

Man's Creator Stooped to Die

Lesson 18: **March 10, 2016**—*God Is*

At 33, Jesus of Nazerath was condemned to a criminal's death—crucifixion—reserved for the worst. His crime was proclaiming *Who He was!* Rather than his hands and feet being tied to the cross in the usual way, 6 to 8 inch nails were used to affix his wrists and feet to the wooden structure. A tendon in his wrists which extends to the shoulder would tear and force him to use his back muscles to support himself to breathe, when he couldn't stretch out his legs which his impaled feet, one on the other, made impossible for very long. The struggle—pain and suffering—for more than 3 hours would have been excruciating!

The adult human body contains just over a gallon of blood, and a few minutes before breathing his last, Jesus ran out of blood and he stopped bleeding. Now water alone poured from his wounds—from his wrists and feet, from his side where the spear had penetrated, and from the deep cuts made by the cat-of-nine-tails, so horrific that his body was shredded. His face was torn by the 2 to 3 inch thorns in the crown and his beard was ripped from him. **Jesus was not just put to death, he was tortured to death!**

When given the choice between crucifying Jesus or the infamous murderer, Barabbas, the crowd insisted on Jesus and shouted: "Crucify him." In Matthew 27:25 "*All the people answered (Pilate), 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!'*" So, at our own request, 'it' is to this day! And there was humiliation in verse 27-31: "*Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. 30They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.*"

After the sentence, Jesus was undressed and mockingly dressed in a 'royal robe', undressed again, flogged, given near-death beatings, and made to carry his cross—a heavy burden for an unbeaten man—as the crowd jeered and spit in the face of God. They threw stones at him. A sign above the cross mocked him yet: "**This is Jesus, the King of the Jews**". All this so that we could have access to God, so that our sins could be washed away! Jesus stooped down to earth to live a sinless life, minister to us, and then die the death that would save us from God's wrath when we repent and believe on Him. **Philippians 2:8** "*And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*"

J. I. Packer—“If He was truly **God the Son**, it is much more startling that He should die than that He should rise again. ‘Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies,’ wrote Wesley; but there is no comparable mystery in the Immortal’s resurrection. And if the immortal Son of God did really submit to taste death, it is not strange that such a death should have saving significance for a doomed race.” **This is the pure, unadulterated Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.** There are 96 references to the gospel in the New Testament, and the world seeks to change it. **When we turn away from the *Truth*—Jesus—we turn to the **Liar**.** If what we hear is not the *Truth*, than it is a lie from the father of lies!

► The number one way in which the world seeks to change the gospel is to change *Who* Jesus was and is—and their attempts are prolific. In his book, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, Christian journalist, Lee Strobel, lists for his readers some twenty beliefs that the world claims about Jesus—and only one is Scriptural: “Jesus is the Son of God, who was born, died, and rose from the dead to save us from our sins. He lives today, and he will come to earth again.” Amen! If we do not know the gospel well, we can easily be drawn into doubt. The following **heresies** are most often without any attempts at proof for belief at all. And let me warn that these ‘gospels’ that the father of lies perpetrates will make believers sick to our stomachs. **These are all heresies—lies:**

- “We don’t know many historical facts concerning Jesus, but apparently he was a rabbi who was an example of compassion. Since then he has been exploited by Christians, particularly Americans.

- “Jesus is real, in the sense that he exists for those who want him to exist.

- “By today’s standards, Jesus was a liberal.

- “Jesus was one of a thousand Jews murdered by the Romans for threatening Roman rule.

- “Jesus was Everyman. His name could have as well been Morris. Too bad he was in male form this time around. Better luck next time.

- “Even strict Christians consider Jesus the Son of God only in a symbolic way.

- “Jesus was an enlightened being.

- “It’s not even obvious that Jesus was a historical figure. If he was, the legends around him—a Son of God who was born of a virgin, worked miracles, and rose from the dead—were common stories in the ancient Near East. The myths about Jesus are not even original.

- “Jesus is about as ‘real’ as Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, or King Arthur.

- “Jesus was a man who was nailed to a tree for saying how great it would be to be nice to people for a change.
- “So who was Jesus? A highly moral person, much like Teresa of Calcutta. No less, but no more.
- “Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher who thought God would intervene to save Israel from Roman rule and himself from death. God didn't do either. Jesus died disappointed, and that's that. Anything more is fantasy.
- “There is no separation or distinction between where God leaves off and where we begin. We are all One, all Divine, just like Jesus.
- “Jesus was a man we should pity more than revile or worship. He suffered from what contemporary psychologists now know to be delusions of grandeur, bipolar disorder, and probably acute schizophrenia.
- “Jesus is a fairy tale for grown-ups. Unfortunately, he's a fairy tale that leads people to bomb clinics, despise women, denigrate reason, and embrace greed. Any behavior can be justified when you have Jesus as your eternal 'Get out of Jail' card.
- “Who was Jesus? An apocalyptic prophet who bet wrong and died as a result. He should be ignored, not celebrated. **Here's the one that sums it up:**
- “Honestly—I don't care about Jesus. Who or what he was, is or isn't doesn't affect me.”

The murderers of Jesus still mock! Scripture says that eternal condemnation will be the punishment for those who would preach another gospel other than the one that has been revealed in God's Word: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Galatians 1:6-9 Paul so exhorts: *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and **are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.** Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. **But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!** **As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned.**”* And then verse ten sums Paul up: *“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”*

On Saturday, February 19, 2011, Mike Huckabee challenged two US churches—Heart Song and an unnamed Methodist Church—for allowing Muslim congregations to meet temporarily in their respective churches while Mosques are being completed. He said these churches were giving themselves over.... We cannot, we must not allow Satan to meet in our churches. Islam and its followers change *Who* God is—*Who* Jesus is—into a LIE!

God defines Himself: “**I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!**” He is not, therefore, the god of Abraham, Ishmael and Mohammed. We must be absolutely certain, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Allah is NOT God—Allah is no god! Isaiah 45:5a *“I am the LORD and **there is no other**; apart from me there is **no God**.”* There is only one God—Scripture’s God, and whatever Muslims believe about Jesus is a LIE, because they do not believe what Scripture says of Him as proclaimed in the Gospel. They have turned to a different gospel—a gospel other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must not be deceived—the devil and his angels ‘believe’, so it is no surprise at all that Satan’s religions’ ‘believe’. Isaiah 44:24ab—**Jesus is God!** *“This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer who formed you in the womb. I am the LORD, who has made all things....”* **The presence of God—his glory—is not with a false gospel!**

► In 1 Samuel 4:21 we are introduced to a fatherless and motherless newborn named *Ichabod*. It happened like this: Eli had been a priest in Israel for 40 years, and at 98, morbidly obese and blind, when he learned about the deaths of his sons Hophni and Phinehas, and, more distressing, that the ark of God had been captured by the Philistines, he fell over dead. His daughter-in-law, Phinehas’ wife, was pregnant and Scripture says that when she heard that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth. She prophesied in naming her newborn in verses 20-22 *“As she was dying, the women attending her said, ‘Don’t despair; you have given birth to a son.’ But she did not respond or pay any attention. 21She named the boy **Ichabod**, saying, **‘The glory has departed from Israel’**—because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. 22She said, **‘The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.’”***

The ark of God represented His presence with his people—His glory. Today, when God removes His glory from a church or a nation—it can rightly be called ‘Ichabod’! Make no mistake God will remove His presence and His glory from those who teach and follow a false gospel. And the work of that nation or that church or that group of people from whom God withdraws Himself will become null and void—ineffective and of no kingdom value—doomed.

As promised from the beginning—the Creator stepped into His creation! “Wonder at the price that was paid for us when Christ knew what we should be!” said Charles Spurgeon. “O redemption, how wondrously resplendent dost thou shine when we think how black we are!” 1 John 5:4 *“...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5Who is it that overcomes the world? **Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**”*

♥Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. They ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, and told them: “They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!” Peter and the other disciple raced each other to the tomb to see—the other disciple arrived first. He stopped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but didn't go in. Then Peter arrived and went inside. He too noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the napkin that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side.

♥♥To understand the significance of the folded napkin, we need to know something about Hebrew tradition of that day. The napkin had to do with the master and servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly the way the master wanted it. After the table was furnished perfectly, the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the master had finished eating. The servant would not dare touch the table, until the master was finished. Now if the master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, mouth, clean his beard, and wad up the napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days the wadded napkin meant, "I'm finished."

♥♥♥But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because the folded napkin meant, "**I'm coming back!**"

J. I. Packer, “It was a great act of condescension and self-humbling...having become man, Jesus humbled Himself by living a life of utter obedience, dying, and the death that he died was the death of a common criminal.” Jesus laid aside divine glory and dignity, but he did not relinquish any of His deity—He was and remains fully God and fully man. And he is coming back! Philippians 2:9-11 “*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***”

“We do not wonder that humanity has learned to reckon history from the birthday of Jesus, and to date all events by the years before or after the nativity of Christ,” said Henry van Dyke. “God has revealed himself in Christ in order that we may love him and live with him and be like him. If we will do this **we shall be sure of him and help other men to be sure of him too.**”