

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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Two Students Completing Their Work

On May 9, 2010, two students, Tim Bolen and Richard Meadows, will be awarded certificates of completion, having met the school's requirements for our two year program. These two students represent just a portion of the school. We have a total of 65 full and part-time students, including our extension classes. Those familiar with the school know that each semester's number of full-time students fluctuates. We are not alone in wanting more full-time students to join us. If you know of potential preaching students, please let us know. The Lord needs more faithful preachers!



Tim Bolen

Brother Bolen first attended the school from 1972-75 with his father, John, and brother, Don. Before enrolling this time he worked as a phone solicitor. He is a member of the North Melbourne church of Christ and has preached on a fill-in basis while a student. As of this printing, he was looking for a full-time preaching job.

Brother Meadows was a firefighter/paramedic for 33 years before taking an early retirement and coming to the school. He is a member of the North Lakeland church of Christ. He and his wife, Connie, hope to relocate to the East Tennessee area, where he can preach. He is scheduled for a mission trip to Costa Rica this summer.



Richard Meadows

Segments of the Cross

By Brian R. Kenyon

Despite acknowledging three times, "I find no fault in Him" (Jn. 18:38; 19:4, 6), Pilate delivered Jesus,

[T]o them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. (Jn. 19:16-18, NKJ)

The most significant events in the history of humanity are those that surrounded Jesus' death on Calvary's cross.

However, everybody does not consider the cross the same. What do we think about the cross? What about our neighbors? In this study we will examine particular details of the crucifixion scene as revealed in the Gospel of John. These "segments of the cross" will give insight concerning truths and attitudes of those present at the Place of the Skull. We will note that these same attitudes exist today and hopefully realize more urgently our task to preach and teach "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

The Sign

Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. ²¹Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, The King of the Jews, but, He said, I am the King of the Jews." ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." (Jn. 19:19-22)

When all the Gospel accounts are compared, the full reading of the sign would have been, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This sign was written in the three common languages of first century Palestine: Hebrew was the religious language of the Jews; Greek was the common language of the masses; Latin was the language of legal documentation. Furthermore, the place of crucifixion was "near the city" so that many who traveled in and out of Jerusalem would see the condemned. The Jewish leaders did not like the wording of the sign, so they wanted Pilate to change it so that it would reflect a mere claim of Jesus rather than a declarative fact. For the first time in the whole ordeal, Pilate displayed a hint of backbone, refusing to cave to the Jews' request. Pilate's refusal to change the sign was probably meant more of an insult to the Jews than an acceptance of Jesus as the Christ.

This segment of the cross teaches us that some know the truth about Jesus but refuse to accept it as the rule for their lives. Pilate certainly knew that Jesus was innocent of the charges but would not do what was right. The Jews

who objected to its wording were given plenty of evidence that Jesus was truly the Christ (Jn. 5:19-47; Acts 2:22), but they also refused to accept it (cf. Mt. 23:37). What are we doing with the abundant evidence that proves Jesus is the Christ? Are we, like Pilate, too cowardly to act upon it, or like the rebellious Jews, not accepting it because we have our own agenda? Let us allow truth to be our guide!

The Soldiers

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. ²⁴They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things. (Jn. 19:23-24)

This segment of the cross teaches us that some are oblivious to the significance of the crucifixion. Soldiers assigned the duty of crucifying criminals were allowed to keep the remaining possessions of the condemned. Usually, they would divide the property evenly among themselves, but here, when they came to Jesus' seamless garment, they did not want to tear it, so instead they cast lots for it. Note the irony: they clearly saw the value of a seamless garment, but missed the priceless value of the Lamb of God slain! There are people today who just simply go about their daily activities totally ignorant of the fact that Jesus died for them (Heb. 2:9). While this incidentally reflects the urgent need the church should feel to evangelize,

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"Abundantly Above All That We Ask or Think"

Paul's statement about God, who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), is wonderfully illustrated in Amber's situation. Thanks for your prayers! Before her second chemotherapy on April 7, a blood test revealed her "cancer marker" dropped from 552 (three weeks before) to 235. Although that does not represent an exact correlation to the amount of cancer in her body, a downward trend is very good. Plus, two of her tumors that are able to be examined externally have shrunk almost in half. These two facts indicate that, by God's grace, the chemo is doing its job. For the first time I began to think that the Lord just might allow her to recover after all. Of course, as stated before, we are content with whatever He decides (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:23). She is by no means "out of the woods" yet, but there appears to be a trail with distant light filtering through the trees. Her third chemo is scheduled for April 28, then two weeks later they will scan her body to check the cancer's status and go from there. Thanks for your continued prayers! We still serve an awesome God! —*Brian*

it also shows that people can get so caught up in the things of this world that they miss that which is of eternal importance. May we never lose our focus on the cross!

The Son

This next scene depicted by John shows the dying Son of God tenderly introducing His mother to her new son.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (Jn. 19:25-27)

"His mother's sister" was likely Salome (Mk. 15:40), who was also the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John (cf. Mt. 27:56). By this time Joseph may have been deceased, and at this point Jesus' half-brothers in the flesh did not believe He was the Messiah (Jn. 7:5).

This segment of the cross teaches us that truly understanding the crucifixion will align our priorities to what is really important. Jesus always put God first (Jn. 6:38). Undoubtedly, many thoughts raced through Jesus' mind as He hung on that cross, but He still remembered to see that His mother would be properly cared for after His departure. Our first priority should be "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt. 6:33). Jesus never had anything less than that as His first priority! However, we must also follow Jesus' example in placing a high priority—second only to God—upon our family. Prioritizing material support is important (1 Tim. 5:8), but even more important is the spiritual guidance that must come from the home (Deut. 6:4-7; Eph. 6:4). Do we have our priorities in line, God first, then family? When we properly understand the cross, we will fulfill our Biblical roles to properly influence our family for an eternity with God!

The Summary

This final segment of the cross consists of two further sayings spoken by the Savior, which summarized His mission on this earth.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" ²⁹Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. ³⁰So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. (Jn. 19:28-30)

The first saying concerned the physical (Jn. 19:28-29). Earlier, Jesus refused "vinegar mixed with gall" (KJV), which would have served to dull the pain (Mt. 27:34), but here, the "sour wine" would serve to clear His throat and strengthen Him for the loud cry that was to follow (cf. Ps. 69:21). This second saying concerned the spiritual (Jn. 19:30). With His last breath, Jesus declared that the reason why He came to this earth was now complete—to be the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). This segment proves the cross was deliberately planned and executed "by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23-24).

Conclusion

The cross and all its attending blessings of forgiveness, fellowship, and an eternal home with the Lamb is what God intended for all humanity (cf. Tit. 2:11). However, the only way these blessings can be ours is to truly see the cross as the ultimate expression of God's love for us and render obedience to His will (Jn. 3:16). How do we relate to these four segments of the cross? Do we realize and appreciate the significance of the cross and teach that good news to others? May God help us to live our lives in honor of the cross of Christ (Gal. 2:20)! 

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*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

= Summer Strategies =

Many of us plan our summer activities far in advance and highly anticipate carrying out those plans, whether they involve a family vacation, mission trip, or major home improvement project. We at the Florida School of Preaching are constantly “strategizing” to see how we can continue training preachers and preparing souls to better serve the Lord. Our main goal for the summer is to find new students. Our efforts to recruit new students are quite challenging, especially due to at least two factors. First, the present economy – potential students, especially with families, find it very difficult to find financial support. Could you or the congregation of which you are a member assist by helping with the financial support of a student? If so, please let the school know. We need your help! Second, there are challenges in finding students because of our culture’s general lack of interest in genuine spirituality, which, unfortunately, has characterized too many in our brotherhood. Men are primarily encouraged to become preachers from two places: the Christian home and the local congregation. Timothy’s becoming a preacher exemplifies both. We know his mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures well (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15), yet we also know he was “well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:1-2). Both of these influences encouraged the young evangelist to preach. However, there seems to be fewer homes and local churches these days who are encouraging their young men to become preachers. Thus, we need your help now, perhaps more than ever, in finding men with potential whom we might encourage to preach. Another goal we have for the summer is to raise financial support for the school. The same two challenges mentioned above – the present economy and lack of interest in true spirituality – also make our “strategizing” in this area difficult. Would you or a congregation you know be willing and able to help us with financial support? Gene Burgett and I are looking for congregations to whom we can introduce the school. Please contact us if you would like to know more about the school. We need your help in preparing souls to better serve the Lord! —*Brian*



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