
The Cross in Prophecy

The Revelation of the Cross

“So Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him’” (John 8:28, 29).

John 8 reports what Jesus said to the Pharisees when they were debating with Him concerning His identity. In His testimony to them, our Lord included some of His most conclusive and far-reaching statements of truth about Himself.

He said that He was *the true Light* from heaven: “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12). He meant that no one is able to find the true meaning of life without Him. He also said that He was *the true witness* that the Father had sent: “The Father who sent Me testifies about Me” (John 8:18b). He was asserting that no one will know the truth sent down from heaven unless he accepts the message that He had brought. As He reached the climax of His discussion with them, He implied that He was *the true Savior* of men. He said, “For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24b). No one can be eternally saved without Him.

Then, in one big sweep, He embraced all of these truths about Himself with the prophecy that declared that all of these truths would become clear when He died upon the cross. He said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (John 8:28a). The cross was to be not only the moment of propitiation for sin, but it was also to be the moment of divine revelation about who Jesus is. It was to be a vindication of God’s faithfulness and a verification of Jesus’ integrity.

Think, then, of how this great prophecy

was fulfilled.

At the cross, Jesus’ identity was declared. He said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (John 8:28a). Following the crucifixion, the sky turned black and darkness covered the land from 12:00 to 3:00 (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). At 3:00, after Jesus cried, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46a), the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, an earthquake shook the earth and the rocks were split, and tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints were raised, who, coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the holy city and appeared to many (see Matthew 27:51–53; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). Observing some of these signs, the centurion and those with him were convinced. Standing at the foot of the cross, he said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54; see Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).

At the cross, Jesus’ purpose was demonstrated. He said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that . . . I do nothing on My own initiative” (John 8:28a, b). Jesus was not the only One who was present at the cross. God the Father was there. Yes, He turned away when Jesus became sin for us, but it was His will that Jesus was obeying. God is always present when His will is being done. Jesus said, “No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from

My Father" (John 10:18).

At the cross, Jesus' message was confirmed. He said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that . . . I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (John 8:28a, c). Everything that Jesus had said about Himself and the cross were true. He said that He would be delivered up, accused by the Jewish leaders, beaten, and crucified by the Gentiles (Matthew 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–33). All of these predictions came to pass. The Jews executed an accused person by stoning him, but the Romans crucified some criminals. Jesus had foretold that He would be crucified, and He was. In addition to this, all the Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled through the different aspects of the crucifixion.

Jesus' truthfulness was authenticated, an authentication that broadens out and proves everything else He said as true. His word concerning salvation (John 3:5), heaven (John 14:1–3), the end of time (Matthew 24:34, 35), and the coming kingdom (Mark 9:1) was proven to be true.

At the cross, Jesus' unity with His Father was revealed. He said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that . . . He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:28, 29). The miracles associated with His death attest to the fact that God was with Him. Peter would later say, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you *by God* with miracles and wonders and signs *which God performed* through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22; emphasis mine). Concerning His resurrection, Peter also said, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32). In a grand climactic statement, Peter exhorted, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that *God has made* Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36; emphasis mine). Jesus and His Father went to the cross to provide atonement for us.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus confirmed His words and claims by the miracles that He worked. When He was asked for a

greater sign than His miracles (Matthew 12:38), he responded by pointing to His resurrection from the dead. He was making the declaration that if one is not persuaded by His death and resurrection, nothing could persuade him. God would give them (and us) all the evidence that would be needed to believe in Jesus as the One sent by God, the One and only Savior of the world; however, if they (or we) do not want to believe, then no amount of evidence would convince them (or us).

The phrase, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He," conveys to us the truth that when we study the cross and His resurrection that we "will know" the truth about Jesus if we want to know. If we choose not to accept this full and complete evidence, we have closed to our souls the door to eternal life.

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A social gospel cannot save the soul. It may sound good to us, satisfy our need to serve, and appeal to our pride, but in reality it ministers only to the physical man, is limited to only a brief time of pain, and can provide no eternal redemption. A moral gospel cannot save the sinner. The best moral man that ever lived has committed enough sins to separate him from God for eternity. The answer to the question, "Can I be good enough?" is always a resounding, "No!"

A ceremonial gospel cannot save. One could live to be as old as Methuselah and obey every ceremonial law devised. However, he would find that ceremonies cannot take away the guilt of sin. A legal gospel cannot save. No one can perfectly keep any law or laws so that he earns the salvation that God gives. No, unless one contacts the blood of Christ, he has no hope given to him in the word of God. The gospel of grace is God's only method of salvation. Christ by His shed blood has made it possible for us to be saved. We must preach Christ crucified with His own blood dripping from His hands and feet, gushing from His side, telling us that all the blood of goats and all the bulls of the world can never take away the sins of the world.