolishness and constitutes a scandal (1 Corinthians 1:23). Who has believed what was announced? Who has recognized the arm of the Lord? (Isaiah 53:1). Who would have believed that the Son of God would be made sin and die on a cross like a thief or one cursed? Yet, it is through this foolishness that we are saved and that we have eternal life. By the cross, the world is crucified to us, as we are to the world (Galatians 6:14). Through the cross, we are freed from the law, dead to sin as regards the flesh and alive to God as regards the spirit (Romans 7:6, 1 Peter 3:18).

We have, therefore, been freed from the slavery of sin in order to become slaves of God and His righteousness (Romans 6:18, 22). This freedom should not give us the opportunity to continue living in sin by following the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:13). Far from it! On the contrary, grace teaches us to renounce ungodliness and to live according to God's righteousness (Titus 2:11-12). Being under grace, we must strip away our old life by renewing our minds so that we can put on Christ (Ephesians 4:21-24). The cross is a place of holiness, not by moral effort, but by the work accomplished by Jesus

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## CONCLUSION

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We have now reached the end of this contribution on the mystery of the cross. Indeed, the teaching of the cross is the foundation of the Gospel and, above all, tangible proof of the love of the risen Christ for humanity. As we noted in the introduction, the extreme divergence of interpretations has prompted some servants of God to refrain from preaching on this mystery, to avoid endless conflicts that plague society, yet are essential for the salvation of souls. In any case, the mystery of the cross is encompassed by two great events in human existence: death and resurrection, which correspond to the two covenants- the Old and the New. The Law-a sign of death; Grace a sign of life.

We cannot be called Christians if Jesus Christ had not died and risen for our sins. Yet, the cross is, as we now know, a symbol that does not date solely from the coming of Christ. It is represented in the Old Testament by several prophetic events that we have highlighted. Among these events is the inevitable text from Numbers 2:1-34: "The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'The children of Israel shall encamp, each by his standard, under the ensigns of the house of his fathers; they shall encamp opposite and around the tent of meeting...'" The strength of the children of Israel as they marched in the cross-shaped formation of their encampments, following God's command for their deployment.

From the above, the cross appears very clearly, given that the encampments referred to here were erected in the shape of a cross. At every moment that the children of Israel respected the order of encampment, there was a manifestation of divine power during their crossing to the Promised Land. However, when they moved away from the camps erected in the shape of the cross, defeat loomed in their camp. The most telling example is the one we read in Numbers 22:5. Indeed, in Moab, the children of Israel had striven to leave the camps to commune with the Moabites. During this time, the strength Israel had behind the cross had disappeared. And yet, this was but a shadow of what was to come years later: the arrival of Christ. This arrival is the basis of the new life we have in Jesus Christ. The Bible

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explains it well. However, many do not truly understand the purpose of the cross and the mystery of God hidden there.

The cross is the site of death and the passage from death to life. Yes, it is also the site of a death that remains controversial in both its meaning and its nature. Whoever believes in Christ passes from death to life, but whoever rejects Christ or sins against Him remains in spiritual death. On the other hand, the one who turns away from spiritual death the walking corpse he once was because of sin—and attaches himself to Christ is often seen as 'dead' by his former companions in a life of sin. The cross, therefore, can be both a place of blessing and a place of curse. It is a place of blessing when, by being there, we freely surrender ourselves to crucifixion so that the flesh may be put to death then we pass from death to life. It becomes a curse when one refuses to embrace the cross as the path to life.

The cross is the ultimate point of transition toward either a joyful eternity or a sorrowful one. It is also the place of the decisive turning point in the history of humanity. With this book, we hope that each reader can use their spiritual eyes to understand its depth.

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