

# THE BIG JOURNEY

from Creation

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to New Creation



## eleven ► Crucified and Risen



'He is Guilty of Death' painted by Vasily Polenov (1844–1927). The artist portrays the moment when Caiaphas the high priest, and the chief priests, elders and scribes gathered with him, declare Jesus to be worthy of death (Matthew 26.66, Mark 14.64).

## Jesus's final days

The events of the Cross and Resurrection lie at the very heart of our journey from Creation to New Creation. John Taylor comments: "We speak of turning points in history, but there has only been the one."

Jesus arrives in Jerusalem at the Feast of Passover (probably in either **AD30** or **AD33**). Jerusalem is heaving with pilgrims. The Passover lambs were killed on the 14th Nisan in the Jewish calendar (around our Easter-time) - see Exodus 12.1-14,21-27, Leviticus 23.5 and Numbers 28.16. This was followed by the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread from the 15th to the 21st Nisan (Exodus 12.15-20, 13.3-10, 23.15, 34.18, Leviticus 23.6-8, Numbers 28.17-25, Deuteronomy 16.3-4,8).

Jesus's triumphal entrance may have been on Sunday 9th Nisan; He cleanses the Temple the next day (Mark 11.15-17 and parallels). Probably over the two succeeding days (Tuesday and Wednesday) Jesus concludes His public teaching, climaxing in His scorching denunciation of the Jewish religious leaders (Matthew 21.23-23.36 and parallels).

Finally, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus teaches His disciples about the events of the years after His resurrection and through the present age to His coming again (Matthew

24.1-25.46 and parallels). He warns them against false prophets and phoney messiahs, and foretells great tribulations - wars and insurrections, natural disasters, and mounting wickedness. God's people will be terribly persecuted; many will betray and hate each other. But the Gospel will be preached across the globe before the end comes. Jesus, too, predicts the Roman war that would climax in the unspeakable horror of the fall of Jerusalem in **AD70** (Matthew 24.15-22). But that catastrophe is just a foretaste of the fearful distress that will overwhelm the Earth in the end times.

And He teaches His disciples, and us, about His coming - and how to live in the light of His coming. We're to live obedient, faithful lives, alert and watchful for His return.

### The betrayal

The chief priests and the other leaders gather in the house of the High Priest, Caiaphas (in the Upper City - see the map on page 4), and plot to arrest Jesus (Matthew 26.3-5). They plan to seize Him privately, for fear of a riot. But how can they do this? Then Judas turns up. He agrees to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26.14-16). From that time, Judas watches for his opportunity.

What triggered Judas's treachery? Perhaps it was Mary's anointing of Jesus in Bethany (John 12.1-8). Mark and Matthew suggest this by placing their accounts of that anointing immediately before Judas's meeting with the Jewish leaders (Matthew 26.6-13, Mark 14.3-9).

Ambitious, unscrupulous Judas recognised Jesus's tremendous power and authority. He must have had ambitions of high office in the coming Kingdom that Jesus would one day set up. After all, hadn't Jesus promised thrones to all the disciples (Matthew 19.28)? Even James and John had asked to sit next to Jesus in His glory (Mark 10.35-40).

At this meal in Bethany, Mary pours the entire contents of a jar of costly perfume over Him - worth the equivalent of around a year's wages for a labourer. Jesus says, *"In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial"* (Matthew 26.12). He implies that His death is now very close. Mary, it seems probable, had sensed that Jesus would not be long in this world. So she took her last opportunity to express her devotion to Him.

Mary valued Jesus as worthy of her most precious possession; Judas valued Jesus only for what he could get out of Him. To him, Jesus was doubtless just a ticket to

position and power in the coming Kingdom. But Jesus had steadfastly refused to be a great warrior driving out the Roman overlords (see John 6.15). Now He was talking of His death. We can imagine Judas thinking: *"Why is this powerful, charismatic man going to allow Himself to be killed? Why doesn't He rise up and take the Kingdom?"*

Judas's dream - the cause for which he had, it seems, followed Jesus for 3 years - was slipping away. Perhaps Judas's treachery was an act of vengeance on Jesus for killing his dream. In William Barclay's words: *"If this be so, Judas betrayed Jesus . . . because Jesus refused to be what he wanted him to be."* Or perhaps Judas thought that Jesus wouldn't, in the end, let Himself be killed - that His arrest would compel Him to rise up at last and seize the Kingdom.

But whatever Judas's motive, money doubtless played only a part. The 30 pieces of silver he bargained for with the chief priests echoes Zechariah 11.12. It was also the price of a slave (see Exodus 21.32). Jesus, Who took *"the form of a bondservant"* (Philippians 2.7 ESV margin) was valued as a slave. The religious leaders, we may presume, paid Judas out of Temple money. This money was also used to buy the Temple sacrifices. Unwittingly, they had just purchased the Lamb Whose sacrifice would fulfil all their sacrifices.

## The Last Supper



'Lord's Supper' painted by Vasily Polenov (1844-1927). A wonderfully realistic depiction of Jesus and His disciples at the Last Supper before His crucifixion.

Jesus was very probably crucified on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan, the day that the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple - John 18.28 indicates this. The Last Supper took place the previous evening (Matthew 26.17-30 and parallels in Mark

and Luke; John 13.1-17.26). Scholars differ over whether this was actually a Passover meal. It seems most likely that it was a Passover meal, but celebrated a day earlier than the official day. It may well have taken place in John Mark's

home, the house that seems to have become the regular meeting place of the church in Jerusalem after Pentecost (see Acts 12.12).

At this meal, Jesus institutes what we call 'the Lord's Supper': *"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"* (Matthew 26.26-28). What did He mean by this? The **Passover meal** and **the covenant at Sinai** supply the background for us.

### The Passover

The Last Supper took place at Passover. The first Passover meal was eaten just before the Exodus, and every time God's people celebrated the Passover they recounted the story of how God saved their firstborn from death, defeated their Egyptian overlords and led them to safety through the sea.

Now a new exodus was about to take place. Jesus was going to die and rise again; this was His exodus (Luke 9.31 - the word *"departure"* (ESV) translates the Greek word *exodus*). This new exodus - His death and resurrection - was going to deliver God's people not from political oppression but from an enemy that had enslaved mankind since the Fall. That enemy was sin (see Matthew 26.28).

The first Exodus was a baptism. God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians through a baptism in the cloud of God's presence and in the sea (1 Corinthians 10.1-2). Jesus's exodus was a baptism, too (Luke 12.50) - not through water, but through death. Jesus was plunged into death and raised again out of death into resurrection life. And everyone who believes in Him is baptised with Him - they die with Him and are raised with Him into new life (Romans 6.3-4, Colossians 2.12-13, 3.1).

The Passover was Israel's birthday - that's when God's nation came into being. Jesus's Passover sacrifice, too, would give birth to a nation - God's renewed people, born again and filled with the Holy Spirit.

### The covenant at Mount Sinai

This covenant was made around a couple of months after the Exodus (Exodus 24.1-11). It was sealed with blood. Moses sprinkled blood on the altar (symbolising God's presence) and on the people, saying: *"Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you . . ."* Jesus echoes Moses' words when He says, *"this is my blood of the covenant"* (Matthew 26.28). Blood is really important in the Bible. Our physical life depends on it (see Leviticus 17.11). When blood is shed, it represents life being brought to an end in death. The sprinkled blood symbolised that each party was committed to the terms of the covenant on pain of death.

Israel did break the covenant - wilfully and repeatedly over centuries. Each Israelite should have suffered the due punishment for breaking that covenant - they should have died. But God accepted the death of animal sacrifices instead. Now Jesus was going to be the final, perfect sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10.1-14). His blood would be *"poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"* (Matthew

26.28), fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant Who *"poured out his soul to death"* and *"bore the sin of many"* (Isaiah 53.12). Under Moses' covenant, the sacrificial animals' blood was sprinkled (Exodus 24.6,8 NKJV, Hebrews 9.19); now Jesus's own blood would be sprinkled (see Hebrews 12.24, 1 Peter 1.2).

Jesus's death inaugurates a new covenant with His eleven disciples (Matthew 26.28, Luke 22.20; see Hebrews 8.6-12, which quotes Jeremiah 31.31-34; and see Hebrews 12.24). Israel kept breaking the covenant that God made with them at Sinai. But this covenant is different. Never again will God's people keep disobeying Him. God is going to give them new, obedient hearts (Jeremiah 31.33, quoted in Hebrews 8.10; Ezekiel 11.19-20, 36.26-27; Hebrews 10.16). God will put His Spirit within them; then they'll *really* be able to love God and their neighbour - and so fulfil the Law (see Matthew 22.37-39 and Romans 13.8-10). As He teaches His disciples at this final meal, Jesus speaks to them about their love for Him (John 16.27 and see John 14.15,21,23), and commands them to love one another (John 13.34).



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### ❖ Broken bread and poured out wine ❖

The bread and wine symbolise Jesus's broken body and His blood poured out in violent death. On the basis of His sacrificial death, Jesus gives God's eternal, uncreated life to all who believe in Him as Saviour and Lord (see John 17.2). Like a vine's life-giving sap flows through its branches, believers are united with Christ and His life in them brings fruitfulness (John 15.1-8).

Whenever His disciples ate and drank these symbols of bread and wine, they were to remember that it was His sacrificial death - the tearing apart of His flesh and the flow of His blood - that enabled them to have eternal life and to enjoy all the blessings of His New Covenant.

## Feasting in God's Kingdom

At this last meal, Jesus prepares His disciples for a whole new life that awaits them when the Holy Spirit comes on the Day of Pentecost (John 14.1-16.33). They doubtless struggle to take in all He is saying to them, and He continues to teach them after His resurrection.

At the Last Supper Jesus speaks about the coming Kingdom (Matthew 26.29, Mark 14.25, Luke 22.16-18,29-30). What does He mean by the Kingdom? Notice that He speaks about *eating and drinking* in the Kingdom. He pictures the blessings of God's Kingdom as a meal (something we'll explore further in Session 14). That's a key to what He means by 'Kingdom'. In the Biblical world, eating together is far more than filling stomachs; it's a time of *fellowship* with all those around the table. Jesus uses the picture of eating together to symbolise *fellowship* with Him in Revelation 3.20. To be in God's Kingdom is, at its heart, *to be in God's presence and enjoy fellowship with Him*.

God's Kingdom will come in its final glory at Jesus's Second Coming. Then God's people will be in His immediate presence and enjoy unhindered fellowship with Him for all eternity. That fellowship with God is symbolised by a meal – the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19.9, and compare Isaiah 25.6). When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom at the Last Supper, we can be sure He was looking forward to His marriage feast in the age to come.

But it seems certain that Jesus was also looking forward to an event only weeks away. On the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit and came to live *inside* people (Acts 1.4-5,8, 2.1-4)! At the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit was already *with* them. But from the moment the Spirit was poured out on that momentous day, He came to live *inside* them (see John 14.17). And through the Spirit, the Father and the Son, too, made their home in the disciples (see John 14.23). Such intimacy with God was completely new - God's Kingdom had come in a radically new way!

### Foot Note Abba, Father

As we pointed out above, to be in God's Kingdom is, at its heart, to enjoy fellowship with Him. God's Kingdom is fundamentally relational. And the most intimate relationships we know as humans are family relationships. That takes us back to something we pointed out back in Session 1 - God's Kingdom is not so much His empire, as His family. God's people are married to Him – the Church is Jesus's bride. And each believer is a child of God – He is their Father.

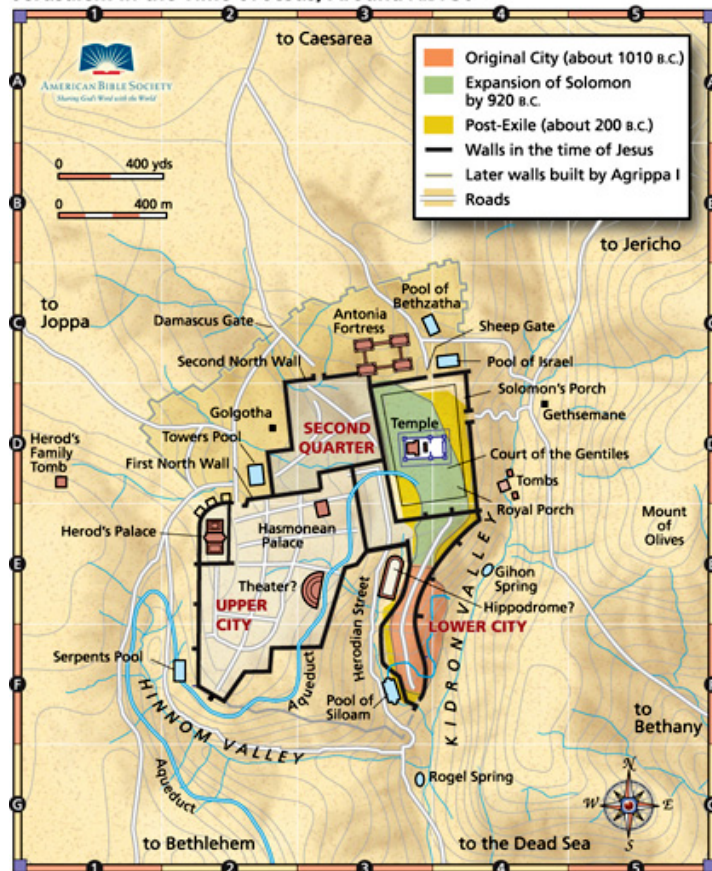
Our biological parents gave us **natural life**, and we entered this world as their children. God gives **eternal life** to those who believe in Jesus. They are born from above; they become His children. They are adopted into His family and call Him "**Abba, Father**" (Romans 8.14-16, Galatians 4.4-6). They have a new disposition and, in Oswald Chambers' words, bear "a strong family likeness" to their Father.

Fellowship with God and each other on the new Earth is symbolised by a meal – **the marriage supper of the Lamb**. And fellowship with God and our fellow Christians on Earth now is also symbolised and celebrated by a meal - **the Lord's Supper**. The bread and wine symbolise Jesus's body and blood given for us in death (see Matthew 26.26-28 and parallels, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26), a death that purchased our

fellowship with God and made us part of God's family.

So the Lord's Supper and the marriage supper of the Lamb are connected. The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the marriage supper; it foreshadows our fellowship with God and with our brothers and sisters in His eternal Kingdom.

Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, Around A.D. 30



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## Jesus's High Priestly prayer

Jesus had now finished the work His Father had given Him to do on Earth. Trial, torture and death on a cross await Him. We now overhear Jesus's wonderful 'High Priestly' prayer (John 17.1-26).

### Jesus prays for Himself (John 17.1-5)

Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him (17.1,5). But, as Leon Morris comments, Jesus "looks for glory in the last place that men would seek it, namely in the cross". He is praying that God will glorify Him through his imminent death - so shameful and hideous to human eyes - and through His resurrection and exaltation to the Father's right hand.

And Jesus asks that His glorification might, in turn, bring glory to the Father (17.1). God is glorified in the glorious achievement of the Cross. Through the Cross and His resurrection and exaltation, Jesus has authority from the Father to give eternal life to everyone the Father has given Him (17.2-3, compare John 3.14-17).

Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him on His return to Heaven "*with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*" (17.5). He will then be glorified not only as the eternal Son of God, but also as a Man with a human nature and a physical body!

### He prays for His disciples (John 17.6-19)

Jesus asks His Father to keep His disciples "*in your name, which you have given me*" (17.11) – that is, to keep them

loyal to the revelation of the Father in the person of His Son. He asks this so that *“that they may be one, even as we are one”* (17.11). He asks the Father, too, to protect them from Satan (7.15).

And He asks Him to sanctify them *“in the truth”* (17.17) – that is, by revealing His truth to them (see John 14.26, 16.13). Adam believed Satan’s lie, and acted upon it. In contrast, Jesus’s disciples are to be God’s new humanity, thinking and understanding as God does, and living in conformity to His truth. By doing this, they’ll be *sanctified* – meaning ‘consecrated to God’, ‘made holy’ or, as D.A. Carson puts it, *“reserved for God’s service”*. Jesus will send His followers into the world to do His work (17.18); but God can only use them in the world if they are separate from the world and consecrated to Him.

### He prays for us (John 17.20-23)

Jesus then prays for those who will believe because of His disciples’ ministry. That includes us. Again, He prays that they will be united – *“perfectly one”* (17.23). And our unity is patterned on no less than the unity of the Father and the Son: *“that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you”* (17.21, see 17.22 and 17.11)! In Tim Chester’s words: *“Humanity is modelled on the triune community. . . . We are people in community without losing our own personal identities”*. Jesus is praying that we, His people, will be united in mind, heart and will. We’re to be united in our understanding, in our love for God and for each other, and in our faithfulness and obedience to Him.

Our unity is neither *institutional* nor *organisational*; it’s *spiritual*. It’s a radical and fundamental unity that’s rooted in our intimate relationship with God. We’re united with each other *because of our unity with God*. Jesus prays

*“that they . . . may be in us”* (17.21), and speaks of Himself as being *“in them”* and the Father in Him (17.23). We’re united because we’re in the Father and the Son (see John 15.1-8), and because the Son is in us – and through the Son, the Father indwells us, too (compare John 14.23).

So you can see how our unity is quite different from any unity the world knows about. Consequently, it will make a deep impression on many unbelievers (17.21,23). When they see our unity, they’ll realise who Jesus really is – that He was sent by the Father. And they’ll see that God loves us with the very same love as He loves the Son!

### He prays for all believers (John 17.24-26)

Finally, Jesus asks that His people might be with Him and see His glory (17.24). Even now *“we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another”* (2 Corinthians 3.18). One day, as John tells us, we shall be like Jesus, *“because we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3.2).

Jesus will continue to make the Father known to believers (17.26 and compare 16.25). He do this through the Holy Spirit (see 16.12-15). This won’t be just to give them intellectual knowledge. He’ll reveal the Father to transform their lives. He’ll reveal Him so *they’ll love with God’s own love*, the very same love with which the Father loves the Son. And He’ll reveal the Father so *He, Jesus, may indwell them* – in D.A. Carson’s words, *“this is nothing less than the fulfilment of the ancient hope that God would dwell in the midst of his people . . .”*

Jesus, our High Priest, always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7.25). What He prayed for believers then, He continues to pray for us now.

## Gethsemane

Jesus and His disciples leave Jerusalem around midnight. They cross the Kidron Valley, east of the city, and enter the Garden of Gethsemane – a walled olive orchard (see the map on page 4). Judas is even now arranging Jesus’s arrest.

Asking His disciples to keep watch, Jesus prays. He begins to be *“greatly distressed and troubled”*; He tells the disciples: *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death”* (Mark 14.33-34). In F.W. Farrar’s words: *“A grief beyond utterance, . . . a horror of great darkness”* overwhelms our Lord. So distraught is He, that an angel comes to strengthen Him; His sweat is like great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22.43-44).

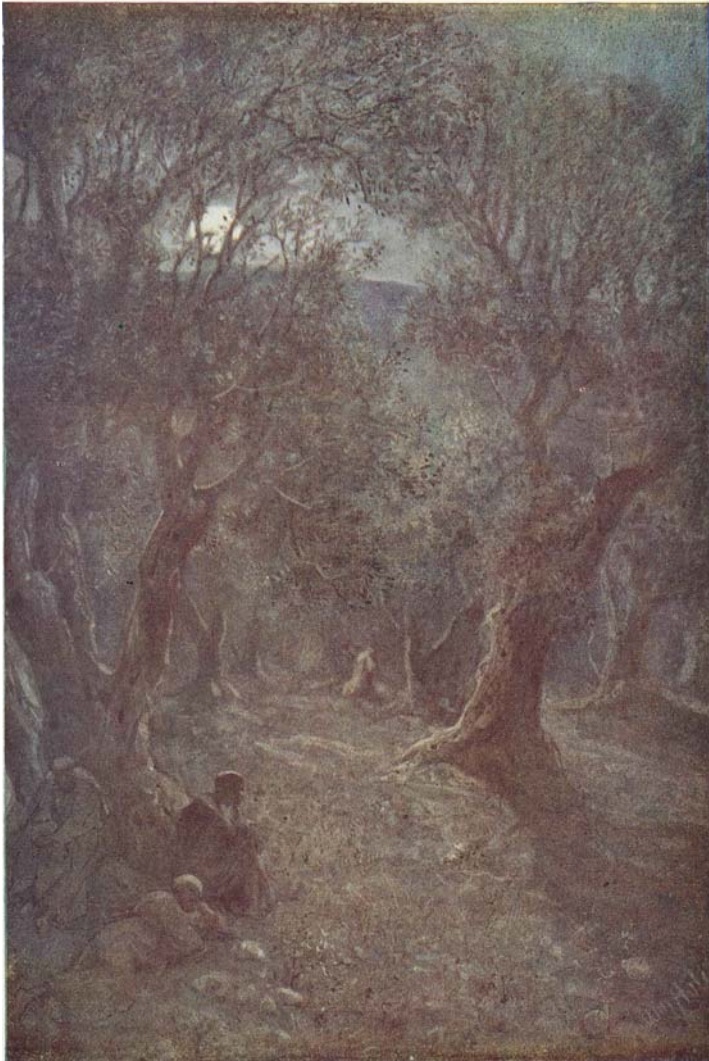
Jesus’s spotless, sensitive soul is appalled and terrorstruck by what He will face on the cross. He will bear all mankind’s sin for all history, past, present and future. Humanity’s contemptuous defiance of the Most High God, the mass murders, the tortures and filthy perversions, right through to the countless unforgivenesses and unkindnesses that daily spoil our lives – all will become His responsibility. The prospect fills Him with stark horror. John Stott asks, *“If to bear man’s sin and God’s wrath was so terrible in anticipation, what must the reality have been like?”*

Sin was utterly alien and abhorrent to Jesus. Yet, in some mysterious way we cannot understand, Jesus took our sin upon Himself and suffered its penalty on our behalf. We



Detail from an image courtesy of [www.HolyLandPhotos.org](http://www.HolyLandPhotos.org)  
Steps in Jerusalem that date from the Second Temple Period, and thus almost certainly in existence during Jesus’s time. They ascend the western hill of old Jerusalem from the central valley, called the Tyropoeon Valley, which bisected the ancient city north to south. It is quite possible that Jesus Himself walked on these steps, perhaps, for example, as He walked with His disciples from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before His crucifixion.

cannot possibly imagine what this must have been like for the pure, spotless son of God. For Him not only to come into contact with sin, but to be *“made . . . to be sin”* (2 Corinthians 5.21) - hideous, corrupt, filthy sin - to feel Himself enveloped by its obscene and loathsome defilement, was an ordeal altogether unimaginable.



Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.  
A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E.

And above all, how could Jesus bear sin's penalty – to be estranged from His Father? As Donald Macleod explains: *“ . . . how could he bear the loss of God? To the fallen, that is a familiar and not altogether unwelcome experience. To Christ, living eternally with God . . . it was an unspeakable horror.”*

But in a final and climactic act of submission, Jesus yields Himself to God's will with these words, *“nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”* (Matthew 26.39).

## The arrest

Judas knows where he will find Jesus. The betrayer leads officials of the religious leaders to the place, backed up by a detachment of soldiers. Jesus, always in command, is quite ready for them. *“Whom do you seek?”*, He asks; *“Jesus of Nazareth”*, they reply (John 18.4-5).

Then Jesus says, *“I am”* (John 18.5, literal translation). We hear the echo of the Divine Name. Awestruck, the arresting officers retreat and fall to the ground. Jesus could simply have passed through their midst to safety (compare Luke 4.29-30). But His hour has come (John 17.1) and He gives Himself freely to His captors. Matthew 26.47-56 and parallels record what happened.

Jesus is taken into the city. Nine disciples flee, perhaps to Bethany where they can lie low, but Peter and another disciple (very possibly John) follow at a distance (Matthew 26.58, John 18.15).

### Foot Note Jesus, the second Adam

Right at the dawn of human history, there was another man in another garden. In that first garden, our ancestor Adam rebelled against God, saying to Him, in effect, *“Not Your will, but mine”*. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, the second Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15.45), says *“not as I will, but as you will”* (Matthew 26.39). The first Adam rebels; the Second Adam obeys – and so submits Himself to the Cross to rescue us from the consequences of the first Adam's rebellion.

## Gabbatha

The Jewish leadership finally have the Son of God in their grasp. Jesus is put on trial - John 18.13-19.16 and its parallels in the other Gospels record what happened. The climax is at Gabbatha (John 19.13), the paved area where Pilate finally hands the Son of God over to be crucified.

### Before Annas, Caiaphas and the religious leaders

Jesus is taken first to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas, the High Priest (John 18.13,19-23). Peter and the other disciple gain access to Annas's house, too (John 18.15-16). Annas was a former High Priest and still retained that office's title and many of its responsibilities. This wasn't a formal trial but, in Robert Stein's words, *“a rough interrogation seeking evidence that might condemn Jesus”*.

Unsuccessful, Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas's house (John 18.24), where the chief priests, elders and scribes are gathered (Matthew 26.57,59-66, Mark 14.53, 55-64). This seems to have been a formal trial. The witnesses' testimony is false, and their evidence breaks down; the case should have been thrown out.

Then two people come forward and claim: *“This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’”* This would have been viewed as sacrilege and treason. These liars had twisted Jesus's words (compare John 2.19,21); moreover, as Mark records, *“Yet even about this their testimony did not agree”* (Mark 14.59). The case for the prosecution had utterly foundered. Yet still Caiaphas persists. He questions Jesus, Who remains silent.

Then, in Val Grieve's words, *“What had started out as a trial now became an inquisition”*. Caiaphas puts Jesus under oath and demands: *“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”* (Mark 14.61). Under oath, Jesus is obliged to reply. He declares: *“I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”* (Mark 14.62). His words, based on Daniel 7.13, seal His fate. To His accusers, this was plain blasphemy. Mark tells us *“they all condemned him as deserving death”*. Jesus is mocked and abused by his captors, a foretaste of the brutality to come (Luke 22.63-65 and parallels).

Early in the morning, the religious leaders reach their decision (Luke 22.66-71). They want to secure a death sentence, which only the Roman authorities could legally carry out (John 18.31). So they submit the case to the Roman governor, Pilate.

### Before Pilate and Herod

Jesus is taken to the Praetorium, Pilate's official residence. This was probably Herod's Palace - the former palace of Herod the Great (see the map on page 4). Pilate is described as inflexible and cruel by his contemporary Philo and later by Josephus. But when faced with Jesus, he acts out of character (John 18.29-38). In Jesus's calm and commanding presence, this Roman governor senses there is something different about this Man. And he knows Jesus is innocent of the charges and is afraid to condemn Him - a disquiet doubtless deepened by his wife's unnerving message: *"Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream"* (Matthew 27.19).

Blasphemy was not a capital offence under Roman law, as the Sanhedrin well know. So they reframe their charges to goad Pilate into compliance with their wishes (Luke 23.2). But Pilate refuses to ratify the Jews' verdict. Three times Pilate declares Jesus innocent (Luke 23.4,14-15,22). During the proceedings, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod Agrippa (Luke 23.6-12). He, too, cannot find anything worthy of death (Luke 23.15).

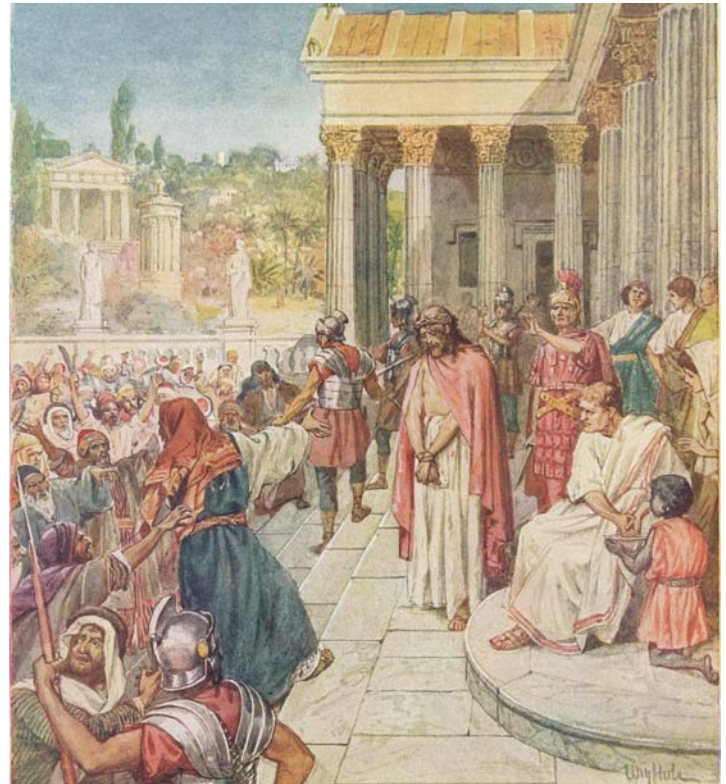
Pilate even tries to get Jesus released according to a custom whereby a prisoner was released to the Jews each Passover. But the crowd instead choose Barabbas, whose other name may well have been Jesus (Matthew 27.16, NKJV margin). He was a rebel and a murderer (Mark 15.7, Acts 3.14). The mob saves a murderer, and wants our Saviour murdered.

Finally, Pilate has Jesus flogged - probably the dreaded *verberatio*, a savage scourging with a whip probably loaded with pieces of metal or bone that lacerated the flesh. The soldiers then cruelly mock and batter their victim. Pilate again declares Jesus innocent and presents Him to the crowd (John 19.4-5). Jesus is arrayed in a mock kingly robe



Jesus being mocked by the soldiers.  
A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E.

and crown of thorns; His face is swollen, bruised, bleeding. Pilate doubtless hopes this pitiful sight will elicit the crowd's sympathy and persuade them to drop their charges. But the baying mob insists on His execution.



Jesus presented to the mob by Pilate at the paved area called in Aramaic Gabbatha (John 19.13-16). A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E. Jesus is arrayed in a mock kingly robe and crown of thorns; the crowd demands His execution. The artist portrays Pilate washing his hands, claiming himself innocent of Jesus's death (Matthew 27.24-25), though strictly this, in fact, occurred prior to Jesus's scourging and mockery by the soldiers.

### Foot Note Mankind in the dock

It was not Jesus Who was on trial that fateful day - it was mankind. Pilate asks the crowd; *"Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"* (Matthew 27.22). Would they have Jesus as their King? Or would they say, *"We do not want this man to reign over us"* (compare Luke 19.14)? That was the question they had to answer. That is the question everyone must answer. We must either crown Him or crucify Him. They crucified Him.

Pilate desperately seeks to release Jesus. The Jewish leaders finally make a veiled threat to report Pilate to Caesar: *"If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."* (John 19.12). Pilate had been in trouble with the Jews before - he daren't risk being reported to Caesar. The Jews had outwitted him. He brings Jesus out to the paved area called Gabbatha. Again the mob cries *"crucify him!"*

Miserably defeated, Pilate caves in to expediency and self-interest. Jesus is led away to be crucified.

Israel had been privileged like no other nation (see Romans 9.4-5). God had brought them into sacred covenant with Himself. He had given them His Law. He had come to live among them as a member of their race; they had heard and seen and touched God made Man (see 1 John 1.1). And now they murder Him. But Israel was no worse than any other nation. Sketched on the canvas of this small nation is a graphic portrait of all mankind in its sin. All humanity crucified our Lord.

## Golgotha



The 'Via Dolorosa' – a street in Old Jerusalem held (since the 18th century) to be along the route that Jesus was taken to the place of His crucifixion. The present street and adjoining houses are, however, much more recent.

One writer observed: “History slows down in the Gospels, until at last all history moves from action to passion, and jerks to a halt before the three hours’ silence of Jesus on his Cross.”

Crucifixion was a horrific, brutal and revolting form of execution. In Martin Hengel’s words, it was “an utterly offensive affair, ‘obscene’ in the original sense of the word”. The tormented victim might live for days; flies would swarm over the wounds; birds and animals might begin to feed on the victim’s flesh even before death. The blessing of death came with agonising slowness. Crucifixion was not only barbaric. In a society where honour was paramount, it was designed to humiliate utterly. The victim - naked, disfigured, caked with filth - was exposed to public ridicule and shame.



### Foot Note Bearing our shame and curse

After Adam and Eve had sinned, they immediately felt naked (Genesis 3.7). To be naked was shameful and humiliating (see Revelation 3.18 and compare Genesis 2.25). Allen P. Ross comments: “Nakedness in the Old Testament was from the beginning a thing of shame for fallen humankind.” Jesus was crucified almost certainly without even a loincloth, naked (this was normal for victims of crucifixion and is implied by John 19.23-24 and parallels). On that hideous cross, He represented us - fallen, shameful and naked humanity.

And anyone hung on a tree was cursed (Deuteronomy 21.22-23) - Jesus “redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’—” (Galatians 3.13, and compare Acts 5.30).

Jesus is crucified sometime in the morning, in a place called Golgotha, just outside the city walls (probably to the north-west, see the map on page 4). Two criminals are crucified with Him, with Jesus in the centre (Matthew 27.38 and parallels); He is “*numbered with the transgressors*” (Isaiah 53.12, Luke 22.37).

### “Made . . . to be sin” for us

At noon, darkness falls (Matthew 27.45). This is no eclipse - it is supernatural.

The gloom shields Jesus’s sufferings from human gaze. Only God knew what Jesus was enduring for us - the agonies of His spirit and soul infinitely outweighing those of His body.

Peter tells us that Jesus “*bore our sins in his body on the tree*” (1 Peter 2.24). Paul makes this astonishing statement: “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5.21). On the Cross, Jesus was “*made . . . to be sin*”. C.K. Barrett explains: Jesus “came to stand in that relation with God which normally is the result of sin, estranged from God and the object of his wrath”. He assumed responsibility for all human sin - your sin and my sin and the sin of the entire world (see John 1.29, 1 John 2.2).

What so gripped Jesus with horror in Gethsemane has now come upon Him. The wickedness and perversion of mankind through the ages now becomes His responsibility. He feels its sickening, filthy pollution clinging to Him. Arthur Custance comments: “We cannot really have the slightest conception of what this experience meant to One who was completely without sin.”

### ❖ The Cross and the Trinity ❖

We must not think of God the Father as standing back, remote from this scene of unutterable anguish on the Cross, and coldly and dispassionately punishing His Son. All Three Persons of the Trinity were deeply involved.

God the Father was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5.18-19). One writer, George Buttrick, comments: “In an Italian church may be seen a picture . . . At first glance it is only another picture of the crucifixion. But a second glance shows it to be different: there can be seen a vast and shadowy Figure behind the figure of Jesus. The nail that pierces the hand of Jesus goes through to the hand of God. The spear that was thrust into His side is thrust also into God’s side.”

And the Holy Spirit, too, was involved in Jesus’s sacrifice. Jesus offered Himself “*through the eternal Spirit*” (Hebrews 9.14).

### Forsaken for us

Jesus, as Man, goes out from His Father’s presence into outer darkness, the abode of the damned. He goes there to save us from this place of eternal torment. Psalm 22.1-18 catalogues His agonies. He bore, to borrow Geoffrey Bingham’s words, “. . . pain and shame, burden and heaviness, . . . the sense of pollution, . . . the feelings of



alienation, rejection, the intense loneliness, . . . the feeling of failure, . . . the utter emptiness of being, . . .” As Isaiah prophesied: *“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . .”* (Isaiah 53.4).

Towards the end of those three hours of darkness, a startling cry is wrung from Jesus’s lips: *“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”* which, translated, is *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27.46, citing Psalm 22.1). Notice He says ‘God’, not ‘Father’. For those long hours, Jesus is abandoned by God, cut off from His presence. During this period of utterly unimaginable desolation, Satan and his hordes of demons will have seized their opportunity to attack Him most ferociously.

Not only the jeering mob of humanity, but a horde of obscene spirits from hell swarm around this pure Man. *“The leering visages of corrupt creatures are thrust up against the Pure One, . . . . . The leering indecency, the harsh and hardened bestiality that slobbers its fetid breath hotly across the Most Precious One – that is the dulled and hardened nature of evil.”* In these words, Geoffrey Bingham captures something of the horror of what Jesus suffered from the forces of darkness on the Cross. At His hour of abandonment by God, these vile beings, in F.F. Bruce’s words, *“flung themselves upon Him with hostile intent.”* Doubtless they goad Him to disown His Father and – echoing the sneering mob of humanity around the cross - call on Him to save Himself, come down from the Cross, and abandon mankind to the consequences of its sin.

But He withstands their foul accusations and cruel insinuations. He will not come down from the Cross. In His utmost agony and desolation Jesus loves His Father (see John 14.31). He trusts and obeys Him to the end. And He loves mankind and suffers until the full price of our sin is paid (see John 3.16).

Satan and his hordes fall back, broken, crushed, defeated. They could not invalidate His sacrifice. In His final hours they could not make Him disqualified from being our perfect High Priest, our Mediator with God and *“the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him”* (Hebrews 5.9). *“He remained . . . uncontaminated, uncompromised”*, wrote John Stott; *“The devil could gain no hold on him, and had to concede defeat.”*

## The Cross as a tree

The Cross itself is sometimes called a tree (Acts 5.30, 10.39, 13.29, 1 Peter 2.24, all ESV). Remember that human sin began in connection with a tree – *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* (Genesis 2.9). God forbade Adam and Eve to eat its fruit. But they disobeyed and chose to live independently from God and decide for themselves what was good and evil. Their rebellion brought guilt and shame, exclusion from God’s presence in the garden, bondage to sin, and pain and toil and death. Jesus took all these consequences on Himself by dying in our place on the tree (see Galatians 3.13, Deuteronomy 21.22-23). **On the tree - that is, the Cross - Jesus rescues us from the consequences of eating from that first tree, by suffering those consequences Himself.**

**And on the Cross-tree, Jesus opens the way to another tree – the tree of life.** This was the other special tree in the Garden of Eden. If Adam and Eve ate its fruit, God would give them eternal life. This wasn’t merely unending biological life, but *His own uncreated life* – the Bible calls



The crucifixion scene, shrouded in darkness during the three hours before Jesus’s death. A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E.

this *“eternal life”*. God made us so He could take up residence in us, enjoy fellowship with us, and be our unceasing source of life and blessing. But after their sin, God had to expel Adam and Eve and *“guard the way to the tree of life”* (Genesis 3.24). Jesus died on the tree to reopen the way to the tree of life (compare Revelation 22.14, 22.2), so human beings could be born again and God could come and live in them and enjoy fellowship with them – just as He had always wanted.

### Foot Note The necessity of the Incarnation

It was humans who sinned. So, legally, only a human could make atonement for sin. Yet only God was actually able to atone for sin – it was completely beyond any mere human to do so. So only One Who was both fully God and fully Man could make satisfaction for sin - hence the absolute necessity of the Incarnation for our salvation.

## The wrath of God

It took the Cross to deal with sin. Why did God need to go to such terrible lengths? It’s because of what sin is. We are so familiar with it; we see it all around us every day; we ourselves fall prey to temptation. It’s difficult for us to comprehend the enormity of sin. But even what we’d call a ‘small’ misdemeanour is a gigantic assault on our Holy God and His creation. Sin has had colossal and devastating consequences – consequences that we catalogued in Session 4.

God is angry - blazingly angry - about sin. Many folk recoil from the idea of God’s anger. But His wrath isn’t a fitful outburst of vindictive, resentful or capricious fury. In John Stott’s words, it’s His *“steady, unrelenting, unremitting,*

uncompromising antagonism to evil . . .” Sin is unspeakably loathsome. God’s rejection of evil is, as John Stott puts it, “as decisive as the human body’s rejection of poison by vomiting”.

A righteous person rightly expresses angry revulsion at wickedness and depravity – we would not expect otherwise. How much more our righteous God? God would violate His own nature - His holiness, His righteousness, His integrity - if He were to overlook evil and do nothing about it. To be true to Himself, God must see to it that restitution for sin is made, or there can be no forgiveness. All the harm that sin has caused must be fully recompensed. Sin’s pollution must be cleansed. The debt that sin incurred must be paid. All the countless and ever-unfolding consequences of sin must be unravelled and put right.

We must view God’s wrath in the context of His compassion, mercy and love (see Exodus 34.6-7, Psalm 103.8-13, Isaiah 54.7-10, Lamentations 3.31-33). Our merciful God does not rejoice over the death of sinners (Ezekiel 18.23,32, 33.11). On the contrary, He rejoices when we repent and find life (see the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, Luke 15.1-32).

So how do we reconcile such love and compassion with His wrath? First, we need to see what God’s love really is. It’s not a sentimental feeling. It’s a selfless, unreserved and unwavering commitment to the good of another. Love like that cannot, in the end, allow the continuing presence of evil in Creation, evil that frustrates His purposes and destroys people made in His image. In His love, God must judge evil and, ultimately, banish the impenitent and all the forces of evil from Heaven and Earth.

But in that same love, God has made a way for sinners to be delivered from evil – in a way consistent with His holy character (see Romans 3.26). God’s love for sinful mankind was demonstrated to us on the Cross – such was the depth and breadth of His love for us (see John 3.16, Romans 5.8). John the apostle tells us, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us . . .” (1 John 3.16). “If we are looking for a definition of love,” says John Stott, “we should look not in a dictionary, but at Calvary.”

It was our sin that made God angry with us. By the Cross Jesus dealt with sin and so removed the cause of God’s anger toward us. By the Cross Jesus propitiated God (see Romans 3.25, Hebrews 2.17, 1 John 2.2, 4.10). In other words, His sacrificial death turned away God’s anger. Those who yield to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour no longer stand under God’s wrath; He is favourably disposed (‘propitious’) towards them and they can now enjoy fellowship with Him. God justifies them (Romans 3.23-24,26, 5.9) – they are (as Douglas Moo explains), “acquitted by God from all ‘charges’ that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins” and instead, Jesus’s perfect righteousness is credited to them. Propitiation and justification are two important Bible words that describe different aspects of our salvation. We’ll explain them more fully in Session 13.

J.I. Packer captures the essence of what Jesus did for us in these words: “Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory.”

## Evil exposed and condemned

In Session 4 we asked this question: Why didn’t God destroy Satan and deal with evil immediately after Adam and Eve sinned? Think of all the atrocities, the tortures, the genocides, the acts of violence and terror, and the wanton destruction that have blighted human existence. Think too of the pain, sorrows, prejudices, even the simple unkindnesses and misunderstandings that mar even our own comparatively untroubled lives.

One key answer lies in the nature of evil. It wasn’t enough to say that Satan was a liar, that rebellion against God was wrong. It wasn’t enough simply to destroy Satan and his kingdom. God had to demonstrate beyond all possible doubt that sin and rebellion was indeed pure evil - and therefore worthy of destruction. Only then could God – with unchallengeable legitimacy - deal with Satan and sin.

Geoffrey Bingham explains: “There can be no doubt that for millenniums the human race has puzzled on the seeming inability of God to effect a quick, sharp, decisive and complete victory over the power of evil. The reason . . . is related to the nature of true morality. A moral being is one who has choice. Simply to destroy creatures which have choice because they make the wrong choice is obviously no true victory. Each creature must be allowed to run its course—however fearful and evil that may be. . . . Against the purity of the Creator it must be shown to be wrong, and in one sense to reveal its own evil.”

Evil must be allowed to reveal itself as evil. And that is exactly what happened at Jesus’s crucifixion. The murder of God made Man, the only truly righteous person that ever lived, was the supreme act of pure evil for which there could be no possible shred of excuse. Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid explain: “Just as a criminal justice system is exposed in its shortcomings when it executes an innocent person, so much more were the cosmic powers exposed and defeated when they crucified the sinless Lord of glory.” There at the Cross, all Heaven and Earth saw evil as it truly was – hideously depraved, utterly corrupt, cruel, malicious and destructive, immoral and unspeakably vile, and so supremely worthy of judgment. God defeated evil using evil’s own malignancy. He made *the supreme act of evil* – the murder of His Son – *the very act that conquers evil*. Henri Blocher comments, “The manoeuvre is utterly unprecedented. No more complete victory could be imagined.”

## The achievement of the Cross

What did Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross achieve? We will explore this in Session 13, but we can summarise here. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus paid sin’s penalty in full, and opened the way for us to be forgiven, cleansed and reconciled to God. On the Cross He put right all the consequences of sin. On the Cross, Jesus dealt the death blow to Satan’s dominion over mankind and secured his eternal doom – and the doom of every evil being allied to him. Through Jesus’s death and resurrection, Jesus created a new mankind. Through His death and resurrection, Heaven and Earth will be transformed.

And the Cross vindicates God from Satan’s slander. In His life, and supremely in His death, so hideous to human eyes, Jesus glorified God (John 13.31, 17.1,4). He has demonstrated to all Heaven’s hosts, to all humanity, and to

every foul spirit in hell *that God is love - and loves to the uttermost* (see John 3.16). Satan is proved to be a liar (John 8.44).

We speak – sometimes glibly – about events that changed the course of history. But only the Cross can really be said to have done that. John Stott wrote: “Truly, when Christ died and was raised from death, a new day dawned, a new age began.” Peter Leithart puts it this way: “From the moment of His incarnation, and more especially from His death, resurrection, and ascension, the old world ended, and a new world was born. Heaven and earth were never the same.”

### ❖ An eternal sacrifice ❖

How could a few hours of suffering – however intense and terrible – atone for all mankind’s sin? It’s because of Who Jesus is. He is God made Man; He is of infinite value. For the Eternal God, the Author of life, just to have tasted death – even for a moment, let alone for hours – was enough to atone for all humanity’s sin for all time. And there is something else we can suggest. Léon Bloy tells us, “Suffering passes away, but to have suffered never passes away”. The experience of suffering remains with us all our lives. That’s true for us who live in time. Certainly it’s true for the eternal Son of God. In this regard, it may be significant that Jesus still bore the marks of His crucifixion after His resurrection.

### “It is finished!”

Jesus cries out in triumph, *“It is finished”* (John 19.30). The darkness lifts. A new age dawns in the history of the world.

Jesus’s work is complete; by an act of pure will He now yields up His spirit (compare John 10.17-18). His death is unlike any other death in history. As Arthur Custance observes: “Our death is passive, something we suffer; His death was active, something He commanded.” He died *on* the cross, but not *from* crucifixion. He – and not His tormentors – fixes the moment of death. Depending on the exact method of crucifixion used, victims could linger on the cross for days before death ended their sufferings – especially for a healthy, strong male in the prime of life. But Jesus is dead in 6 hours and Pilate is surprised (Mark 15.44).



Image © Ian Scott / Ian W Scott : Flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

View into the interior of a Jewish tomb of the kind used in Jesus’s day. An open central area is surrounded by burial niches where the bodies would remain until decomposition was complete. The bones were then placed in a bone box, called an ossuary, some of which can be seen in this tomb.

At His death, the curtain that shielded the Most Holy Place in the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27.51). And *“The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs*

*broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.”* (Matthew 27.51-53 NIV). This was a foretaste of the resurrection of all God’s people.

### Foot Note The torn veil

In the Temple, there was a curtain (also called a veil) between the Holy Place (which contained the lampstands, the table of showbread and the incense altar) and the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was God’s special room. It was His ‘throne-room’ where He manifested His presence in a special way. The curtain in front of the Most Holy Place barred the way into God’s presence. No-one was allowed to go through this curtain into the Most Holy Place, except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (as explained in The Big Journey Session 7). The curtain symbolised the fact that there was a barrier between God and mankind – a barrier caused by our sin.

But when Jesus died, *“the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom”* (Matthew 27.51). There was also another curtain at the entrance of the Holy Place from the Court of the Priests. But it’s most probable that it was the inner curtain at the entrance of the Most Holy Place that was torn.

And it was torn, not from bottom to top, as would happen if people had torn it, but from top to bottom. God Himself tore it. It seems clear that He did this to show that the barrier between Him and mankind had been lifted. Jesus’s perfect sacrifice had now dealt fully and finally with sin. And so the way was now open for people to enjoy unhindered fellowship with God. Through Jesus, all those who have been born of the Spirit may draw near to God (Hebrews 10.19-22 and compare Hebrews 6.19-20).

### The burial

Having established that Jesus is dead, Pilate gives Joseph of Arimathea permission to remove the body for burial. Jesus’s body is prepared and wrapped with spices in haste because of the imminent Sabbath, which began at dusk (John 19.38-42 and parallels). Then it is laid in Joseph’s own new tomb. The tomb is sealed, and Temple guards, backed by a detachment of Roman soldiers (this seems the most likely scenario), begin their watch, for fear the disciples might steal His body and fake His resurrection (Matthew 27.62-66).

Jesus’s body lies in the tomb. Death’s decay cannot touch Him (Acts 2.29-31, 13.32-37). His human spirit goes to Hades (Acts 2.27, quoting Psalm 16.10). The Greek *Hades* here simply means ‘the place of the departed’, ‘the abode of the dead’; it doesn’t mean Hell. Jesus has already suffered Hell on the Cross. His redemptive work is complete.

### Foot Note God’s perfect Sacrifice

Jesus fulfilled the entire sacrificial system that God gave His people through Moses – which we looked at in detail in Session 7. Through the various different sacrifices offered in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, God was foreshadowing Jesus’s sacrificial death on the Cross. We’ll look in more detail at exactly how Jesus fulfilled all these sacrifices in Session 13.

## He is Risen!

Suddenly there is a great earthquake; an angel rolls back the great stone (Matthew 28.2) - not to let Jesus out, but to let people in and show them He has risen! The sight of the angel petrifies the guards (Matthew 28.3-4).

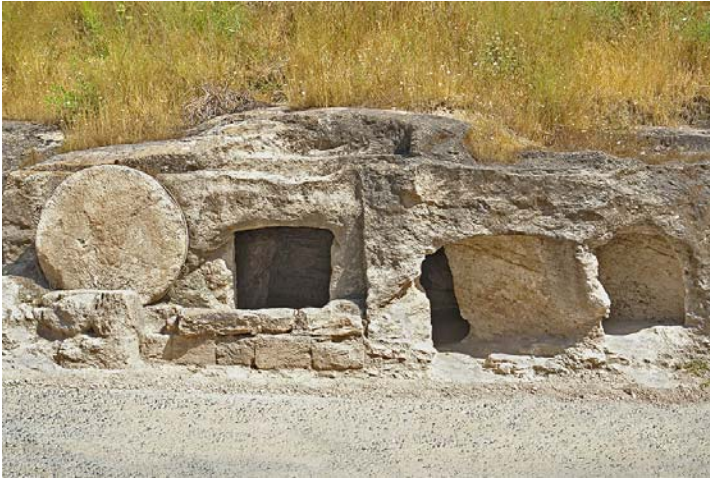


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An excellent example of an ancient rolling stone tomb, which dates from the first century AD.



### Foot Note A story of gardens

When Jesus rises again, He steps out into a garden. The drama of redemption is, to borrow Michael D. Williams' words, "a story of gardens". Sin infects mankind in a garden. Jesus submits Himself to provide sin's remedy in a garden – the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18.1). He rises victorious over sin and death in a garden (John 19.41). Indeed, Mary Magdalene mistakes Him for the gardener (John 20.15)!

God seems to be taking us back to that other garden at the dawn of history, a garden where mankind once walked with God. As Bernard Bell comments, "God has made man for the garden and is determined to restore him to the garden." Through His death and resurrection, Jesus opens again to humanity the door to unclouded communion with God.

The events of that historic morning are recorded in Matthew 28.1-15, Mark 16.1-11, Luke 24.1-12 and John 20.1-18. The guards report the empty tomb to the chief priests. For the Roman soldiers, to fall asleep while on duty was a very serious offence, perhaps even punishable by death. As John Wenham points out, the chief priests "would have had no scruples about pinning the blame on the guard and securing their punishment, . . . but it would have done nothing to prevent the circulation of their dangerous and damaging story". But it's clear that the soldiers and Jewish leaders and doubtless even Pilate knew that something supernatural had happened. The best plan, the Jewish authorities suppose, is to invent a story - be it ever so implausible! Hence the improbable tale of the stolen body – how likely was it really that the guards slept through a tomb raid, or that they knew what had happened while they were asleep?

Meanwhile, very early that morning, Mary Magdalene and the other women return to the tomb to complete the traditional embalming of Jesus's body. They find the stone flung back. John Wenham, in his convincing

harmonisation of the resurrection events entitled *Easter Enigma*, suggests that "Mary Magdalene at once jumped to the conclusion that the body had been taken. She dashed off to tell Peter and John, . . ." The following sequence of events follows John Wenham's reconstruction. Mary arrives back at the house in Jerusalem where Peter and John are. On hearing the news, these two disciples run to the tomb and enter it. They find no body, just the graveclothes neatly laid on the burial platform. The empty tomb, coupled with the way the graveclothes are arranged, convinces John that Jesus has indeed risen.

While Mary is reporting her story to Peter and John, the other women enter the tomb - and find it empty! Two men - actually angels – appear. One of them explains that Jesus has risen, and instructs them to tell His disciples that they will see Him in Galilee. Bewildered, yet full of joy, they rush back to tell Peter and John and others with them. But because of the maze of alleys and streets in ancient Jerusalem, they don't meet Peter and John running to the tomb.

Before the women arrive back and have a chance to tell her the wonderful news, Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb. Weeping, she peers into the tomb and sees the angels. They say to her: "*Woman, why are you weeping?*" She replies: "*They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.*" Then she turns, and sees Jesus. At first she thinks He is the gardener. Then Jesus says, "*Mary*". The sound of His voice dispels her grief. In D.A. Carson's words, "*Anguish and despair are instantly swallowed up by astonishment and delight.*"

That moment in a garden cemetery 2000 years ago must rank as one of the most moving and poignant in history. We can imagine Mary holding on to Jesus as if never wanting to let Him go again. But He says: "*Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*"

### ❖ A woman – not a man – sees Jesus first ❖

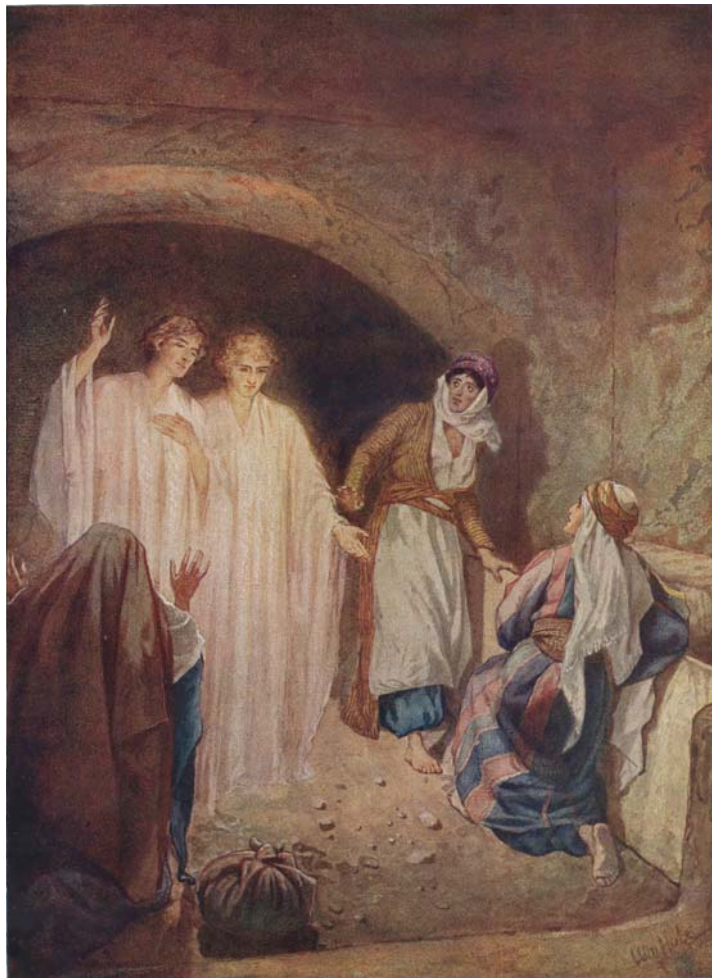
Jesus appears first to a woman, not to a man. That's significant. Satan first targeted a woman in a garden, beguiling her into eating the fruit in the first garden. So Jesus appears to a woman in a garden, to break the wonderful news of His resurrection to her!

Mary then returns to the house where the other women and John and Peter are. From there, two or more of the women hurry off to bring news of Jesus's resurrection to the other nine disciples in Bethany. On their way, Jesus appears to them: "*And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'*" (Matthew 28.9-10). At some point during the day these disciples return to Jerusalem.

During the day, too, Jesus appears to Peter alone (Luke 24.34, 1 Corinthians 15.5). John Wenham suggests Peter might have gone to the Garden of Gethsemane for a time of solitude, and that Jesus appears to him there. It is surely a very tender and emotional encounter for Peter, as doubtless

the Lord confirms His love to him and assures him that He has forgiven him for denying Him in Caiaphas's house.

Jesus also appears to Cleopas and his companion – who may perhaps be Luke – on the Emmaus road (Mark 16.12-13, Luke 24.13-35). They rush back to the house in Jerusalem where the disciples are gathered. As they and the disciples are talking over all that has happened, Jesus appears in their midst. So conclude the events of that momentous day.



The angels appear to the women in the empty tomb.  
A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E.

resurrection and His ascension. During this time Jesus opens the Scriptures to them and prepares them for the coming of His Spirit (see Luke 24.44-49, Acts 1.4-5).

There were plenty of eyewitnesses alive during the early years of the Church to confirm the truth of Jesus's resurrection. The Scriptures record a number of times that Jesus appeared:

- **To Mary Magdalene**
- **To the other women**
- **To Peter**
- **To Cleopas and his companion** on the Emmaus road
- **To the disciples in Jerusalem** (twice), very probably in the upper room where He had celebrated the Last Supper with them (Luke 24.36-43, John 20.19-29). On the first occasion, Thomas is not with them. On the second, Jesus shows Thomas His wounds and Thomas exclaims, *“My Lord and my God!”* – the greatest recorded confession of His deity by any of the apostles. Those meetings in that upper room must have been amazing! Time will have slipped by unnoticed as His disciples renewed fellowship with their Lord.
- **To seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee.** Jesus makes breakfast for them from their miraculous catch of fish, and prepares Peter for his ministry and martyrdom (John 21.1-24).
- **To a group of more than 500 of Jesus's followers in Galilee, including the eleven disciples** (1 Corinthians 15.6 and possibly Matthew 28.16-20). This was the most important of all the resurrection appearances. The meeting was carefully planned; it was like a one-day convention with the Lord Himself as the Guest Speaker.
- **To James, who was Jesus's natural half-brother** (1 Corinthians 15.7) – perhaps to bring him to understanding and faith (compare John 7.3-5), and prepare him for leadership in the fledgling Church (see Acts 12.17, 15.13-21, 21.18, Galatians 1.19, 2.9).

► **Most probably to the disciples in Jerusalem before His ascension.** It seems that Jesus met with His disciples shortly before His ascension, perhaps the evening before. If so, Acts 1.6-8, and perhaps Mark 16.15-18 and some of Luke 24.44-49 may record this occasion. Finally, Jesus leads the disciples out to the Mount of Olives, blesses them and ascends into Heaven (Mark 16.19, Luke 24.50-52, Acts 1.9-11).

It's striking how completely free the Gospel records are from the lurid or sensational. An unmistakable naturalness and normality pervades the account of the 6 weeks that followed Jesus's resurrection. One writer comments: *“He consorted with His friends, and went for walks, and shared a supper, and picnicked by the lake. Nothing could have been homelier, nothing more natural. For it was natural; that is the point.”*

## Jesus's resurrection body

Jesus's own resurrection body was the very same body that He had during His earthly life. It was His tortured, crucified and thoroughly dead body that rose – a body that still bore the marks of His crucifixion (John 20.20,25,27). He was no ghost. His resurrection body was endowed with new powers; He could, for example, appear and disappear from

### Foot Note The firstfruits from the dead

The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed the Passover (Leviticus 23.5-8). During this feast, on *“the day after the Sabbath”*, the Jews offered the firstfruits of their harvest – probably barley, which ripened first (Leviticus 23.9-14).

Jesus rose on the very day this firstfruits offering was brought – the day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He fulfils the firstfruits offering.

Jesus is the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15.20,23) – the first of the harvest and the pledge that the rest of the harvest will follow. God's people are the rest of the harvest. Jesus is the first to rise from the dead; His resurrection guarantees that God's people will rise from the dead, too. They'll rise again at His Second Coming.

## Jesus's appearances

Combining the Gospel records with Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 15.4-8, the Bible records Jesus appearing a number of times during the 6 weeks between His



Jesus appears to His disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21.1-9).  
A painting by William Hole R.S.A., R.E.

human sight at will. Yet His body was quite solid, capable of being handled, and able to eat and drink (Luke 24.39-43).

But there was also something different about Him. Jesus was not always immediately recognised. Mary Magdalene did not know who He was when she first saw Him after His resurrection. Nor did the disciples on the road to Emmaus, until He broke bread with them. It may be significant that He described His body as *“flesh and bones”* (Luke 24.39) not *“flesh and blood”* as is used (for example) in 1 Corinthians 15.50 for humanity in its present earthly, mortal condition.

## “Many infallible proofs”

The New Testament writers took pains to emphasise that the resurrection actually happened and could be verified (see Acts 1.3, 2.32, 1 Corinthians 15.3-8). The Gospel writers’ first readers were not more gullible than we are (as evidenced by the disciples’ slowness to believe - see Mark 16.11,13). They needed proof every bit as much as we do.

Among the strongest proofs of Jesus’s resurrection are the following:

- ① **The Jews’ failure to produce Jesus’s body** - they didn’t even try to get another body and pretend it was Jesus’s!
- ② **His appearances to a succession of individuals and groups of people**, including 500 people at once, at a variety of times and in differing circumstances.
- ③ **The revolutionary change in the disciples** - from a rather motley and defeated band of men cowering in hiding (with the notable exception of John), to a bold and fearless company who preached Jesus without compromise.

④ **The swift growth and expansion of the infant Church** and its immeasurably huge impact on the world’s civilisations.

## The significance of the Resurrection

It’s interesting, too, that it’s the resurrection rather than the Cross that the early Church emphasised. The apostles’ first sermons made Jesus’s resurrection a key point of their preaching (Acts 2.14-36, 4.2,33, 10.34-43, 13.16-41, 17.18,22-32). Declaring that Jesus has risen from the dead was part of what someone must believe and confess in order to be saved (see Romans 10.9). Paul, too, emphasises how crucial the resurrection is: *“... if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15.14).

Why is Jesus’s resurrection such a crucial part of the Gospel? Because He rose again from the dead, we can be sure of these things:

- That God has accepted His sacrifice for sin on the Cross. The resurrection proclaims the fact that, as Martyn Lloyd Jones puts it: *“God is fully and completely satisfied with the work that His Son did upon the Cross.”* It proves that Jesus has borne the full penalty of our sins, that all the consequences of sin have been dealt with, and that Satan and his dark kingdom are utterly vanquished.
- That we’re now justified – forgiven and credited with Jesus’s perfect righteousness - by faith in Jesus Christ and by union with Him (see Romans 4.25 and 1 Corinthians 15.17). But we can only have faith in, and be united with, *a living Lord*. Jesus’s sin-bearing work on our behalf was completed on the Cross. But if He hadn’t been resurrected from death to be the living Lord, we couldn’t benefit from it.
- That we can be raised with Him to new spiritual life (Colossians 2.12, Ephesians 2.6, and see Romans 6.4-5).
- That every believer will rise physically from the dead and have a resurrection body like His (1 Corinthians 15.20-23, Philippians 3.20-21, 1 Peter 1.3).



### Foot Note The new creation has begun!

When Jesus rose again, He received a new resurrection body. So He is already part of God’s new creation that we read about in Revelation 21.1. That new creation sprang into being when He rose again!

Jesus is *“the first to rise from the dead”* (Acts 26.23), *“the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”* (Colossians 1.18, see also Revelation 1.5). Jesus is the first to rise from the dead and the One Who founds a new humanity who would also be resurrected. One day all God’s people will get new bodies like His (see Philippians 3.20-21). That will happen at His return to Earth, when the whole creation will be renewed.

But though we haven’t received our new bodies, we’re already - if we belong to God - part of the new creation. Paul said: *“... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* (2 Corinthians 5.17). Our spirits have been renewed; our souls are being renewed; and one day we shall have new bodies, fit for life on the new Earth.

## Ascended on high

Jesus ascended to His Father in Heaven and sat down at His right hand (Acts 5.31, Ephesians 1.20, Hebrews 1.3, 8.1, 10.12-13, 12.2), enthroned in absolute authority over all creation – including Satan and all his forces of evil (see Matthew 28.18, Ephesians 1.20-22, 1 Peter 3.22, and see also Daniel 7.13-14). His ascension was His coronation day. God has given Him a Name above every other name (Philippians 2.9-10).

remove Satan's power over mankind. The first Adam put mankind under Satan's power; the Second Adam delivered mankind from Satan's power. On the Cross Jesus Christ defeated Satan (Colossians 2.15, Hebrews 2.14; see John 12.31 and 1 John 3.8). And through this Man, Satan and his whole kingdom will be finally and utterly destroyed.

When Satan messed with mankind, he met more than his match; he met his doom. The Man Christ Jesus is the promised "*Seed*" (NKJV) or "*offspring*" (ESV) of Eve Who crushes Satan's head (Genesis 3.15). And He did it through the Cross and Resurrection.

### Foot Note Our Man in Heaven

It's important to stress that Jesus still has a physical body – and will have for all eternity. He is the eternal divine Son of God. But at His incarnation, He also became a Human with a human body, soul and spirit - something He was not before.

When He returned to His Father at His Ascension He didn't stop being a Man. Being human wasn't just a temporary condition that He assumed whilst on Earth and divested Himself of on His return to Heaven. He will be a Man with a physical, and now glorious, body for all eternity. He and His people will have glorified physical bodies and live together for ever in the New Heaven and Earth.

Paul declares that Jesus "*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him*" (Colossians 2.15). The Greek word for "*triumphing*" is *thriambeuoo*. Douglas Moo explains that this word "alludes to the Roman custom of awarding victorious generals a 'victory parade' ". The general would ride triumphantly through the city to the adulation of the crowds; behind him would follow his prisoners of war, chained and exposed to public display. God has put on public display the triumph of Christ over the powers of evil; their subjugation to Him is paraded for all to see. That subjugation is now being put into effect; all His enemies are now being subjugated to Him (Psalm 110.1, quoted in Matthew 22.44 and parallels in Mark and Luke, Acts 2.34-35 and Hebrews 1.13, and alluded to in Hebrews 10.12-13).

From 1 Peter 3.18-20 we learn that Jesus went and issued a proclamation to evil spiritual beings that he calls "*the spirits in prison*". He proclaimed His victory and their defeat. This may have been in the interval between His death and resurrection or, more likely, after His resurrection in connection with His ascension to His Father. Sin first erupted in the angelic realm and we may be sure that His victory was announced *throughout* the heavenly realms – to God's holy angels as well as to evil angels. Certainly, holy angels knew He had risen before any humans did (Luke 24.4-7).

### The Serpent-Crusher

When Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they put themselves under Satan's authority. Satan's dark kingdom, once confined to a heavenly realm, now held mankind in its grip. Human civilisation now lay "*in the power of the evil one*" (1 John 5.19, see also John 14.30).

It was a man whose sin brought mankind under Satan's power. So God ordained that it would be a Man who would



Lightning in Arizona. After Jesus's 72 disciples returned from their mission, Jesus said to them "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10.18). Jesus defeated Satan on the Cross – that defeat was inaugurated by the ministry of Jesus and His disciples, is now being outworked during this Church age, and will be completed at His Second Coming.

### The Man Who rules Heaven and Earth

The Son of God has ruled creation from when He first made it. But now He rules it as a Man, too. A Man of David's dynasty sits on David's throne (see Luke 1.32-33, Acts 2.29-36) and rules the Universe.

God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the Earth (Genesis 1.26,28). They were to be God's vice-regents, ruling over Earth on His behalf. The psalmist sang "*... you have made [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ...*" (Psalm 8.5-6, quoted in Hebrew 2.7-8).

Now the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, rules over Heaven and Earth. A Member of the human race now has all authority in Heaven and Earth (Matthew 28.18, Ephesians 1.20-23)! Jesus will reign "*until he has put all his enemies under his feet*" (1 Corinthians 15.25). In Jesus, mankind's vice-regency is now being restored. Jesus's brothers and sisters – who together form His Church - share His rule over both Heaven and Earth. They're seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2.6), and participate in His victory over the evil powers.

And, in T. Desmond Alexander's words, "*at Christ's second coming in royal splendour . . . the world [will] be purged of everything opposed to God's presence and sovereignty.*" Then God's people will be His vice-regents over creation as He had planned from the beginning. God's new humanity, with Christ its Head, will have dominion over Heaven and Earth for ever.

## Foot Note The new creation is physical

Jesus's new body was the very same body that He had during His earthly life. It was endowed with new powers, yet was quite solid and capable of being handled. So will ours be. Bodily existence is not an imperfect state from which we seek deliverance at death. On the contrary, He will transform our bodies on the Day of Resurrection. Our weak

and ageing bodies will be transformed into ones resplendent in glory (as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15.35-55) and endowed with new and amazing properties unknown to us now. But they will certainly be at least as substantial, solid and real as those we possess now. We couldn't be proper humans without them.



Detail from a photograph entitled 'When Sunlight Bathes the August Plains,' and copyright © Athena's Pix / Athena Flickr : Flickr.com

Sunlight bathes the plain at the foothills of the Knockmealdown mountain ranges in the Republic of Ireland. A stunning panorama that gives a foretaste of the beauty of the New Heaven and Earth.

## Our Great High Priest

Now resurrected and seated at God's right hand, Jesus is our great **High Priest** (Hebrews 4.14-15, 7.11-8.6, 9.11-14, 24-26, 10.21):

► He offered Himself as our **sacrifice for sins** (Hebrews 9.11-14, 24-26) - He *"has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"* (Hebrews 9.26); He has been *"offered once to bear the sins of many"* (Hebrews 9.28). If anyone yields to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, His sacrifice cleanses them completely from all their sin. And as they walk closely with God, they can be assured that His blood (that is, the saving effect of His sacrificial death) continues to cleanse them from all sin (1 John 1.7).

► He is the One through Whom we have **access to the Father** – through Jesus we can stand in God's presence (see John 14.6, Romans 5.1-2, Ephesians 2.18, Hebrews 10.19-22).

► He is our **Intercessor** - He prays for us all the time (Romans 8.34, Hebrews 7.25).

► He is our **Advocate with the Father** (1 John 2.1-2). He stands for us against our accuser, Satan, and He speaks to the Father on our behalf. He asks for our acquittal on the ground of His sacrificial death. His death is sufficient for *"the sins of the whole world"* – and therefore for our sins, too. So Jesus's advocacy for us assures us of forgiveness.

► He is our **Helper**, especially in time of trial and temptation (Hebrews 2.18).

► Through Jesus Christ, **all God's blessings and resources are available to us** (John 16.23-24; see John 14.13-14 and compare Romans 8.32).

### ► Next Session The Acts of the Apostles

We continue our journey from the Day of Pentecost, and tell the story of the young Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

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