



## A crucial object

Reading: Galatians 3.10-14.

- There's one physical object in the Bible that, more than any other, represents where all the history, theology, prophecy and poetry meet together.
  - It represents the point of it all.
  - I wonder if you can guess what that object is?

A. The wooden cross at Calvary.

- It was the terrible means God would use to accomplish His great plan of redemption.
- Before the world was made, God chose the material of a tree - wood - to be the instrument by which Jesus Christ would suffer and die.
- He Himself was a carpenter.
  - I wonder if he thought about the cross every time he worked the wood in his carpentry workshop?
- It's clear from Scripture that He didn't suffer and die for His sins, but for those who would realise that cross is where sin leads:
  - It was for those who realise that sin has to be paid for; justice must be done.
- This wooden structure would be the instrument where, not only sin is punished, but, like an altar, it would be where a perfectly righteous sacrifice would be offered up.
  - A perfect life lived, to earn salvation for all who look to it and say to themselves - "That was for me! I haven't lived a perfect life, I'm someone who has committed sins - by definition that makes me a sinner."
- We call it a substitutionary atonement.

- And it's free for all who care to see it is what they need.
- But, so many people in life, look at the cross, as it were, and walk right past it. -
  - Some mock,
  - some shake their heads,
  - some jeer and laugh,
  - some turn away,
  - but some believe.
- I'm sure there were all those different types that stood around that cross on that day in history.
- It was a day known by God.
  - A day planned to fulfill all the foreshadowings that had gone before in the Bible.
  - All those pictures, and prophecies, hundreds, even thousands of years before.
  - Even pictures of the wooden cross itself.
- You may say, "but Sir, where does it speak of a wooden cross in the Old Testament?"
- Well, I can think of more than ten places.
  - You may be able to think of more than I can.
  - But I'll show you what I found.
    - Amazing foreshadowings.
- I'll go through them for you.
  - Some are clear, others need teasing out a bit, but they are there.
- I'll group them into four categories:
  1. TYPES OF A TREE
  2. TYPES WHERE A WOODEN OBJECT IS CONNECTED TO SALVATION
  3. TYPES WHERE WOOD IS CONNECTED TO SACRIFICE
  4. TYPES WHERE A CROSS, OR POSTURE OF CRUCIFIGATION, IS CONNECTED TO DELIVERANCE

First;

#### 1. TYPES OF A TREE

- In Acts 5:30 and Acts 10:39: Peter explicitly states that Jesus was put to death by being "hung on a tree".
- In Acts 13:29: Paul also uses this terminology when recounting the story of Jesus being taken down from the "tree".
- In Galatians 3:13: Paul quotes the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 21:23) to explain that Christ redeemed humanity from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, writing: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." as the law in Deuteronomy says. "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;)"
- In 1 Peter 2:24: Peter reminds believers that Jesus "bore our sins in His own body on the tree."
- The obvious place to start is the trees in the garden in the land of Eden.
  - First: A tree of Life - representing the positive aspect of the agreement of works God had with mankind (in Adam).

- Second: A tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil - representing the negative aspect of the agreement of works God had with mankind.

Trees were connected to the Fall of man, and a tree would be the means of his redemption.

- Gen 35.4 Jacob tells the people in his household to put away their sins, and they bury them under a tree.  
“And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”
- Five rebellious kings were defeated by Joshua and hung on trees at Gilgal in Joshua 10.  
“five kings of the Amorites,...went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it....And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us,...But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah....And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them:...Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave....And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.”
- The sinners against God paid with their lives for their rebellion, and are put in a cave with a stone rolled over the entrance.
- Does that sound familiar? 🤔
- You see, when Christ went to the cross it was so that He could become a cursed person to be punished in the place of sinners like us.
- It's interesting to note that Gilgal sounds like Golgotha, and means “rolling”. Golgotha comes from a root word meaning round head/skull.
- Golgotha, or Calvary, is the place where Christ was crucified and where that stone was rolled away from the tomb at the resurrection.
- The deaths of the wicked kings shows a deserved judgement - and Christ suffered a punishment that is deserved by sinners.
- Then we could look at the strange account of the lost axe head in 2 Kings 6.5 “But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.”
- The word "stick" here means “tree” or can even mean “gallows”.
- This account is like the parable of the lost coin.
  - We interpret that to mean a lost soul, and this is a similar picture.
- The axe head was precious, but is lost in the river Jordan.
- Elisha cuts down this tree and throws it into the place where it was lost, just like Christ dying on the cross “tree” in the place of repentant sinners with lost souls.
- The axe is raised and saved like resurrection.
- The Jordan river was the place that was passed over by the Israelites into the promised land and where John the Baptist baptised people;
  - Both of these things are pictures of salvation.

Next;

## 2. TYPES WHERE A WOODEN OBJECT IS CONNECTED TO SALVATION or JUDGEMENT

- Brazen serpent on a wooden pole.

Numbers 21.6 “And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a (wooden) pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

This pictures Christ being lifted up on the cross

- We can think of Noah's ark being “lifted up from the earth” in Genesis 7.17 “And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.”
  - Once again this wooden object saves people, like the cross being lifted up with Christ on it.
- Jonah saves the sailors by telling them to throw him into the sea from a wooden ship.
- In the book of Acts people are saved from a shipwreck by clinging to pieces of wood to be washed ashore
- The burning bush connects to the cross and the crown.
  - It was a ‘thorn bush’. And on the cross Christ wore a crown of thorns.
  - The LORD speaks to Moses out of the bush that is on fire but not consumed.
    - Like Christ enduring the flames of hell on Calvary's cross, but resurrected.
  - This bush is connected to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which is a great picture of salvation.
- Absalom (David's rebellious son, who led an army against his own father) is slain after getting caught by his head in the branches of a tree, and hanging from it.
  - And like Christ, the Son of God, being thrust through by a spear on the cross, Absalom is thrust through with spears by the opposing army whilst he hung in that tree.
  - This again shows a deserved judgement.
- And how can we forget Haman's gallows, that wooden stake that was erected for Mordecai, but the guilty Haman was hung and killed on it. Thus God's people were saved. Esther 7.10 “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.”
  - The Hebrew word translated ‘gallows’ in our translation, is a word that can mean a ‘tree’. (Although the wood would have been fashioned in some way).
  - Here's an interesting fact: This word is also the same word used for the ‘stick’ Elisha cast into the Jordan to raise the axe head, and used in Deuteronomy when it talks of the capital punishment of hanging on a tree.

Then we have;

### 3. WHERE WOOD IS CONNECTED TO SACRIFICE

- Issac carries the wood for his own sacrifice, like Christ carrying his cross to Calvary. When his father Abraham is about to kill him, God provides a substitute.
  - Thus Christ dies in the place of all who would trust in Him for their own salvation.

- In Lev. 1.7,8; Lev.6.12; 1 Kings 18.33; Respectively the sacrifice is laid on the burning wood, or on the wood before burned, and lastly Elijah lays the cut up sacrifice on the wood of the altar before God sends fire down to consume it.
  - Once again this pictures Christ bearing the fiery wrath of God on Calvary's cross.
- Then we can note that the Ark of the Covenant, which is a picture of Christ's work on Calvary, was made of acacia wood. The temple of cedar
  - Archeological finds suggest Roman crosses were made of a few different woods, two of which were - acacia, and cedar wood.

Lastly we'll look at;

#### 4. WHERE A CROSS OR POSTURE OF CRUCIFIXATION IS CONNECTED TO DELIVERANCE

- Moses has his arms outstretched whilst Joshua fights to win a battle to save the people:. Exodus 17.12 "Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."
  - We note that the sun was darkened at the crucifixion, and at the end of the day they took Christ down from the cross.
- Samson finally delivers his people, after being betrayed, and with outstretched arms between two pillars, as in a crucifixion posture.
 

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." Judges 16.29-31
- Then in a remarkable vision in Ezekiel:
  - A man clothed in linen with a writer's ink horn puts a mark upon all the contrite people who sigh and cry for their sins.
  - The interesting thing is the mark which he makes is a cross!
  - The Hebrew word for mark in this passage is the letter 'tau' which is the forerunner of our letter 't', and would have literally been a cross.

Ezekiel 9.4 "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

The Lord spares all with the mark, saying to the angels,

"Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary" 5,6

  - This is like the angel of death passing over all those with the blood on their doorposts, when the children of Israel were rescued from slavery in Egypt.
- These pictures are all symbolic, but Christ Himself was much more specific on five different occasions:
  - He used the picture of a cross of crucifixion as a metaphor, before anyone knew He would die by Roman crucifixion:-
  - Matthew 10.38 "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."
  - Matthew 16.24; "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

- He talks about Himself being “lifted up” from the earth.
- John 3.14 “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up”
- John 12:32-33, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. -- This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

Lifted up like it says Noah's ark was in Genesis, or the pole with the brass serpent on it in Exodus.

- Then, if it is in any doubt, He specifically spells out how He would die:-
- Matthew 20:18-19: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.”
- These examples are to prove that Christianity is authentic, and the only credible religion.
  - Why do I make it exclusive, the only way to God?
  - Because these all point to Christ as the way of salvation, and He Himself makes it exclusive:-

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14.6

- The College Class is here to help you, not to offend you, or insult you, or to be condescending.
- So, if you want some friendly advice -
  - Times are hard for young people like yourselves.
  - Don't expect anything from the world.
  - If there is help - great - but don't expect the Government or Society to be much help.
  - Work hard to reach your potential without expecting anyone to do it for you
- When it comes to your Spiritual survival: again don't expect anything from the World,
  - It won't repay your love.
  - But also, don't expect your imagined efforts (to make yourself right) will be enough.
  - Don't think that working hard in this case will get results. It will only make things worse, like a struggling animal in a snare, only makes the wire pull tighter.
  - Convincing yourself that moral improvement is enough is a false hope.
- But do expect help from God.
  - In fact not just help (half you and half God won't work either) it must be a complete dependence.
- I mentioned that shipwreck of Paul.
  - Before they were saved, by clinging to those broken pieces of wood, some tried to deceive the others by taking the lifeboat. But Paul says “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off”
  - That lifeboat couldn't save them.
  - It's a picture of trying to save yourself in a way not prescribed by the Gospel.
- So, don't be afraid to go to God in Christ.

- This world's ways will be your ruin, that way is towards hell.
  - You may fear going to God, and I can understand that. He is furious at sinners.
  - But He has promised to save those who go to Him pleading the cross of Christ.
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- So, don't walk by it, don't scorn it, don't shake your head at it, don't turn away, but believe and trust in it for yourself.