

Beneath the palace.

Peter had followed. Afar off, but HE followed when the others had forsaken Jesus and fled. Following afar off opened the way to a temptation he would not have otherwise. For he was neither with Jesus or with His disciples. He was alone. But he found himself among the crew of thugs that had "captured" Jesus. Given his inadvertent choice of company self preservation ruled his actions, leading to sin upon sin. When God faithfully awakened him from his folly with the rooster's predawn crow, he wept. After Jesus rose He met him privately and communion was restored. We aren't given details but haven't we been there, alone with the Lord, after we've sinned? Note Luke 24:34 and John 21:7.

John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Later in a public setting, Jesus restored Peter to his calling to serve Him, John 21:15-22. And serve Him he did. See Acts 1 and 2 and on throughout the New Testament.

Roman "Justice."

Though they had condemned Jesus at the all night "trial" in the High Priest's "palace" the Jewish leadership met again after dawn with the whole counsel to legally confirm their decision. They planned the next step, to bring Jesus bound before Pilate, the Roman Governor. While the Romans prided themselves on their justice system it failed miserably that day in Jerusalem. Was Jesus on trial or were the Jewish authorities and the Roman government? Astute lawyers today have cited the trial of Jesus as the greatest miscarriage of justice in history, and it was. Watch the charade of "legal" procedures mixed with the cynical interplay of the Roman Governor teasing and taunting the Jewish leaders whom he despised. Yet he was forced to cooperate with them if he was to keep the peace as charged by his emperor. His position, and his life, depended upon it. He was trapped in a seemingly unescapable situation seemingly completely beyond his control. Was there was no way out of crucifying this frightening, innocent man? Pilate had no personal conscience about cruelty, or of sentencing criminals to crucifixion. But he did not want to satisfy the despised Jewish leaders whom he well knew as the hypocrites they were. But more importantly, He had before him an opportunity to bow to this innocent man and humbly accept His claim to be God. If he even thought of such a thing his pride and ambition and personal danger would not let him. He passed up his chance for eternal life.

Condemnation.

Everyone, except His own, rejected Jesus. He was condemned unjustly, mocked, derided, spit upon, crowned

with thorns, hit with their hands, hit with a rod, scourged, taunted, treated as a criminal, nailed to a cross, thrust out from the earth. "This is the King of the Jews," Man's defiant rejection of God's perfect Servant/Prophet, the perfect Sin Offering, his only hope.

Crucifixion.

We sometimes sing:

"O mystery of mysteries!
Of life and death the tree;
Center of two eternities,
Which look with rapt adoring eyes,
Onward and back to Thee--
O cross of Christ, where all His pain
And death in our eternal gain."

The cross of Christ stands at the center of God's revelation of Himself to all Creation. His shed blood was central to God's Plan before the Creation. The cross was necessary to provide a Bride for His Son. Almost incidently, it provided redemption of the lost race of mankind and the creation ruined by his sin. All those redeemed by faith, both before and after the cross, are destined to fill earth and heaven.

Scripture is full of the cross, from the very beginning to the very end. The Old Testament is full of unmistakable types and figures and graphic outright prophecies. The New Testament begins with the story of Jesus, recording not only the actual crucifixion but His own predictions of it. Then, after His resurrection and ascension, the gospel of the cross was preached for the salvation of any who would believe resulting in widespread conversions to Christ. But there is far more. All of the glorious revelations of Christ's Person and His Work on the cross. And the practical applications contained in apostolic doctrines for believers regarding personal living and hope are all founded on what Christ accomplished on the Cross.

Examples:

Romans 6:6 *knowing this, that our old self was crucified with [Him], that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*

6:14 *But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Colossians 1:20 *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. {having...: or, making}*

2:14 *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

Jesus' cross will be the theme of worship and praise for

all eternity in heaven and on earth.

Hebrews 12:2 *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Revelation 1:5 . . . *To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, 6 and He has made us [to be] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him [be] the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

5:9 *And they *sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

And there is the Church, His Assembly, established upon His shed blood, comprising Jews and Gentiles now made one in Christ.

Ephesians 2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 ¶ For He Himself is our peace, who made both [groups into] one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, [which is] the Law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, [thus] establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

The Cross is everywhere in scripture, for it is the central basis and theme of God's revelation and His means of blessing all creation. Watch for it wherever you read in the Bible.

Death and Burial.

More details of Jesus' death are given in the other

gospels. He didn't die of exhaustion or loss of blood for He cried with a loud voice. The Roman centurion witnessed this with amazement and exclaimed this was indeed the Son of God.

The disciples laid Jesus' body with great respect in a new tomb. Yet people still, in this new century, make claim to finding an ossuary with the name Jesus on it, ignoring the fact, established by many dependable witnesses, including Jesus' disciples (honest, godly men and women), the Jewish leadership, the Roman governor and soldiers, that it was wrapped and laid in an unused hewn out tomb. Others claim to have found Jesus' tomb with His body in it, totally ignoring the well documented fact He is risen. They want to run a DNA test!? To compare against what? How audacious! How foolish! How deceptive! At least some of those investigating the so called "shroud of Turin" claim some imprints on the cloth are marks left by Jesus' body as it passed through the cloth wrapping which were left behind intact when He rose from the dead. But we don't need "scientific evidence" to believe He is risen. We have the witness of numerous reliable witnesses. And we aren't given relics to revere. By faith we have Jesus, now seated, as chapter 16 reveals, upon God's right hand in heaven.

Mark 16:19 *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

By Ron Canner, May 9, 2007.