

To God be the Glory *Romans 16:21~27*

Why the Cross? Have you ever thought about it? Why was it that God's plan (*a plan that He himself set in place*) require that His Son to come into the world, and suffer the way He did, ultimately dying the tragic death of the cross?

The answer we may give, may be that the atonement for sin, requires the shedding of blood... We may answer that the wages of sin is death, that Jesus died for our sins, etc... Which is all true, *but that still doesn't answer* the question, of why did He choose the cross? We could cite all the O.T. passages that point to the cross, events that foreshadowed the cross, as the reason Christ had to die on the cross.

We could point to the story of Joseph... Story of betrayal by his own brother, being sold for silver, and how God used it, and exalted Joseph in the land of Egypt, ultimately resulting in Joseph being the salvation of those who betrayed him. (What a wonderful picture of Christ)

We could point to the story of Moses... How God used Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of bondage, citing the Passover lamb as a picture of the coming sacrificial lamb... (Picture of the Cross...)

We could point to the story of Abraham & Isaac... Where we see the image of the Father preparing to sacrifice His Son on the altar...(Picture of the Cross...)

We could point to Isaiah's Suffering Servant of chapter 53... One of the most graphic and detailed prophecies of the crucifixion of Christ in all of scripture...

And on and on...but that still does not answer the question, *as to why God choose the cross?* Those and others like them throughout the O.T. scriptures, serve only to confirm the fact that God had chosen the cross thousands of years before the actual event took place. All the "*shadows of the cross*" that we see throughout the O.T. scriptures were given to serve as evidence that God had chosen the cross. They were given to serve as "*signs*" to point to the ultimate reality. Everyone here understands the purpose of "*signs*"...they serve to direct you to the place you are going to. If you follow the direction of the signs, they will lead you to the "*Actual Place*" they were pointing too. In the same way, all of the O.T writings were like "*signs*" that pointed to the coming of Christ, his betrayal and suffering, and ultimately the death of the Cross... But even so, that still doesn't answer the question, *Why God chose the cross?*

We learn from the scripture... that God chose the Cross, long before the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden. God's plan was not a "*solution*" he came up with *after the problem* arose.

(Ephesians 1) ³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: ⁴According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...*

Before the world was even formed, God's plan of salvation was already in place, God had already chosen the cross! So, the question remains... *Why did God choose the Cross?* We know that all of scripture, both the O.T and the N.T. were written as a result of God's choosing the cross, but that still doesn't answer WHY He choose the cross?

Another answer someone might give is... "*to provide salvation for man.*" But that still does not answer the question, because the cross is much, much more than a means of salvation. To SEE the cross simply as a means of salvation *is to miss what the cross is all about!* God did not choose the cross, simply so we could go to heaven when we die. That view comes from a carnal, self-centered view, looking at the cross,

from the vantage point of what we get out of the deal. (*Which, I guess, should be expected, given the fact of human nature, our self-centeredness...*) We often think the “World revolves around us...”

Listen, God did not choose the cross, simply for the purpose of supplying salvation. He could have accomplished that a number of different ways, ways that did not require the offering up of His Son as a sacrifice. Think about it, God (being God) could have chosen any way He wanted to, to redeem man. Being God, He could have chosen a way that the bible doesn't mention at all...adherence to a particular creed or doctrine.

Having the bible so ingrained in us, it's hard for us to imagine anything else. The entire bible is written around the cross. If God had chosen another way, the bible would have been entirely different! It would have been nothing like the one we have now. Which would have been no problem, He is God after all, and He could have chosen any way He wanted too. So *why did He choose the cross...WHY?*

We find the answer to that question, here in Ephesians 1...

³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: ⁴According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **“To the praise of the glory of his grace,”** wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: ¹¹In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will: **“That we should be to the praise of his glory,”** who first trusted in Christ. ¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, **unto the praise of his glory.***

The answer to...*Why the Cross? ...to the praise of His Glory...* God chose the cross so that men would give Him praise and honor for His goodness. God chose the cross because it was the greatest possible “expression” of Who He is and What He is like! *God is a Spirit...* He has no “form” that we should SEE Him. But in the Cross, we can “see” the “invisible” God. The cross “puts a face on God,” and allows us to see what He looks like!

Ever since the creation of man, men have tried to put a face on God, by making “images.” From the fowl of the air, to calves, to bulls, you name it, it's been made. But upon “giving the Law to Israel, God commanded, “*Thou shall not make any graven image.*” The reasoning behind that is the fact that there is nothing that MAN can possibly make that would even begin to capture WHO He is... I mean, God, who made this world that we live in, which He holds in the palm of His hand. Think about it, this world is the works of His hands, He made the mountains, He made the oceans, He formed the sun, He hung the moon and stars... Think about it, as far as we can see with the human eye, and even as far as we can see with the most powerful telescope, we have only tipped the surface of what is out there. We cannot see beyond our galaxy...and the point is, God is bigger than all of it, He created it! It is all in His control!

(Ro 1) **No man** has ever SEEN Him, but **all men** “*Know He is*” by what He has made!

²⁰*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

Everything we see, was made by Him. Everything we eat, is provided by Him. All things that live, move and breathe, do so because of Him. The sun rises each morning, and the moon comes out at night, because of Him... There is no doubt, there is a God! There is no doubt, ALL men know that there is a God, by the things that are seen...problem is, they still do not glorify Him... They don't given Him the praise & honor He so richly deserves.

²¹*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

Even though we have all of this, in spite of all that God has made, and has given us, in spite of all that God provides for us on a daily basis, in spite of His faithfulness in taking care of the world in which we live, to provide all things needed for us to live...**MAN is not thankful!**

Man is not grateful to God for all He has done and does. Man does not glorify God for His goodness. Man does not consider the food he eats, the water he drinks, the warmth of the sun, the light of the moon, the air the he breathes...nothing, he takes it all for granted! He consumes it upon his own lust...

To make it even worse...man comes up with his own "Image of God."

²¹*...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* ²²*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,* ²³*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.*

He brings God down to "his level," like to corruptible man, and birds, etc... Point here, Man comes up with his own "God". And he does so out of a darkened, foolish heart! The "Best God" that man can imagine, brings dishonor to the true God...

It is humanly impossible, for us with our feeble, little minds to even begin to comprehend God! What could you make, that would represent Him? What could you build, that could do Him justice? What could we make, that could possibly bring Him honor? **Nothing**... That's why God commanded that we make no "graven image", because no matter how wonderful it was...it would fall way short of His Glory!

There is only "One Thing" in the world, that is able to give Him the honor and glory He so richly deserves...the Cross. Beloved, in the "Cross," we see the glory and splendor of God! The cross reveals the very heart of God...the loving heart of a Father, who deeply and passionately loves his children. In the cross, we SEE the UNSEEN GOD... And the result...is praise and honor!

Many may look to the cross and see nothing but two pieces of wood, or simply an instrument of death, a symbol of suffering and shame. But to those who know the Lord, it is the most glorious thing in the world, something that is highly esteemed and cherished.

(Romans 16: 25~27) Here in this passage, Paul *offers up* a song of praise as it were...

²⁵*Now to him.....To God only wise, **be glory** through Jesus Christ for ever.*

Paul simply says...*To God be the Glory*... God gave us the Cross, and the Cross gives us God! God choose the cross, because it revealed Who He was and What He is like. And the result is, men worship Him! Men fall down at the feet of Jesus, and give him praise and honor...Which is true worship... God does not desire the works of men's hands, nor his offerings of animals or money. None of those things constitute what the true worship of God is. Men worship God when they offer up the sacrifice of praise to Him.

²⁵*Now to him.....To God only wise, **be glory** through Jesus Christ for ever.*

Read the lyrics of the hymn... "To God be the Glory" (page #4)