



FOR THE KING

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have  
turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

—ISAIAH 53:6

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
and are justified by his grace as a gift,  
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,  
whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood,  
to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness,  
because in his divine forbearance he had passed over  
former sins.

It was to show his righteousness at the present time,  
so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who  
has faith in Jesus.

—ROMANS 3:23–26

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose  
heart is set on pilgrimage.

—PSALM 84:5 NKJV

# CONTENTS

*Why Take a 40-Day Pilgrimage Back to the Cross?* . . . . . xv

## PART 1: THE ORIGIN STORY OF WHAT JESUS FINISHED AT THE CROSS

### DAY 1

*“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”* . . . . . 3  
JOHN 19:14–19

### DAY 2

*“I Am the Light of the World.”* . . . . . 9  
JOHN 9:1–7

### DAY 3

*“I Am Not.”* . . . . . 18  
JOHN 18:15–18, 25–27

### DAY 4

*“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who Takes Away the  
Sin of the World!”* . . . . . 30  
JOHN 1:29–34

CONTENTS

DAY 5

- “... That the Love with Which You Have Loved  
Me May Be in Them ...”* . . . . . 37  
JOHN 17:25-26

DAY 6

- “Shall I Not Drink the Cup?”* . . . . . 45  
MATTHEW 26:36-39; JOHN 18:11

DAY 7

- “In the Beginning Was the Word.”* . . . . . 53  
JOHN 1:1-5

DAY 8

- “Young Man, I Say to You, Arise.”* . . . . . 60  
LUKE 7:1-17

DAY 9

- “Today This Scripture Has Been Fulfilled  
in Your Hearing.”* . . . . . 65  
LUKE 4:16-21

DAY 10

- “Did You Not Know That I Must Be  
in My Father’s House?”* . . . . . 72  
LUKE 2:41-50

PART 2: WHY BLOOD WAS THE ONLY  
WAY TO SETTLE OUR DEBT

DAY 11

- “Woman, Believe Me ...”* . . . . . 81  
JOHN 4:4-26

CONTENTS

DAY 12

*“Be Merciful to Me, a Sinner!”* . . . . . 89

LUKE 18:10-14

DAY 13

*“Whoever Believes in Him Is Not Condemned.”* . . . . . 95

JOHN 3:16-18

DAY 14

*“Why Are You Afraid?”* . . . . . 103

MATTHEW 8:24-27

DAY 15

*“The Truth Will Set You Free.”* . . . . . 111

JOHN 8:1-36

DAY 16

*“Whoever Finds His Life Will Lose It.”* . . . . . 121

MATTHEW 10:23-39

DAY 17

*“Blessed Are . . .”* . . . . . 126

MATTHEW 5:1-11

DAY 18

*“She Is a Sinner.”* . . . . . 136

LUKE 7:36-50

DAY 19

*“I Will . . .”* . . . . . 143

MATTHEW 8:1-4

DAY 20

*“What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?”* . . . . . 147

LUKE 10:25

CONTENTS

PART 3: BUT WHY JESUS' BLOOD?

DAY 21

*"If You Believed Moses, You Would Believe Me."* . . . . . 155

JOHN 5:46

DAY 22

*"This Is the Work of God."* . . . . . 162

JOHN 6:29

DAY 23

*"For This Is the Will of My Father . . ."* . . . . . 170

JOHN 6:38–54

DAY 24

*"Do You Want to Go Away as Well?"* . . . . . 178

JOHN 6:41–69

DAY 25

*"Everyone Who Acknowledges Me Before Men . . ."* . . . . . 189

LUKE 12:8–12

DAY 26

*"Jesus, Son of David, Have Mercy on Me!"* . . . . . 196

MARK 10:47

DAY 27

*"The Things That Make for Peace!"* . . . . . 203

LUKE 19:42

DAY 28

*" . . . and Anointed the Feet of Jesus and  
Wiped His Feet with Her Hair . . ."* . . . . . 209

JOHN 12:1–19

CONTENTS

DAY 29

*“When I Am Lifted Up . . .” . . . . . 215*

JOHN 12:27-32

DAY 30

*“I Am He.” . . . . . 224*

JOHN 18:3-6

PART 4: WHAT WAS  
EXCHANGED AT THE CROSS?

DAY 31

*“What Shall I Do with Jesus Who Is Called Christ?” . . . . . 233*

MATTHEW 27:1-23

DAY 32

*“Jesus, Remember Me When You Come into Your Kingdom.” 238*

LUKE 23:32-43

DAY 33

*“Sin No More.” . . . . . 249*

JOHN 8:2-11

DAY 34

*“Love One Another: Just As I Have Loved You.” . . . . . 259*

JOHN 13:30-35

DAY 35

*“You Will Deny Me Three Times.” . . . . . 267*

MATTHEW 26:30-35

DAY 36

*“And He Will Give You Another Helper.” . . . . . 277*

JOHN 14:15-16:15

CONTENTS

DAY 37

- “And His Sweat Became Like Great Drops  
of Blood Falling Down to the Ground.”* . . . . . 288  
LUKE 22:44

DAY 38

- “Then Pilate Took Jesus and Flogged Him.”* . . . . . 295  
JOHN 19:1

DAY 39

- “When the Soldiers Had Crucified Jesus . . .”* . . . . . 304  
JOHN 19:23

DAY 40

- “He Is Not Here, for He Has Risen.”* . . . . . 311  
MATTHEW 28:1–9

- Epilogue from Jerusalem* . . . . . 317

- Notes* . . . . . 325

- About the Author* . . . . . 337

# WHY TAKE A 40-DAY PILGRIMAGE BACK TO THE CROSS?

The road is well-trafficked and sits just outside the city walls. Out where they burn the trash. The soldiers have lit a small fire and pass the wineskin one to another. They slap each other's backs. Bragging about the scourging. And admiring the clothes.

Days after riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the conquering, triumphant King who raised Lazarus to life is being taught a lesson. Humiliated. Cursed. Hung on a cross. Naked before the world. Passersby spit at Him. Mock Him. Remind Him of all the stupid things He said leading up to this moment.

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’”<sup>1</sup>

What scripture? Psalm 69: “For my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus is now the subject of jokes. Gambling. The song of drunkards.<sup>3</sup>

The soldiers mock Him and gamble for His clothes. “A jar full of sour wine stood there.”<sup>4</sup> Some have remarked the soldiers mixed the vinegar with water to sterilize it for drinking. Offering it to Him as an act of mercy. Maybe, but I don't think so. Given their general attitude toward Jesus, I think the vinegar had another use. “So they

put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.”<sup>5</sup>

In A.D. 33, the Roman army was the largest the world had ever known; and a large army has to be fed; and a fed army has to go to the bathroom, which can cause problems if they’re not careful. Sickness, for starters. So how did one keep so large an army clean? During the first century, vinegar was an effective and commonly used cleanser—for everything. Both astringent and antiseptic. In lieu of toilet paper, soldiers were issued vinegar, a stick, and a sponge and instructed as to how to clean their backsides. This sponge-on-a-stick was called a *tensorium*.

How does the King go from triumphant parade where people lay down their cloaks before Him to feces-laced vinegar shoved into His mouth?

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘*Tetelestai*,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

*Tetelestai*.

If you were VP of marketing for Jesus, Inc., how would you broadcast the message? How would you get the word out that the answer to the problem of all mankind, the consummation of the ages, the One to make propitiation and satisfy the wrath of God, has come? Seems like a glistening throne, inhabited by a golden, yoked deity with twelve-pack abs and ridiculous biceps throwing lightning bolts with accuracy, framed by hundreds of millions of angels singing at the tops of their lungs and surrounded by other rulers who have cast their crowns at His feet and plastered their faces to the floor, would do a much better job of attracting the masses than hanging a mangled, naked man on a bloody cross and shoving a filthy sponge down His throat.

And I’d wager you wouldn’t kill the messenger.

I write fiction for a living, and rule number one in writing a series is don't kill your protagonist. So how is the death of Jesus a good idea? How does that make any sense at all? And how are we to make sense of something that doesn't make much sense?

For two thousand years, people have written and talked about the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth more than any other man who's ever died. We've seen "John 3:16" billboards and heard people say, "I'd like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" or "I'm saved." "Born again." "Jesus Christ saved me from my sins." Further, the instrument of His execution has become a symbol. Something hung around necks, displayed on walls, erected on sidewalks. And if you listen to those who have written or spoken on the subject—or better yet, read the words of the dead man Himself—His death has something to do with you and me.

But what? What's the connection? Who'd He save? From what? And maybe most importantly, why? What does the death of a man two thousand years ago have to do with you and me? Right here, right now.

If the death of Jesus means something, then I think the doorway to a better understanding is one word. Spoken by Jesus with His last breath, just before He gave His Spirit to His Father. The mushroom cloud rising out of the kingdom of darkness was ignited by one word. *Tetelestai*—"It is finished"—may be the most significant word ever uttered across the stratosphere. The single most important statement in all of human history. Spoken by the innocent and dying only begotten Son of God. *Tetelestai* is a stake driven into eternity, which stands there still, and the kingdom of darkness is powerless against it.



Let's jump to the other side of the Cross. Twenty-three years later. To a day and time when people were still alive who had seen it. Eyewitnesses. In A.D. 56, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a leading commercial city in its day, centered on the city's chief deity, Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, where over one thousand prostitutes served in the temple dedicated to her. So extensive was their service that "to Corinthianize" meant to practice prostitution. Given its access to trade and markets, the city was a leading influencer in philosophy and reason, with no shortage of stoic prognosticators. Twenty-three years after Jesus' death, Paul told the church in Corinth, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>7</sup>

Question: How is the Cross of Jesus Christ, the merciless death of a Galilean carpenter, both the power and the wisdom of God?

In the very next chapter, Paul doubled down, saying, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."<sup>8</sup> Why did the greatest theologian and evangelist and writer the world has ever known summarize his own ministry in two words: "Christ crucified"? Why not Christ feeding the five thousand? Or Christ healing the paralytic? Or Christ turning the tables over in the temple? Or Christ raising Lazarus?

Why focus on His crucifixion? His death?

Twenty years after Jesus' death, Paul also wrote a letter to the church in Galatia, a church that we might describe as Spirit-filled,

even charismatic, containing eyewitnesses to Jesus' crucifixion. To those people, Paul said, "**Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?**"<sup>9</sup> Translation? "What happened to your focus? You stood there and watched this man bleed and die. You heard the word come out of His mouth. What has happened to you since? Why have you taken your eyes off this man and His cross?"

The Cross is the sole basis for God's total provision for us. Period. Everything He did, does, and will do for us and in us, He does through the Cross and the shed blood of His only Son. There is no path back to Him that does not go through the Cross. Paul told the Romans, "**He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**"<sup>10</sup> With and through Jesus, the Father grants us all things—and first on the list is a path back to Himself. Without Jesus, we receive nothing. And no way back.

So why spend forty days going back to the Cross? Why take this pilgrimage?

Because, while "it is finished," He is not. His work on the Cross was perfect. Complete. Absolute. And because of it and through it, He continues working in and through us. The Cross is the singular basis of Christ's total defeat of satan<sup>1</sup> and his kingdom. satan had no response then and has none now. There's nothing he can do about it. his defeat was complete, everlasting, and irrevocable. And while satan can't change what happened on that Friday, he has been working ever since to hide what happened there. To obscure the work of the Cross. To avert our eyes. This is why Paul told

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1. I realize this breaks long-held rules of grammar and punctuation, but I don't capitalize satan. he's not due the honor. Not in his name and not in his pronoun. And not at the beginning of a sentence.

the Galatians they'd been "bewitched." Even though they were Spirit-filled eyewitnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus and even though God was actively doing miracles in their church, they'd taken their eyes off the Cross. Some power of darkness had obscured the work of the Cross, and they were focused on something else.

If Paul were alive today, I think he'd take one look around and say, "See my letter to the Galatians." We are no different. We are too easily bewitched and routinely take our eyes off the Cross. Off Jesus Christ crucified. God, in His mercy, has provided one path back to Himself, and that path is through the Cross. The Father delivered the Son to the Cross, and in return, the Cross became the symbol of our deliverance and the enemy's defeat. Our job is to "believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."<sup>11</sup>

Throughout history, there have been two primary responses to the death of Jesus: mock, spit, curse, beat, scourge, and crucify, or fall at His feet and cry out, "My Lord and my God."

A third response is indifference, which is simply a variation on the first.

From the onset, let me pose a question. And in asking, I'm not poking you in the chest. I'm hoping to wrap an arm around your shoulder, come alongside, and walk with you. Pilgrims, headed in the same direction: What will you do with this man, Jesus? Shove a sponge in His mouth, or bow?

Over the next forty days, I want to return here. Every day. To look up from a different angle and ask the Father to reveal to us: What does this mean? What did You do here that I so easily forget and take for granted? What do I not realize about me that You've never forgotten? I am coming back here because I know me and I

need to be reminded what the Cross has done in me. Done to me. Done for me. Again and again.

God seldom works *through* without first working *in, to, and for*.

My encouragement is to press in. Look up. See it again for the first time. Let the blood of Jesus, which flows fresh from the Cross on Calvary, do for the first time, the tenth time, or the ten thousandth time what only the blood can do in you and to you. No matter how many times I or we have been here, we never graduate from the Cross. This doesn't mean it's the final destination. It's not. For which I thank God. There is an empty tomb just over this hill, but the path leading to it runs through this Cross.

Without this Cross, there is no tomb. No "He is risen." No "firstborn from among the dead." No Savior with the keys of death and hell dangling from His belt. No Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End. Before we can celebrate where He is not (i.e., the tomb) and why He is not there, we need to backtrack to where He's been, how He got there, and what His presence there accomplished.

My hope is that each of these devotions is about a cup of coffee long. Maybe two. And that they stand as road signs to Jerusalem. I'm hoping to retell one slice of the story each day, focusing on one thing at a time. If I were to describe my posture, it would be a fellow traveler, sojourner, locking arm in arm, walking with you, and then letting you listen as I fall on my face and cry out. Hoping you join me.

At times, it won't be pretty, and it might hurt. You won't like what you see. But when you tire and begin counting the cost of returning one more time to that splintery, blood stained reminder, just remember what it cost Him to hang there.

Personally, no matter how long I sit at the foot of the Cross and stare up, I cannot fathom why He would do that. For me. I simply

can't wrap my head around this question: When each of us has gone astray, turned our own way, why did God the Father lay on Him—Jesus—the iniquity of us all?<sup>2</sup> I know the answer intellectually. It swims around my head. “For God so loved the world.” I’m praying for both of us that during these forty days, it migrates down into our hearts and takes root there. So that we “know-that-we-know” it. Because while I know in my head the love of God came on a rescue mission for you and for me, I think if that knowing were to sink down into my heart, it might shake a few things loose. Might change me. And I’d be more like Him, which is my heart’s desire. And His.

Paul ended his letter to the Galatians with this: “*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”<sup>12</sup> Boast in the Cross? Really?

This Cross was and is God’s solution—His remedy—to our problem. Seems rather drastic, doesn’t it? I mean, is it really worth all that? What’s the big deal?

To answer this, you and I need to know our own need. To see the problem anew. Clearly. You and I will never be grateful for the Cross until we know how desperately we need it.

Jesus told His disciples, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*”<sup>13</sup> Herein lies the tension of all mankind. The self is the seat of our will, the place where we decide what we want. By definition, it is selfish and antithetical to the selfless nature of Christ. The self is a rebel; it cannot be tamed or improved, and it exists—24/7/365—in total enmity to God. To suggest otherwise is to mock the Cross. The only remedy

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2. And that word “iniquity” not only means rebellion but includes all of the evil consequences due to us for our rebellion. This makes no sense.

is to put it to death. Crucify it. This means that for each of us there's an execution in our future. Something and someone is going to be put to death. So what is our cross? It's different for each of us, but in my experience it is the place where our will and His will collide. The place where we surrender our will to His. Totally. Without qualification. Without reservation. Without revocation. Where we die. It is why Paul said, **"I have been crucified with Christ."**<sup>14</sup> And, for the record, it's not a one-and-done. This denying, taking up, following, and dying is a daily thing.

Hence, our journey in this book.

According to Paul, the Cross is offensive.<sup>15</sup> Why? Because it is both a mirror of and a magnifier into our self. Our sin. It is the X-ray that diagnoses the break in us and our need for surgery. To the world, those without the mind of Christ and the Spirit of God, the Cross is folly and foolishness. What Isaiah called a stumbling block.<sup>16</sup> But to us who are being saved, it is the power and wisdom of God.

Here at this Cross, Jesus—through the spirit of Holiness—is going to show you some things about yourself you may not like. Some things might leave a bitter taste. You might be tempted to look away. Don't. Press in. Pull back the veil. His desire is to expose the ugly in us in order to reveal the pure and beautiful and Holy in Himself. Why? The next forty days are my attempt to answer this question.

I pray throughout this journey that you and I come face-to-face with both the weight of our need and the depth of the problem. I pray that we are undone by the truth of us. And I pray that we simultaneously experience the limitless joy of what Christ accomplished for us.

Paul told the church in Corinth, **"For I decided to know nothing**

among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”<sup>17</sup> Paul was and is arguably the greatest thinker and writer in the history of thinking and writing, and yet after everything, he came to this singular decision: only the Cross.

Have you ever wondered why?

## WALK WITH ME BACK TO THE CROSS

Smell the burning trash, and sweat, and blood, and human waste. Now look up. Look at the bleeding man hanging there on the middle cross.<sup>3</sup> According to the Bible, that man is the only and innocent Son of God. He’s moments from dying. Listen to the gurgle. The labored breathing. See the mangled, hamburger body. Now listen to Him speak.

*“Tetelestai.”*

What will you do with Him?

The answer to this question will change everything about everything for everyone for all time.

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3. If you’re a believer, a follower of Jesus, and you’re well versed in this story, please don’t get too tripped up when I say He’s hanging there. You and I both know that while He did at one time, He’s not now. He is risen. I am attempting to walk people to the Cross who’ve never considered the fact that He did hang there. I am doing so in the same mindset as the writers of the Gospels who used the historical present tense with verbs, which our translators convert to the English past tense to conform to modern usage. Greek authors frequently used present tense for “heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence” (Schuyler, NASB Bible “Explanation of General format,” p. ix.). I’m hoping to walk in their shoes, or better, stand on their shoulders.

## PRAY WITH ME

*King Jesus, I know that shortly before his death, Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus from a Roman prison because he knew they were asking the same question. What would they do with You? How would they, how could they, come to know the answer to this mystery hidden for ages? He answered it this way, and it is my prayer too: “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you [me] the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your [my] hearts enlightened, that you [I] may know what is the hope to which he has called you [me], what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us [me] who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”<sup>18</sup>*

*Jesus, I know that wisdom and revelation into this mystery only come from God the Father. Please reveal that truth to me. Holy Spirit, help me. Please. I need You. Show me, reveal to me, what You want me to see about me, and You. And keep me, daily, from the enemy who would blind me to the Cross and to my King. King Jesus, You—and You alone—are my Lord and my God. I choose You. I want to know You and You crucified because I have a feeling that if I did, it would change me. Please bring me face-to-face with both the weight of my need and the depth of the problem. I give You permission, here and now, to make me undone by the truth of me. Help me deny myself,*

## IT IS FINISHED

*lay down my will, die willingly, and follow where You lead. Lastly, I pray that You allow me to experience the limitless joy of what You and You alone accomplished for me on this splintery wooden stake of execution. I believe that at the end of this journey, this pilgrimage, is a joy I have seldom, if ever, known. So bring it. I'm in. Because while I am headed to a merciless crucifixion, an inconceivable resurrection follows. In Jesus' name.*

## AND GOD RESPONDS

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being

## WHY TAKE A 40-DAY PILGRIMAGE BACK TO THE CROSS

might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"<sup>19</sup>



PART ONE

The Origin Story of  
What Jesus Finished  
at the Cross

## DAY 1

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*“Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews.”*

JOHN 19:14–19

“Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ They cried out, ‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’”<sup>1</sup>

It’s 3:00 P.M. on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33. The town of Jerusalem.

It’s dark and has been for three hours. As if someone has blocked out the sun, which is strange since it’s the middle of the afternoon. Jerusalem is bustling with people. Jews have come from all around to observe Passover. Many have walked days just to get here.

Just outside the city walls, Roman soldiers are executing three criminals along a common, well-traveled road. While their crimes

are unknown, their sentence is obvious: death by crucifixion—a practice started by the Persians some six hundred years ago<sup>2</sup>—where they attach, or hang, a man by his hands and feet along a vertical pole topped with a crossbar. It looks like a “T.” Once hung, gravity exerts downward pressure on the man’s body, which stresses his lungs, decreasing lung capacity and, hence, his ability to breathe. To take a breath, he must push up with his feet and pull up with his arms, producing a slow, painful death. There’s nothing quick about it. But what the Persians started, the Romans perfected, which is why these three men are hanging on this road—where they can be seen. A warning to squash future rebellions by dissuading those who would start them.

Crucifixions were known to take all day. Records indicate thirty-six hours to nine days.<sup>3</sup> With each passing hour, fluid builds up in the man’s lungs, causing a slow death. He is caught between a desire to breathe and the decreasing ability to push and pull, and as that ability decreases, the man drowns. Suffocates. This form of death is considered one of the most painful ways to die.

Improving on the Persian model, and to prolong both the torture and the agony, the Romans made one addition called a “sedile,” or “mercy seat.” It’s a sharp peg of wood driven into the vertical post between the man’s legs just below butt-level. To avoid puncture, the man arches himself out away from the vertical post, allowing him less leverage to lift himself. When he tires, the only option is to rest, or sit, on the “seat.”

But there is nothing merciful about it. In addition to the excruciating pain, many lost bladder and bowel control, further increasing their shame.

Despite artistic portrayals to the contrary, crucified criminals were hung at eye level. This allowed passersby to see the excruciation.

## DAY 1

The naked bodies. The shoulders popped out of joint. They could smell the feces and urine. Hear their cries. Proximity to the dying allowed them to spit. Mock. Remind them of all the foolish things they said and did in this life and how that futile attempt had brought them to this point. How they were getting what they deserve.

These three men will die. Right here. Today.

During His life on earth, the man on the middle cross claimed to be the Son of God. A claim punishable by death. This is *the* question. Given that claim, He now hangs below a sign written in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin that says: "JESUS OF NAZARETH. THE KING OF THE JEWS." The religious elite milling around want to rewrite it to say, "This man *says* He is King of the Jews," but Pilate wrote what he wrote, and he's not changing it.

Whatever the truth, and whoever this man is, He is struggling, and He looks anything but kingly. And if this really is God's Son, why on earth would God let this happen to Him? The soldiers hung Him on this cross with a nail through each wrist, then they spread the man's legs around the vertical post and nailed through the side of each heel.<sup>4</sup> There were two reasons for this: a high concentration of nerves, equaling greater pain, and fewer blood vessels, meaning he couldn't bleed out before the torture had time to set in. It also made pushing up and pulling that much more painful as the condemned did so against tearing flesh.

The man looks unnatural. Almost unrecognizable as a man. Prior to hanging Him here, someone got ahold of Him with a cat-o'-nine-tails. A scourge. Tipped with bone, glass, or nails. Which when slung at His body, wrapped around, embedding into His flesh. When ripped backward again, it removed chunks of the man's neck, back, face, and sides. He's hamburger. Shredded.

Proving he is the most evil of men.

## IT IS FINISHED

During the course of His agony, the man says seven things, most of which are strange. He forgives His torturers. Says something to His mother and another man, but it does little good as she is inconsolable. He speaks to the criminal at His side. Then, for the first and only time, He speaks about Himself, saying He's thirsty. He cries out for His Father, asking why He has left Him there to die. Alone. Forsaken. Finally, with His last breath, He bows his head and gives up His Spirit.

But just prior to giving up His Spirit, He utters a single word. Just one word. It echoes off the rocks and the ears of those milling about. Judging by the looks on their faces, they know the word but pay little attention to it. The babbling of a dying man.

### *Tetelestai.*

A simple word. It means, "It is finished." Something has come to an end. Concluded. Accomplished. Given its tense in the Greek, it's also translated as "It is perfectly perfect" or "It is completely complete." A verb tense that carries with it the promise that whatever happened is happening still. Throughout time. For all eternity. Once-and-for-all kind of stuff. It was finished then and is still being finished now, continually. The word is well-known, as it was used frequently by first-century bankers. When noting that a debt obligation had been fulfilled, they would write or stamp "*Tetelestai*" on the debt ledger. "Paid in full."

According to the dying man, something has been accomplished or completed. Something was made perfect. But what? The only thing finished is Him. The fact is this: His rebellion failed. He lost. Rome won. Looks like He should've kept His mouth shut.

Which gives rise to the question: Who is this man? Why is He dying? What horrible crimes did He commit? Further, what did He finish? And why would this tormented man speak "*tetelestai*" as His last word?

## WALK WITH ME BACK TO THE CROSS

How is the shed blood of a man two thousand years ago relevant here and now? What could it possibly have to do with you and me? And what is finished?

### PRAY WITH ME

*Lord Jesus, whenever I hear someone downplay, denigrate, or doubt the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, I cringe. I want to pull them aside and say, “Hey, walk with me up to the Cross and let’s look together at Jesus.” Then I pray like crazy that You will do in them whatever You did in the centurion, the thief, and me.*

*For the record, I believe the story of You is true. Completely. You were and are the Son of God who came here on a rescue mission—better yet, a prisoner swap—and died for a rebel like me. You paid a debt I could not pay in ten thousand lifetimes, but the story does not and did not end there. God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, raised the Son—You—to life. Meaning, You’re alive. Right now. Ruling and reigning. The King ruling over the kingdom sitting on the throne.*

*God the Father’s answer to the problem of mankind, my problem, was Your premeditated and brutal death. His only begotten Son. But while that is horrible, it was no haphazard plan thrown together on the spur of the moment because God was caught off guard by man’s utter depravity. God planned this very thing—the execution of His Son—since before He created light, darkness, the heavens, the earth, time, and me.*

*Billions of people have died on this earth, so please show me,*

## IT IS FINISHED

*reveal to me, what does the shed blood of one man two thousand years ago have to do with any of us? Why do six hours on a Friday get so much airtime throughout human history? Paul himself told us it was a “mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.”<sup>5</sup> In another letter, he called it “the unsearchable riches of Christ . . . according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>6</sup>*

*The mystery, the unsearchable riches, and the eternal purpose, what today might be called “the best God can come up with,” was and is a dead Jesus. How is this so? Please unpack that for me. In Jesus’ name.*

## AND GOD RESPONDS

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.”<sup>7</sup>*