

CROSS, THE BEGINNING OF A VICTORY

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I thank the One and true God in the person of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who created me, knew me, called me, chose me, healed me, delivered me, protected me, sustained me and made me walk until here with His love. I thank you, Lord, for being my faithful and inseparable companion and my constant source of inspiration.

I dedicate this work to those who eagerly seek peace, love, joy and deliverance through Jesus and surrender their life to Him and for Him.

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INTRODUCTION

The cross was the fulfillment of God's plan of love and salvation, begun in Eden, and a new beginning for humanity, where it would no longer continue on its path of darkness and separation from its Creator. After three attempts to reconcile with humanity, using servants such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses, God sent His own Son, Jesus, as the mediator of a definitive covenant of peace, reconciliation, and salvation between us and the Father.

And everything Jesus did there brought us a great victory: over evil and the devil, over death and the Law, over the world, over the flesh, and over the flesh and the disease.

On the part of God, in the person of Jesus, the sacrifice of the cross was unique and definitive, but from our perspective it becomes daily, in the sense that our victory as Christians consists in surrendering to His will, handing over our 'old self' to Him so that we may be transformed into the new creation in Christ, as was His will for all mankind before the Fall. Today, we are returning to the state of perfection from which we once departed.

To take possession of Christ's victory and enjoy its benefits, we need to know what happened on the cross. Jesus came, taught us the truth and the path of light and holiness, and showed us the Father. Those who belong to the truth and love Him hear His voice and receive Him into their hearts.

Jesus said: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." (John 15:22).

In the Old Testament some 'shadows' of the sacrifice of the cross can be observed:

1) The tree of life:

Gen 2:9; cf. Isa 53:2: "Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" … "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him."

2) Sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham:

Gen 22:12,16-18: "He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me'… and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.'"

3) Serpent in the wilderness:

Num 21:8-9; cf. Jn 3:14: "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live'. So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live" … "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

The cross is a fascinating, vast and comprehensive subject, which is summarized not only in the natural and bloody form as was done, but reverberates deeply in the spiritual

world, conquering all the fullness of God's purpose for His children. The cross shows us that there is not any kind of physical, emotional or spiritual suffering that has not been experienced by God Himself in the person of the Son, and does not have a victorious solution. This makes us to resize our problems and our enemies.

At the same time, the cross brings us back to our humility, confronts us with our humanity and smallness before the Most High and makes us feel gratitude for being loved and chosen by Him. The cross shows us that in our weakness we are powerful and can win with Jesus what seems impossible.

I ask the Lord Jesus that my heart and yours may be increasingly aware of this sacrifice and filled with gratitude and love for Him, who showed us what LIFE is.

This book was written in 1999 as a monograph for the 'school of leaders' in the church. I am rewriting it now in a different way.

I love you in Jesus.

Tânia Cristina Giachetti

Notes:

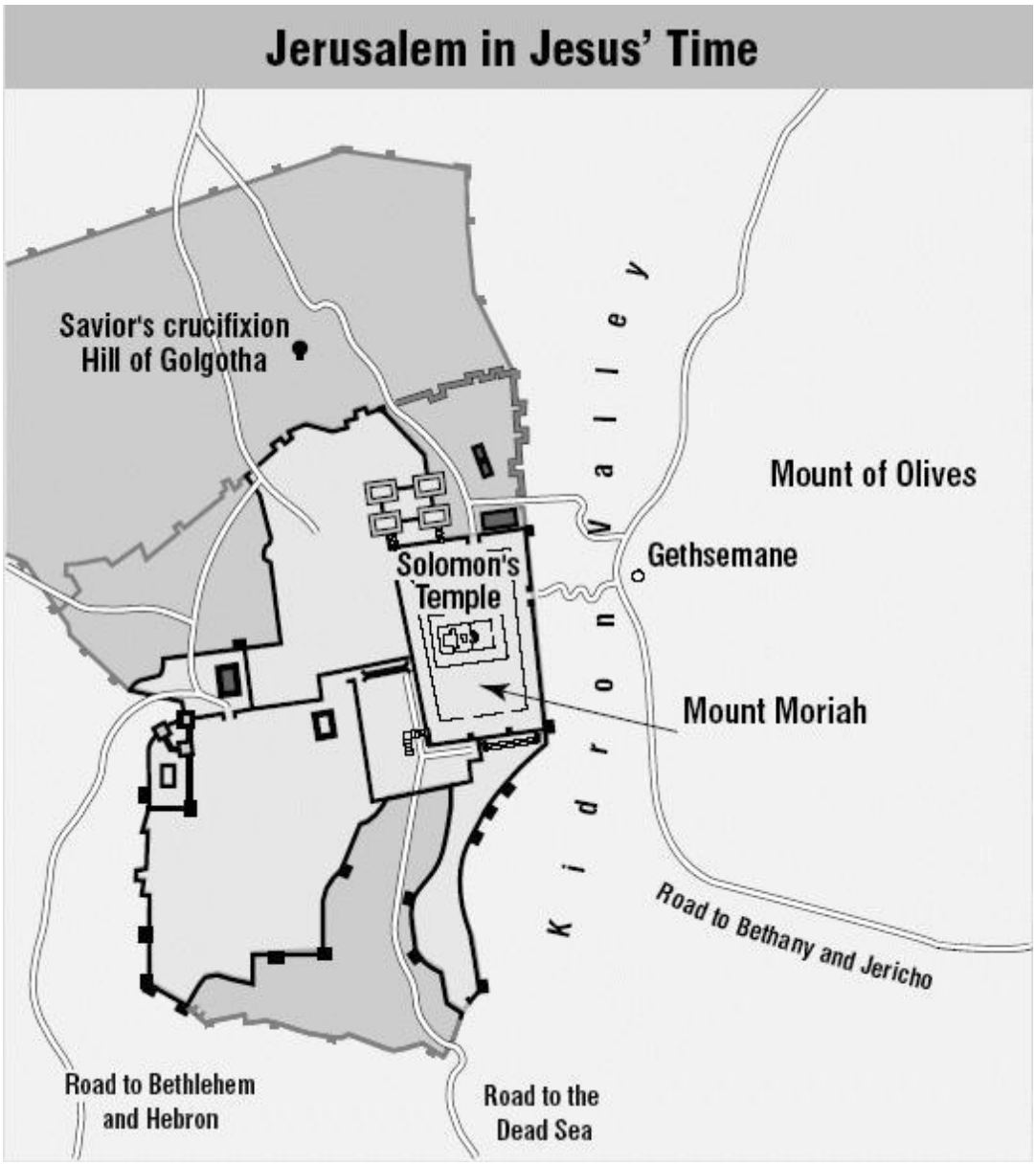
• Words or phrases enclosed in brackets *[ ]* or parenthesis *( ),* in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].

• The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV–1989 (1995)

• NIV = New International Version (will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).

• Last reviewed on 11th November, 2026.

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JERUSALEM IN TIME OF JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter 1 – The cross was the center of Jesus' mission



"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mk 10:45)

Jesus knew that the cross was the center of His mission.

He Himself said it was necessary even to fulfill the previous prophecies about Him:

• Matt 26:24: "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born!"

• Lk 12:50: "I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!"

• Lk 18:31-33: "Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.'"

We can see in the OT some prophetic references to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross:

• Ps 22:1: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?"

• Ps 22:7-8: "All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; 'Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'"

• Ps 2:11-21: "Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help; come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me."

• Ps 69:18-21: "Draw near to me, redeem me, set me free because of my enemies. You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was

none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison [NIV: gall] for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

• Ps 129:3: "The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long."

• Isa 50:6-7: "I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."

• Isa 52:13-15: "See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals—so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate."

• Isa 53:2-12: "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised; and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

• Jer.31:34: "No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more."

Jesus Himself spoke of our redemption through the cross:

Mk 10:45: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Lk 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Why did Jesus die on the cross for us?

He willingly embraced the Father's purpose in order to save the sinners:

Jn 6:38-39: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."

Jesus was killed obeying a human and divine plan together.

In human plan, the cross was the result of the hostility of the Jewish leaders, because Jesus was a threat to their position and authority and, therefore, they envied Him. For the Romans, He was a revolutionary, someone who has upset the 'status quo', therefore, with their mediocrity, they killed Him:

Matt 27:18: "For he realized *[the bible is talking about Pilate]* that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over."

Mk 15:10: "For he realized *[the bible is talking about Pilate]* that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over."

Pilate realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests and the Jews had handed Jesus over to him (Mt 27:18; Mk 15:10), and he, in turn, handed Him over to be put to death, even though he knew He was innocent, by the ambition to keep his position and by cowardliness, thinking about Caesar (Matt 27:24-25; Mk 15:15; Lk 23:1-7; Lk 23:20-25; Jn 19:6-16).

Judas handed him over out of greed; perhaps because he believed in the promise of the Messiah and hoped that Jesus would manifest Himself as such before the Roman and Jewish authorities to free His people from oppression. Because of his greedy nature, he was used by the devil so that the Scriptures were fulfilled. The prophet Zechariah prophesied about Jesus's suffering and that He would be betrayed (Zech 11:12-14; Zech 12:10; Zech 13:7; Matt 26:14-16; Lk 22:3-6).

Psalm 69 talks about the suffering of the Messiah. So, we can see that He felt the sins, the outrage and our wrong attitudes, and that's what led Him to death. He felt and still feels sadness when we expose Him to contempt, moving away from Him; when we do not give ourselves completely to Him; when we opt for a lukewarm commitment; when we deny Him in our hearts; when we are greedy, envious, ambitious and irreverent, and much more.

In the divine plan, the Father gave Him out of love:

Isa 53:10: "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper."

Jn 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

Chapter 2 – The teachings at the Last Supper



"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." (Jn 6: 54)

Jesus spoke of His own sacrifice a few hours before He died, in the upper chamber, as a way to prepare the disciples for what was to come and teach them about the purpose of all that. He spoke about the blood of the covenant that would be shed for the remission of sins:

Lk 22:15-20 (Matt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; 1 Cor 11:23-26): "He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

In addition to preparing them for His crucifixion and making them understand the true meaning of Passover, He gave them other teachings (Jn 13:1-20).

• Jn 13: 1-20

1 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.
2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper
3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,
4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.
5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.
6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"
7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."
8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."
9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"
10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”
12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?
13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.
14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.
15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.
16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.
17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.
18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’
19 I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he.
20 Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

The first teaching given by Jesus was humility and service, as well as sanctification of the disciples, so that they could receive the Holy Spirit later. Here Jesus washed their feet, something that only the servants did for the visitors. Just like the kiss and the oil, washing the feet was a customary ritual among the Jews when they received a visitor at home (Jn 12:1-3; Jn 11:2).

Washing the guest’s feet was a sign of cleanliness, comfort, and hospitality, usually done by the humblest slaves, a thing that was done willingly by the sinful woman and by Jesus Himself (Jn. 13:5).

By cleansing the parts of the body that accumulate the most dirt, Jesus demonstrates the importance of continuous sanctification. He washed His disciples’ feet to also teach them humility and a willingness to serve one another, for Jesus Himself told them that the greatest among them is like the one who serves:

Matt 20:25-28 [NIV]: “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.””

But there are other things to say about ‘feet:’

• Foot refers to “base, pedestal”, mainly in the wash basin of the tabernacle (Ex 30: 18-19).

• The word foot in Hebrew (Strong H7272), regel (רגל; sometimes written as ‘reguel’ or ‘raghl’; raḥgel, רַגֶל, from the root: rgl), means ‘to be firm’ and indicates both in Greek (‘podas’ or ‘pous’ – Strong G4228) and in Hebrew, position, destination, inclination of the individual:

Prov 6:18: “... feet which hurry to run to evil ...” (In relation to the six things the Lord hates).

Prov 3:23: “Then you will walk on your way securely and your foot will not stumble.”

• Placing something under someone’s feet signifies complete dominion, the defeat of enemies, authority, and subjection.

Josh 10:24: “When they brought the kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the Israelites, and said to the chiefs of the warriors who had gone with him, ‘Come near, put

your feet on the necks of these kings'. Then they came near and put their feet on their necks."

Ps 110:1: "The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

Matt 22:44: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?'"

Acts 2:34-35: "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.''"

Rom 16:20: "The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

1 Cor. 15:25: "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."

Eph 1:22: "And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church."

Heb 1:13: "But to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?"

• In the bible, to fall at the feet of someone means homage, repentance, gratitude or supplication (Lk 8:41, Jairus; Lk 7:38, the sinful woman; Lk 17:16, the Samaritan leper).

• Sitting at the feet of someone means discipleship, learning (Lk 10:39, in reference to Mary, Martha's sister, who sat at Jesus' feet to learn from Him).

• Throwing something at the feet of someone means an offering to this one, for example, the blind man at Jericho, Bartimaeus, who sat by the roadside, expecting people to give him some money or offering (Mk 10:46).

• In Ruth 4:7-8, we can also see the significance of removing the shoes, which was for negotiations between the kinsman-redeemers of someone to be rescued.

• Readiness to proclaim the Gospel, not only as mouth and voice but as swift, purposeful movement toward the unreached.

Isa 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'"

Rom 10:15: "And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Ef 6: 15: "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace."

And in Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15 when the Lord said to Moses and Joshua on different occasions to take off their sandals from their feet, the link between taking off one's shoes and surrender, sign of submission and respect is implicit: "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Sandals are related to authority, occupation, material possessions.

Thus, in addition to teach humility to His disciples in this act of washing their feet, Jesus was showing them that God desires to lead us by rights paths, clean from the contamination of the world; in other words, teaching us to walk in holiness and reverence to Him, and thus, having the authority to trample the enemy's head and take possession of our blessings.

The second teaching is in verses 6 to 11 (Jn 13:6-11). When Jesus was washing Peter's feet, he refused. At first, it seemed an attitude of recognition of the superiority of Jesus, who should not do a thing usually done only by slaves. This showed, in the first place, the ignorance of Peter about the spiritual things; so much that Jesus told him, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." He meant that what He was doing was a prophetic act, not only for an immediate future when He explained to them the meaning of having washed their feet with water, but also referring to a distant future where all believers would have to repeat this same act towards one another, that is, to serve one another with love. Jesus was not giving an ordinance for a ritual of foot washing here. But it was something with a very deep symbolic meaning.

In the second place, the attitude of Peter came to show us what happens to every human being. Arrogance and pride (which manifest in the desire to be independent of God, in doing everything without His help) are part of our carnal nature since the fall of Adam and Eve, starting with the desire to have the same knowledge and the same wisdom as Him. Even when we go through hardships and distress, our flesh resists the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Jesus drew the attention of Peter to this detail when answered him, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." He wants us, even imperfect, to seek sanctification, in order to continue in the position of children who give real value to salvation that they received. In other words, the act of washing the disciples' feet was a symbol of spiritual purification. Without purification there is no communion with Jesus and therefore He said that phrase to Peter. Therefore, the second teaching can be summarized in few words: when we have lack of knowledge of the spiritual things, there is also a lack of knowledge of the deformations of our own flesh and vice versa.

Jesus continues the conversation with Peter, saying, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean." This is to confirm the revelation given to us in the first teaching: for them to depend only and exclusively on the Father and could stand firm in what they had learned in the three years of pilgrimage with Jesus; so that they could walk in the right ways, clean from the contamination of the world, to store all they had received and achieved and to have the authority to trample the enemy's head, in order to take possession of their blessings. He said, "I know whom I have chosen", that is, He knows the inmost of our hearts.

The third teaching is: we are divine instruments, and who receives us, also receives Him; and he who receives Him, receives the Father. Who rejects His Word through us, is rejecting the Son and the Father, therefore, the eternal life. Jesus had already said in previous verses (Jn. 12:48-50), "The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me."

The fourth teaching is that in the kingdom of God things are different from the things of the world. Here, the smallest is the one who serves and who is strong is in command. In the kingdom of God who serves is the greatest of all, for he resembles Jesus. The bible says that if we suffer with Him, we also be glorified with Him (Rom 8:17b). It is also written (Mk 10:42-45): "So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life

a ransom for many.'" Therefore, this item teaches us to be servants, in order to be great before God.

The fifth teaching is to have faith and trust in God and in His judgment (Jn 13:7). What we do not understand now we will understand later, because everything has a purpose. Sometimes we do not understand His work in our lives and why we go through certain experiences; however, if we surrender totally to Him, we can be sure that all things will become clear later. What He is doing is to prepare us for something big and that will be good for us, also bringing His blessing upon others.

The sixth teaching is to know that being humble is to be conscious of the lack and the dependence on God; is to be like children and be aware of the need to grow and learn always from Him. It is to know that only He is able to supply us. It should not to be confused with servitude, slavery, ignorance, poverty or any other evil situation that can reach our financial life; insecurity, indecision or lack of authority. It does not depend on social class, but on the true spiritual growth that comes from the knowledge of the divine character, acquired in constant contact with the Holy Spirit. Even using all the divine power that He had, Jesus was humble because He knew that as a man, what He did and taught came from the Father and He depended on Him for everything. He Himself said, "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me" (Jn. 7:16).

After washing their feet, Jesus spoke to them about many other things during the Supper, until they reached Gethsemane:

He warned them of the betrayal to come (Jn 13:21-30, referring to Judas).

He gave them the commandment of love (Jn 13:31-35).

He warned warn them about the danger (Jn 13:36-38, especially Peter) in the hands of Satan (Jn 14:30), and the persecutions (Jn 15:18-23; Jn 16:33).

He gave them comfort (Jn 14:1-3; Jn 14:16; Jn 14:25-27).

He made it clear that He is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6).

He strengthened their faith (Jn 14: 9-11;13-14).

He prophesied about the ministry of the disciples and emphasize the importance of service to God, increasing confidence and self-esteem in their heart (Jn 14:12).

He taught them the true meaning of love that is linked to obedience, and to rejoice at the victory of the other, releasing him to be happy (Jn 14:15;23-24;28).

He dispelled their anxiety and gave them true peace (Jn 14:27).

He reminded them that they are connected to God as His chosen ones and His friends and that they are dependent on Him (Jn 15:1-27, about the true vine).

He explained the mission of the Holy Spirit, who would come upon them (Jn 16:1-15).

He taught them to intercede and clearly revealed the gentle purpose of His heart (Jn 17:1-26, on Jesus' priestly prayer).

The disciples needed to receive these teachings, in order to go through the pain with dignity and to face their own "crosses". The cross was Christ's calling. To exercise our calling we also need to know the meaning of: surrender, humility, holiness; to be in communion with God to be warned of the traps of the enemy in our way, to learn to intercede, to be sure of His Fatherhood over us; to be immersed in His peace and exercise the true love toward the Lord through obedience and selflessness of our hearts and to know that we will be always comforted.

Chapter 3 – Jesus in Gethsemane



"He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'" (Mk 14:36)

After the Last Supper, Jesus goes to Gethsemane and discovers that it is a path that He has to walk alone, because in the very moment when He needed support and assistance He found no one on His side.

Matt 26:36-46 (Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46).

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'
37 He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.
38 Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.'
39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'
40 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?
41 Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'
42 Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' (Lk. 22:43: [Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength]).
43 Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.
44 So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.
45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
46 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Gethsemane is a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark (Matt. 26: 36; Mk. 14: 32) say that Jesus went to a 'place' [chórion – χωρίον – Strong #g5564] called Gethsemane; and John (Jn. 18: 1) makes it clear that it was a garden [Strong #g2779 – képos – κῆπος].

• Matt. 26:36: "Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'"

• Mk. 14:32: “They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’”

• Jn. 18:1: “After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.”



Gethsemane (in Greek: Γεθσημανή, transl. Gethsēmani; in Hebrew: גת שמנים, transl. Gath Shmanim; from Aramaic, Gath Shmānê or Gath Shemen), literally means ‘an oil press’ (Gath – גת = oil press or winepress; olive oil = shemen). The garden was so named not because of the amount of olive trees in it, but because of the great number of oil presses that were there.

The olive press

The mill stones were used to crush the freshly harvested olives (Zayit = olives), and then this ‘paste’ was placed in bags similar to car tires, stacked on top of each other and taken to another place where others stones with different weights pressed them, thus extracting the oil. The extra virgin oil, as we know it today, was the purest oil that was extracted with the first stone and generally given as firstfruits for the anointing oil in the Temple for the anointing and consecration ceremonies of kings and priests and mixed with aromatic spices. The second press – with a heavier stone than the first – generated an oil of inferior quality and that was used by people for domestic use, generally, in the preparation of food. The third, extracted by the press with an even heavier stone than the previous ones, was a thicker oil used in lamps for illumination of the houses. What was left of the olives squeezed by a fourth press contained practically the seeds and peels, therefore an oil of a much lower quality, for other uses, such as soap making [Source: ‘A vida nos tempos de Jesus 1’ (Life in the Time of Jesus 1) – Rodrigo Silva – Evidências NT 04/05/17].





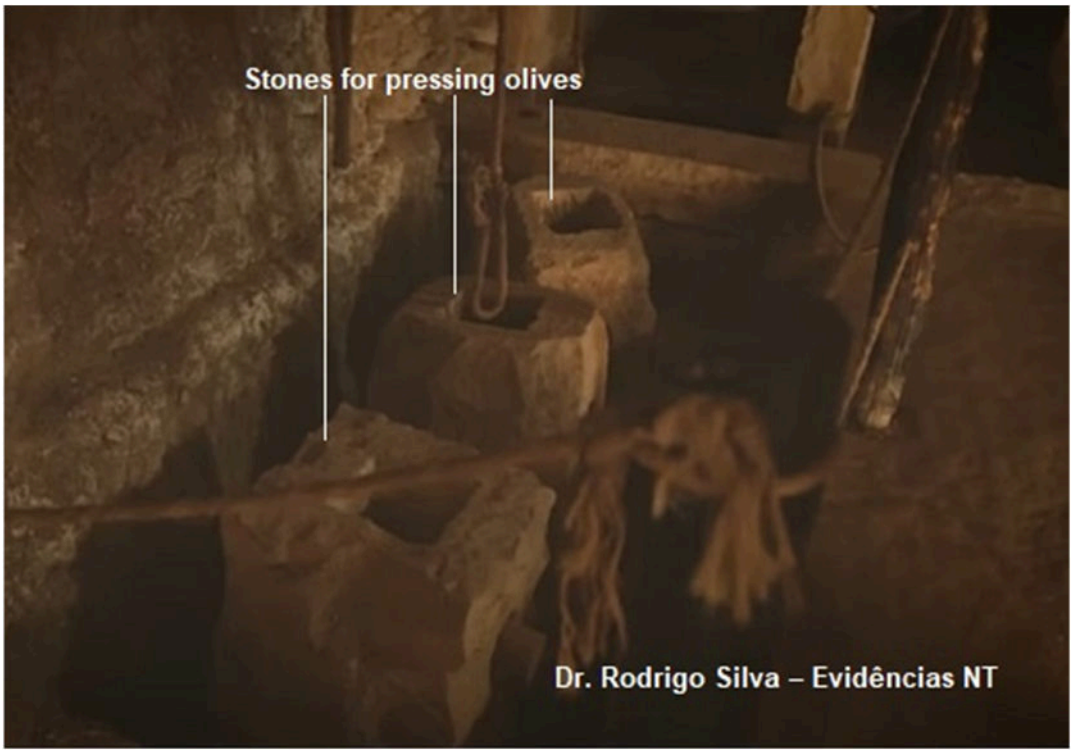
The bags with the olives...



… were piled up before going to the stone presses



The lamp



When we look at the images of the mill and pressing stones, we can understand the meaning of the name of the Garden (Gethsemane, 'an oil press') and the similarity with what Jesus went through there in His agony before being arrested. He felt an immense oppression, like an olive being crushed by a huge stone.

He was feeling a sharp emotional pain that caused profuse sweating (Lk. 22:44: ["In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground"]), as He looked at His sacrifice to come, the 'bitter cup', with apprehension and almost terror.

Jesus sweat blood – hematidrosis

Science attempts to explain Jesus' agony in Gethsemane and his sweating of blood as hematidrosis, a rare condition.

Hematidrosis, also called blood sweat, is a very rare condition in which a human being sweats blood. The term is from Ancient Greek haîma/haímatos (αἷμα/αἵματος), meaning blood, and hīdrṓs (ἱδρώς), meaning sweat. Science knows that this phenomenon is related to psychogenic causes, such as extreme physical or emotional stress, severe mental anxiety, for these emotional conditions have a direct impact on capillary blood vessels supplying the sweat glands and whose rupture causes them to exude blood, along with sweat. There were no changes in coagulation, red blood cells or platelets, nor vasculitis or abnormalities of skin glands in cases of hematidrosis.

Some researches note the presence of hematidrosis in people awaiting execution or in individuals in fear for their lives. Leonardo da Vinci described a soldier who sweated blood before battle. A case occurred during the London blitz (German bombing campaign in London in World War II), and a case of fear of a storm while sailing.

Science can even understand and explain the relationship between hematidrosis and severe conditions of emotional stress, but it cannot perceive or understand the degree of spiritual oppression that Jesus was feeling at that moment for all humanity. The oppression of darkness brings tragic and harmful effects on the health. If we've ever felt the weight of darkness trying to overwhelm us, imagine the anguish Jesus endured in Gethsemane for all of us! This makes us value His sacrifice even more and value our salvation; it makes us face the hardships bravely and encourages us to glorify and believe in the strength of an extremely greater God, who can defend us from all evil and who is today at the right hand of God in power and glory, watching over those who belong to Him.

The bitter cup did not symbolize physical or mental pain, but rather the spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the world and enduring the divine judgment that those sins deserved. The cup contained the wrath of God (Isa 51:17; Isa 51:22-23; Isa 63:3; Jer 25:15-16; Rev 19:15), which caused a complete physical ('the cup of staggering' – Isa 51:22) and mental disorientation like drunkenness. He moved away in horror from the experience of alienation from His Father that the judgment of the sin would bring upon Him. The purpose of God's love was to save the sinners and save them fairly. The cup also symbolized our requests before the suffering that Satan would impose on all men. There, Jesus saw the suffering of all mankind and the terrible plans of Satan against us.

From His agony of dread, while He meditated on the implications of His death, Jesus emerged of that intercession with serene and absolute confidence, emotional balance and a great anointing, for those who approached fell before Him (Jn. 18:6: "When Jesus to them, 'I am he,' they stepped back and fell to the ground").

Once, the Lord told me: "I fulfill everything that I promise in order to reveal my power to my children, and increase in their heart the faith and the hope in my provision. You feel alone in your darkest moments, as I felt in Gethsemane, but I did it willingly so that you could remember that at these moments I am with you and I'm able to make you overcome any pain. Wait on me and you will get the victory."

Chapter 4 – The crucifixion



"At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Mk. 15: 34)

"Why such a cruel sacrifice?"

"Because our reconciliation with God was a purchase; the price was high and had to be paid in full. This penalty, borne by Jesus in our place (1 Cor. 15:3), brought us peace—that is, divine justice was satisfied there on the cross. This is why we can be at peace with God by accepting this sacrifice. His blood justified us and still justifies us from all accusation; by His wounds, we have been healed, and we have been saved from our sins and from eternal condemnation."

What was crucifixion like?

The word crucifixion comes from Latin cruci figo (from the verb,' figere', to pin, to nail, to stick, to fasten), which means: 'nailed to a cross', or 'a nail in a cross.' In the New Testament is always used the verb stauroõ, to nail, which derives from the noun stauros, stake. The crucifixion was a practice of Phoenician and Carthaginian origin, but there is also evidence of its use in Persia in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. The Greeks and Romans adopted crucifixion from the Phoenicians and it was a kind of punishment reserved for slaves, provincials and the lowest types of criminals. Roman citizens were exempt. Crucifixion was the cruelest method of execution practiced by the Romans. It was finally abolished in the Roman Empire by Constantine in 315 AD.

Three types of crosses are known by ancient writers: the crux decussata or cross of Saint Andrew (X), the crux comissa or cross of St. Anthony (T) and the Latin cross or crux immissa (†). The Greek cross, in which the joist is more or less in the middle of the vertical post and has the same size as this (+), is of later origin. The cross of Jesus was probably the crux immissa that tradition turned into a Christian symbol.

In Isa 50:6-7; Isa 52:14; Isa 53:2-3 we see a description on how the face of Jesus was disfigured because of the strokes of the soldiers.

• Isa 50:6-7: "I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."

• Isa 52:14: "Just as there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals"

• Isa 53:2-3: "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance

that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account."

In Ps 22:11-21, David wrote: "Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me."

Ps 69 (of David) – the lamentation of the Messiah – has other prophetic words about the cross.

Ps 69:3: "I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God."

Ps 69:7: "It is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that shame has covered my face."

Ps 69:9: "It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

Ps 69:19: "You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonor; my foes are all known to you."

Ps 69:21: "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Ps 69:26: "For they persecute those whom you have struck down, and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more."

They spat on Him, pulled out His beard and tortured Him with punches, strokes and blasphemies while He was in the Sanhedrin:

Matt. 26:67-68: "Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, Prophesy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?"

Mk. 14:65: "Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophesy!' The guards also took him over and beat him."

Lk. 22:63-65: "Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, 'Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?' They kept heaping many other insults on him."

The face is a part of the body, full with blood vessels and bleeds a lot when traumatized. The soldiers who beat Him were part of the Cohorts of the Roman guard (Matt 27:27 – NRSV: Cohort; NIV: the whole company of soldiers) sent to Judea and all the Roman provinces of Asia Minor (300 to 600 soldiers, with an average of 480 soldiers); therefore, they were the strongest, sturdy, violent and prepared for big fights. Their punches and blows probably came over Jesus with great force, causing bruises and hematomas and, consequently, disfiguring His face completely. For the Jews, the Passover lamb could not have any bone broken (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; Jn 19:36), as Jesus had none of His bones broken.

After pronounced the sentence, it was customary that the victim was flogged with the flagellum, a whip of leather tongues with small pieces of metal or bone. This occurred after Pilate having interrogated Jesus and released the sentence of crucifixion:

• Matt 27:26: "So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified."



By the violence with which the blows were applied, for the metal and bones of the whip tore pieces of skin and muscles, it was unlikely that the victim endured and survived to this type of scourge, but Jesus survived. In Ps 129:3 we can see a reference on how were Jesus' back by the blows, like a land full of furrows after passing the plow, that is, the deep wounds of the blows took pieces of His flesh and skin, "The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long." It is worth remembering that the same back that suffered and bled with the whips was traumatized again when the soldiers tore the clothes of Jesus to put Him on the cross and when His back came into contact with the rough timber. When the blood of the earlier wounds coagulated, another torture made Him bleed again.

After the flogging, Jesus was handed again to the soldiers who clothed Him with purple (Mk 15:17), as it was known the dyed wool, 'a scarlet robe' (Matt 27:28). They put on His head a crown of thorns and traumatized His scalp with strokes once more. More blood was shed:

• Matt 27:27-31 (Mk 15:16-20): "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him."

Crucifixion was held outside the city (Deut 16:3-8 cf. Heb 13:10-13) and the victims carried the cross, probably only the patibullum (the horizontal beam), also called antenna,

with the title around the neck or carried ahead by a herald. The patibullum could weight 30 to 60 kilograms. Jesus probably carried the entire cross.



The patibullum (the horizontal beam)

There is no reference about how the title of Jesus was carried; we only know that Pilate wrote it and pinned it on the cross (Jn 19:17-19: "and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS'").

In Judea, before the executions, wine mixed with myrrh was given to the convicted by Jewish women obedient to God's Word, in order to relieve the pain of the crucified but Jesus refused:

• Prov 31:6-7: "Give strong drink to one who is perishing [NIV: "to those who are perishing"], and wine to those in bitter distress [NIV: "to those who are in anguish]; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more."

This text about the advice of King Lemuel's mother, and which in v.4 talks about the duty of a king to abstain from wine and strong drinks, as it would be dangerous for his ability to judge, as well as it would apply to any person. The use of these drinks would only be a temporary escape from the problems of life, but in verses 6 and 7 we can see that their use would be permitted in the case of the dying, perhaps to relieve them of intense pain ("to those who are perishing") and to cheer the souls of those who were very depressed and discouraged ("to those who are in anguish"), so that they would not be so distressed by their afflictions. Therefore, it would not be surprising if these drinks were mixed with myrrh, so that those condemned to crucifixion could endure the pain.

• Lk 23:27: "A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him."

• Matt 27:34: "they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it."

• Mk 15:23: "And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it."

Some information about myrrh

In pharmacology, myrrh has been used as an antiseptic, as an analgesic in liniments applied to bruises, aching muscles, and sprains. Some people use it for other physical symptoms—both respiratory and digestive—but there is no scientific evidence for this yet. There is evidence to suggest certain compounds in myrrh interact with central opioid pathways in the brain (source: wikipedia.org). Natural opiates such as morphine and codeine are derived from the plant *Papaver somniferum,* commonly known as the 'opium poppy' or 'breadseed poppy.' A semi-synthetic opiate, for example, is heroin, obtained from morphine through a small chemical modification. Synthetic substances produced in the laboratory are called opioids (for example: meperidine, propoxyphene, methadone) and they all have an analgesic effect (remove pain) and a hypnotic effect; they induce sleep. Because these drugs have these two effects, they are also called narcotics (source: 'Ópio, opiáceos/opióides, morfina' – CEBRID – Centro Brasileiro de Informações – UNIFESP). What is known is that myrrh was used by the ancient Egyptians to embalm mummies, and the Jews used it as an ointment. Greeks and Romans used it on wounds and infections (due to its antiseptic effect). Research was carried out at the University of Florence and three chemical compounds called sesquiterpenes (derived from the terpene group) were found in myrrh, two of which had an analgesic effect on animals. The third is still in the research phase. Just as in ancient times myrrh may have been used in analgesia (through interaction with the central opioid pathways in the brain), recent compounds derived from opium, such as morphine, have become its substitutes as a potent analgesic. It is possible, then, that the mixture wine with myrrh actually had an analgesic and numbing effect.

An experience I myself had with myrrh oil

Now, I would like to share an experience I personally had with myrrh oil. Perhaps it will corroborate the hypothesis of analgesia and numbness; a kind of in vivo experience, I can say better and more reliable than in animals, for they cannot tell what they feel, but I can. I was a new convert and had heard recent preachings in church about the oils used in the Bible and their healing effects, and I think God allowed me to have this experience to better understand, not just the effects of an anointed oil, in this case myrrh , as well as the power of His blood. I had bought a bottle of myrrh oil at the evangelical bookstore and I prayed over it and consecrated it in my home. I no longer remember what I said. Once, I was kneeling by the bed praying and I felt an itch and a rash on the skin on my neck, probably from an insect bite. I took the oil and applied it to the area, and the rash was close to the carotid artery. But I rubbed a little more. Then, the skin absorbed the myrrh and carried it through the artery to my brain. Suddenly, I began to feel as if I were being anesthetized for surgery, with altered consciousness, as if numb. I reacted quickly, I got up from the floor, went to the refrigerator and took some grape juice that I kept at home and prayed, crying out for the power of the blood of Jesus. I rubbed the juice over the rash and prayed again, rebuking that. Soon after, everything passed and my consciousness returned to normal. This not only made me aware of the pharmacological qualities of myrrh, but also the spiritual power of the blood of Jesus when used for a purpose.

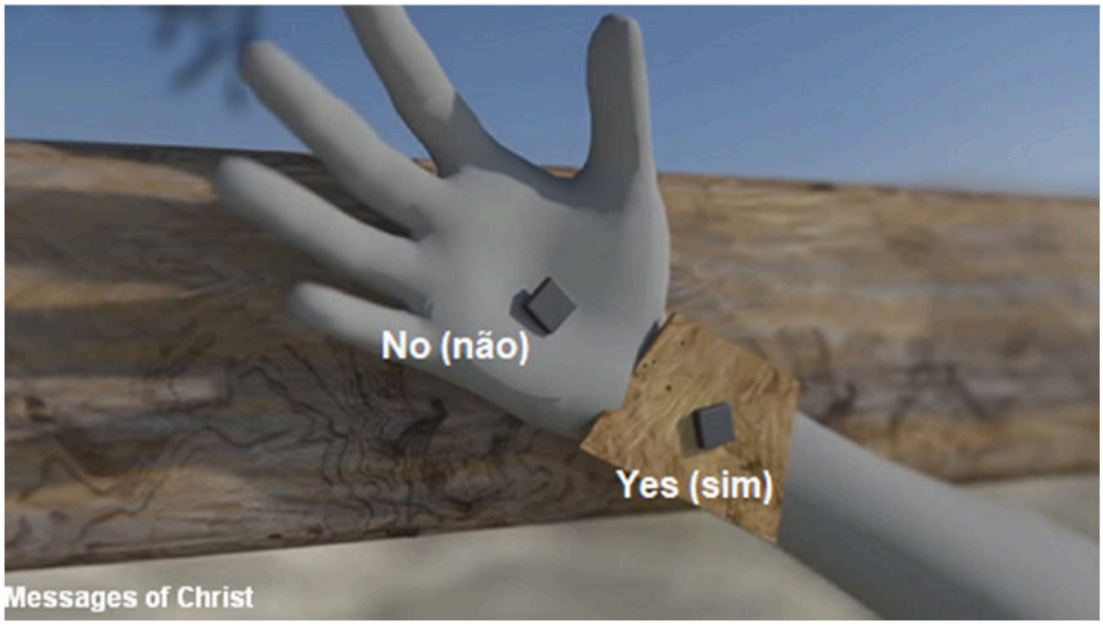
If you want to believe what I am telling you, you will be able to understand why myrrh and wine was offered to those condemned to the cross and why Jesus refused them: to suffer what He had to suffer for us, without becoming numb or minimizing His

suffering. For me, after that, no laboratory experience with animals is no longer necessary. I tasted myrrh.

Returning to the crucifixion of Jesus

It seems more likely that the hands were nailed to the antenna (patibullum), first the right, and then the left, with sharp nails from 11 to 18 centimeters (cravi trabales), being the victim lying down, and then the patibullum was raised and nailed to the vertical beam (stauros – stake). There was no rest for the feet, but a pegma (in Greek), cornu or sedile (in Latin) was placed on the wrist to prevent that hands were torn and the body fell. It was a piece of wood placed between the hand and the nail pinned in the wrist. The person's arms were not tied with ropes to the horizontal beam, only the nails supported the body. The arms could be more or less extended. If they were stretched, death was faster; if they were more bent, death was generally slower. The person had to make an upward movement from time to time to be able to breathe, because the weight of the body pulling it down made it difficult to breathe, and death occurred by asphyxia. Blood loss was also a factor to be taken into account because with each movement that the condemned man made to raise his body in order to be able to breathe, his back already injured by the whip was scratched in the contact with the rough wood.

There was another possibility, besides that of hoisting the patibullum and then attaching it to the vertical beam. Sometimes the person was nailed in a lying position on both the horizontal and vertical beams, and then the entire wooden set was raised. The convict was not always nailed to a sawn wooden cross and prepared for this purpose. As the Romans executed many people in this way and there was not so much wood available in Judea to do this, most of the time those condemned to death on the cross were nailed to trees and, depending on the circumstances, several people could be nailed to the same tree, if their branches were propitious to this.





The convict's feet were not nailed one over the other, but the nails were driven into the sides of the feet, close to the heels, and in the same way as in the hands, a piece of wood was used to help fixing it to the vertical pole. This can be confirmed by the archaeological findings of the bones of a young man crucified in the first century of the Christian era, in whose ossuary the bones of his foot were found with a nail going through it laterally and some wood fragments attached to it. Perhaps, because of this the bible wrote: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen. 3:15).







Golgotha – probable locations

Another detail about the crucifixion is that the cross was not very high and it was not common to crucify criminals on hills, but the cross was usually of little height (Jn 19:29: a sponge soaked in vinegar was put on a stalk of the hyssop plant and offered to Jesus, not on the tip of a spear) and erected in places visible to passersby. For this reason, the four gospels do not say that Calvary or Golgotha was situated on a hill; they just say that Jesus was crucified in a place called Golgotha, which in Hebrew means 'Place of a Skull.'

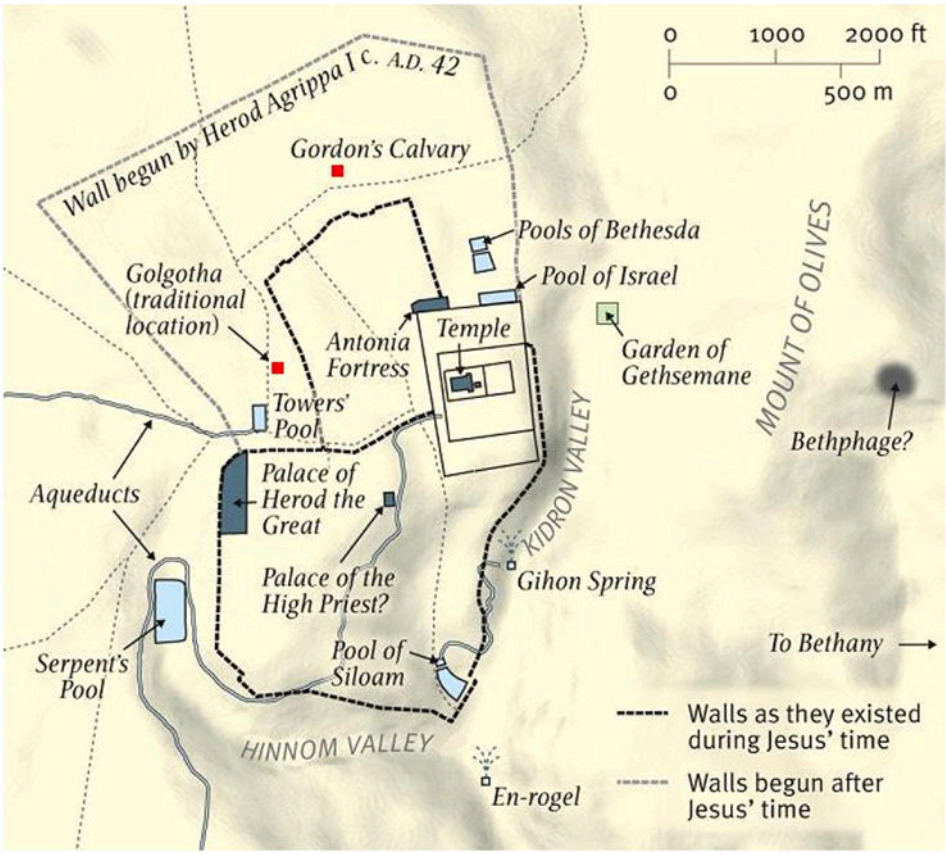
• Matt. 27: 33-34: "And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it."

• Mk. 15: 22: "Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull)."

• Lk. 23: 33: “When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.”

• Jn. 19: 17-18: “and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

The place of execution was outside the city walls, but near it (Jn 19:20: “Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.”) and to a road of great traffic and accessible to people (Matt 27:39; Mk 15:29).



The exact location of Calvary or Golgotha (Γολγοθᾶ, in Greek; In Hebrew, gulgōlet – גולגולת = skull) is unknown. All landmarks were destroyed in the siege of Jerusalem; so, identification is uncertain. Opinions today are divided between the traditional site at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, or Gordon Calvary, just north of the Damascus Gate. Recent excavations (since 2016) show strong evidence regarding the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Calvary (Latin) or Golgotha (Aramaic) means “Place of the skull”. The place was so named or because of the configuration of the grounds, which had the appearance of a skull. Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) was a British Army officer and administrator who visited Palestine and made researches about the likely place of Jesus’ crucifixion. He endorsed the view of a German theologian and biblical scholar from Dresden named Otto Thenius who, in 1842, published a proposal that the rocky knoll north of Damascus Gate was the biblical Golgotha, beneath a cliff that contains two large sunken holes, which Gordon regarded as resembling the eyes of a skull. Nearby is an

ancient rock-cut tomb known today as 'the Garden Tomb' or 'Gordon's Calvary', which Gordon proposed as the tomb of Jesus, but later discovered by the archaeologists as dating to the 7th century BC, along with several other ancient tombs that may have been abandoned around the 1st century CE.



The Church of the Holy Sepulcher



The Garden Tomb

The animals offered as a sacrifice for sin were burned outside the camp.

We can notice that the bodies of animals (skin, flesh and excrement) whose blood was brought to the Holy of Holies to make atonement for sin were burned outside the camp (Lev. 16:27: "The bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be consumed in fire.").

Therefore, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 13:11-12) wrote: "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood."

So, Jesus was not crucified within the city walls, but outside them (On Calvary, He felt the fire of God's wrath).

Hyssop

In the final moments of Jesus' life when He was on the cross in an extreme level of dehydration, He felt thirst.

"After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty!' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (Jn. 19:28-30)."

So, someone dipped a sponge in vinegar, putting it on a branch of hyssop and gave Him to drink. It was actually an act of mercy because the body of Jesus in the face of dehydration and the vinegar would die. By receiving the sponge on a branch of hyssop and drink it, Jesus has expired, meaning that the cleansing of mankind was accomplished. His sacrifice was finished and the leprosy (sin) of the world was cleansed.

The sponge was attached to a branch of hyssop, not the point of a spear, which speaks in favor of the low height of the cross in relation to the ground. Hyssop is a symbol of purification, so David said in Ps 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Hyssop would also remind any Jew of the first Passover in Egypt, where the blood of the lamb was smeared on the lintel and the two doorposts of houses with a branch of this plant (Ex 12:22), protecting families from the angel of death. Furthermore, it would confirm this Passover as God's new covenant of deliverance for His people.



Hyssop

Vinegar

Jesus was truly dehydrated due to the amount of blood He had lost, and because He had neither eaten nor drunk any water since the previous evening at the Last Supper. His mouth was extremely dry, and his tongue was swollen.

• Jn 19:29: "A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth."

• Ps 69:21: "For food they gave me gall and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

• Ps 22:15: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me [Or I am laid] in the dust of death." (NIV).

The Greek word here for vinegar is oxous, οξος, equivalent to the Hebrew, 'hõmeç' or chomets (חֹמֶץ), an ordinary drink of field workers (Ruth 2:14) where they dipped their bread, and of soldiers of the lower ranks, which the Romans called 'posca'. 'Posca' was a mixture of water and wine (or other alcoholic beverages) that had undergone acetic fermentation. It consisted of three parts water to one part wine vinegar. Not only was it cheap, but it also quenched thirst and possessed antibacterial properties. Its composition differs from that of modern vinegar.

Regarding the vinegar and the cause of Jesus' death, several hypotheses may be considered—for instance, severe metabolic acidosis (an excess of acidity in the blood and tissues) in a body already dehydrated and suffering from such a condition, which could lead to the failure of certain organs (such as the kidneys and heart). Or it could be that, due to the acidity of the vinegar, there was a sudden and intense stimulation of the Vagus Nerve, the tenth pair of cranial nerves responsible for the parasympathetic nervous system, and a sudden drop in blood pressure and heart rate, and consequently, cardiac arrest.

These are merely human attempts to explain something that was under the control of the will of Jesus and the Father: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father." (Jn 10:17-18).

There was no hypovolemic or cardiogenic shock.

Throughout the entire crucifixion process, Jesus was conscious, both physically and spiritually. His brain was alert and aware, fully awake. I am saying this because despite the sufferings that He went through from Gethsemane to the crucifixion, Jesus did not have a hypovolemic shock due to dehydration or because of blood loss; nor a cardiogenic shock (much less in Gethsemane, when He sweated blood), as some scholars often try to explain, for that would cause Him lose consciousness. He, then, could not have said all that He spoke during those six hours to Mary, to John, to the soldiers, to the evildoers, and to the Father. He knew what He was doing and talking about.

Death by crucifixion

By this method (The crucifixion), death was usually rather long, rarely occurring before 36 hours, and at times it took up to nine days, so, a centurion and four guards were put on guard to prevent the removal of Jesus from the cross (Jn. 19:23). But Jesus was on the cross for six hours, so much that Pilate marveled that He had already died (Mk. 15:44). He was crucified at the 3rd hour (9:00 am: Mk. 15:25) and died on the 9th hour (3:00 p.m.: Mk. 15:34,37). He was taken from the cross in the evening, before 6:00 p.m. not to desecrate the Sabbath (Mk. 15:42-46). Another reason why Jesus was removed from the cross can be found in Deut. 21:22-23 (cf. Josh. 10:27): "When someone is convicted of a

crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession." The man who was executed for penalty of death was cursed and should be buried on the same day (Gal. 3:3).

The pain was obviously intense, since the entire body was under stress, while the hands and feet, which are masses of nerves and tendons lose little blood. However, the presence of the nails near the nerves in the wrists and feet caused intense neuralgic pain. Occasionally, fever and tetanus were manifested.

When, for whatever reason, it was proposed to rid the victim of his intense suffering before the end, as if to compensate him with the abbreviated suffering, his legs were broken with blows of a bludgeon or hammer *(crurifragium or skelocopia),* and the mercy killing was given with a sword or spear, usually on the side of the victim *(perforatio subalas).* With broken legs, the person would be unable to lift his body to breathe, and would die from asphyxiation. As we have seen, the Passover lamb could not have any bone broken (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; Jn 19:36), as Jesus had none of His bones broken.

Jesus knew He would go through all this suffering, but it would not be in vain, because, through it, His work of redemption would be complete (Isa 53:11: "Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities").

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, that is, from noon to three in the afternoon (Mt 27:45; Lk 23:44), and Jesus was crucified at 9:00 am, that is, the third hour (Mk 15:25). This means that Jesus was on the cross for six hours; the first three hours of which He was under the mockery of men and Satan, and the final three hours were reserved for bearing the punishment, divine wrath upon Himself for the sins of mankind. This shows us the size of Jesus' suffering and the size of God's wrath towards men for their sins. It's as if for three hours Jesus was the lamb sacrificed on the altar and consumed with fire until everything was just ashes.



On the cross, the Lord could feel the abandonment and the loneliness of human beings, but it was not the abandonment as great as that would follow, when He felt the spiritual abandonment of the Father:

• Matt 27:45-46: "From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'[or Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani] that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

All kinds of sin that there can be upon the face of the earth were present there in those wounds. When we think about it, is it even difficult to understand how a man of flesh and blood could bear this if he were not God either? The color of His soul was so ugly because of our sins that even God turned His face away from Jesus, so He cried out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34; Ps. 22:1).

The Greek word Sabachthani (σαβαχθάνι, Strong #g4518) is of Chaldean origin (Aramaic); it is a cry of distress, which means, 'thou hast left me.' The word sabachthani comes from the verb 'sabac' or 'shebaq' (Strong #7662), which means: leave, forsake, let alone, leave alone.

In Psalm 22:1, the corresponding expression äzav-tani or 'ă·zaḇ·tā·nî, means 'thou hast abandoned me.' It comes from the verb azab (Strong #5800), which means: to loosen, relinquish, fail, forsake, leave, leave destitute, leave off, refuse.

Thus, what Jesus felt on the cross was definitive helplessness, a deep and total abandonment by the Father. The bible says that from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (noon to three p.m.) there was darkness over the land, meaning the separation of God the Father from His Son, because of our sins (the spiritual darkness). When this process reached its apex, finishing the wrath of God, is that Jesus cried out and delivered His spirit.

Darkness means separation from God (= death). The Lord felt such separation from the Father, that His cry of helplessness was a genuine cry of total abandonment. He suffered in His soul the terrible torments of a man condemned and abandoned – a real and frightening separation happened between Father and Son and was willingly accepted by both due to our sins and their just reward.

Only after the physical suffering of the crucifixion, the emotional suffering of the mockery of those who were there, and the spiritual suffering of separation from the Father by the darkness of humanity's sins, which He carried upon Himself, the Lord could say, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30), that is, "it was and will forever be finished (Tetelestai – τετελεσται in Greek = 'it is finished', 'it's totally paid'; in the case of payment of debts, for example, means: settled, liquidated, or paid off)." He carried out on the cross what He came to accomplish in the world.

What does it mean to crucify the flesh?

"Flesh" does not refer only to our physical body. It is also the part of our soul (thoughts, feelings, and will) that tends toward sin. To crucify is to make the decision not to satisfy our tastes and desires that lead to sin, that is, to give up our reasons and arguments, feelings and desires so that God may prevail. When we surrender our attachments and sins to Jesus, we are set free (Gal 6:14,17).

Cap.5 – Events that occurred during the crucifixion and resurrection



"From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon"
(Matt 27:45)

The darkness

One supernatural event that can be noted during the crucifixion of Jesus was the darkness mentioned in the Gospels (Matt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44), which occurred from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon.

Much historical research has been done to explain this event, including the possibility of a solar eclipse, but this would be impossible. No historian at the time having witnessed the fact or written about it. Besides, the Jewish Passover is celebrated from sunset on the 14th day of month of Nisan (March-April), which is when the first full moon of the spring equinox begins, in the Northern Hemisphere (or autumnal equinox, in the Southern Hemisphere). Equinox is when the inclination of the axis and the direction of the orbit are perpendicular, that is, when the sun, in its apparent annual movement (as seen from Earth) cuts the celestial equator, occasions when day and night last the same time. A solar eclipse occurs when the moon comes between the Earth and the sun, completely or partially obscuring its light. And this is more likely to happen during the new moon phase, when the moon is invisible from Earth. A full moon is being illuminated by the sun in opposition to it, for it is the earth that lies between the moon and the sun. Thus, the darkness described in the bible during the death of Jesus was indeed a supernatural event from God, not an astronomical event. God the Father turned away from His own Son because of the immense darkness of sin upon Him.

The earthquake and the curtain of the sanctuary

When Jesus commended His spirit to the Father and cried with a loud voice and breathed his last (Matt 27:50; Lk 23:46; Mk 15: 37 – 'a loud cry'), the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Matt 27:51; Mk 15: 38; Lk 23:45), there was an earthquake and the dead saints (those of that generation probably) were raised (Matt 27:52), but only after Jesus' resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city, since He is the first to rise from the dead, 'the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep' – Acts 26:23; 1 Cor 15:20. The curtain of the temple was torn by the hands of God, not by the hands of men, which was also a supernatural sign for the Jewish priests who witnessed it.

Jesus cried out in a loud voice

Upon seeing all these events, the centurion and the soldiers who were in front of the cross recognized that Jesus was really God's Son (Matt. 27:54; Mk. 15:39 mentions only the centurion, who said: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" and Lk. 23:a47 writes that the centurion praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent"). Living among the Jews for some time, most likely this centurion was already believing in Jesus, so much so that he was sensitive to all those events and could say this phrase. Perhaps, one more detail that must have surprised the centurion present there, and who certainly had already witnessed other crucifixions before, was the fact that Jesus cried out in a loud voice (or with 'a loud cry'), an unexpected reaction on the part of a crucified: injured, weakened, dehydrated, in pain and about to die of asphyxia. How could someone who was barely able to breathe cry out to God in a loud voice? Could it have been just the vinegar that moistened His mouth for a moment?

Therefore, all the events that have occurred since Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane, with no resistance on His part and still healing the servant's ear that was cut off by Peter; His judgment by Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, where He kept silent and did nothing to defend Himself; His submissive behavior at the hands of Roman soldiers in Pilate's palace and His forgiving attitude toward those who crucified Him, not to mention the supernatural events in nature, all this would be enough to convince anyone of His divinity and His atoning and saving mission to mankind, which was prophesied in Isa. 52:13-15:

"See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals—so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate."

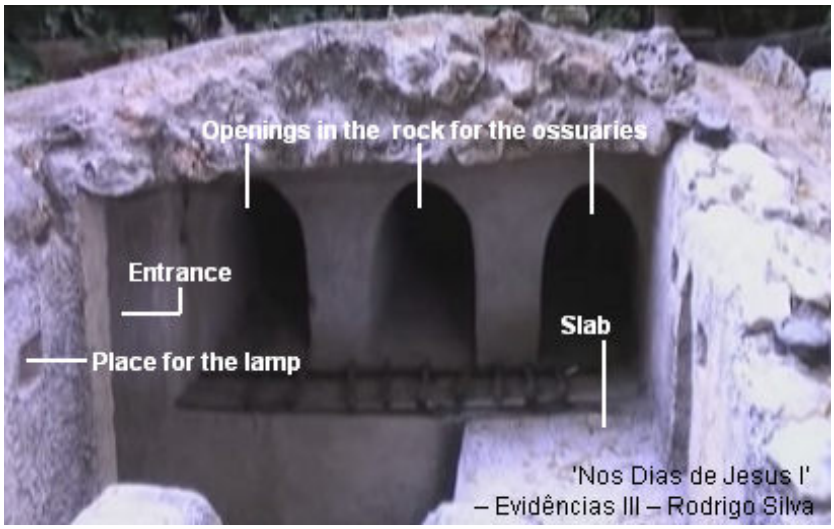
NIV writes: "his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness."

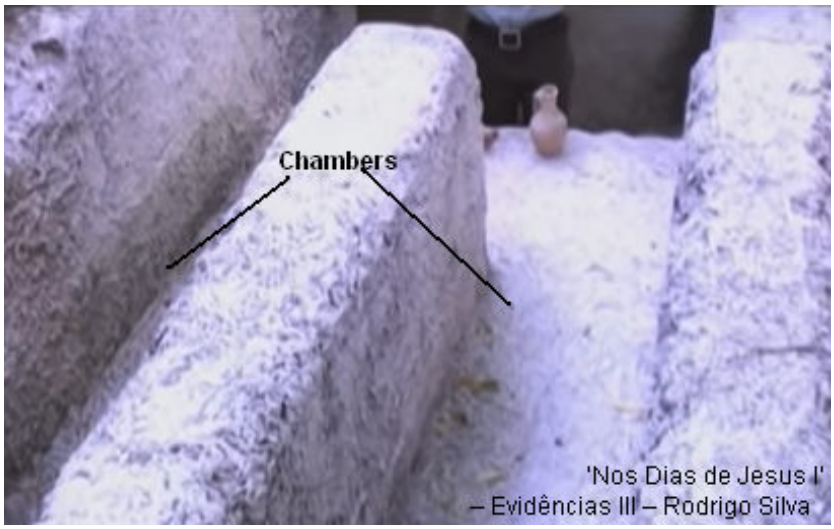
Just this description of the Messiah's suffering by Isaiah is enough to describe the degree of His suffering and convert skeptics of His intentions towards human beings.

The burial and the events of Jesus' resurrection

Jesus was laid to rest in a new tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57-61), a member of the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:43) who was also a disciple of Jesus.

In the NT, the body was placed on a slab, washed thoroughly by the women with water, oil and perfumes, including hair and nails, well brushed. Then the corpse was washed and then anointed with oil and perfumes (Mk. 16:1; Jn. 19:39; Lk. 23:56). Then the corpse was wrapped in linen strips impregnated with spices (Mk 14:8; Jn 19:40). The bandaging process consisted of that is, a set of bands involving the body from the neck down, the members separately, and another group of bands on the head, over which a linen cloth was placed (Jn. 11: 44; Jn. 20: 7). This process took 7 to 8 hours and was not done at night. The body, thus prepared, was placed in one of the chambers. After a year or more, the bones were placed in ossuaries and deposited in the openings of the rock. The tombs were small, and there wasn't enough room for many people to be in the process of placing the strips of cloth. It was also dark, so there was a place on the rock for a lamp. In the case of Jesus, that work was interrupted because of Sabbath. Therefore, the evangelists describe only that Jesus was wrapped in a linen cloth (like a sheet), but not wrapped with linen bands (Jn. 19: 40; Jn. 20: 4-8; Lk. 23: 53; Mk. 15: 46).





It's interesting to notice what the bible tells about the clean linen cloth with what Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body and how it was found by Peter and John on Sunday, after His resurrection. In Jn 20:4-8, it is written: "The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but **rolled up** in a place by itself [NIV: the cloth was **folded up** by itself, separate from the linen]. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed."

'Rolled up' or 'folded up' (Strong #1794, entulissó, ἐντυλίσσω) means, in Greek, to wrap up, roll round, envelop. Entulissó comes from 'en' and 'tulisso' (to twist; probably akin to heilisso); to entwine, i.e. wind up in; wrap in (together).

This means that there was something supernatural there. The fact that the linen cloth that had been on Jesus' head was separated from the clean linen cloth that Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Jesus (Matt 27:57-60), this means that no one had entered there quickly to steal the body of the Master before Roman soldiers noticed. There was a careful and deliberate act of folding or rolling the cloth that covered the head and leaving it in a separate place.

The two evangelists who describe the linen cloths that wrapped the body of Jesus are Luke and John:

• Lk 24:12: "But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened."

• Jn 20:4-8: "Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself [NRSV: rolled up in a place by itself], separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed."

None of them wrote exactly how they found the sheets. However, they do not describe finding them in an untidy manner; therefore, it is to be assumed that the very way the sheets were arranged pointed to the supernatural event that had taken place there. And the linen wrappings were not laid out carelessly, as if they had been hastily unrolled, but as if the Lord was passing through them; they were the way they had involved Jesus.

Matthew writes: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men… While they *[the women that saw Jesus resurrected]* were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day."

If the guards who witnessed this were instructed to lie, it was because there was a very striking spiritual event for them that many unbelievers wanted to stifle.

Cap.6 – The time that Jesus spent in the tomb



"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth."
(Matt. 12: 40)"

One of the victories won by Jesus was the victory over death, because the human being was always afraid of death.

In Heb 2:14-15 it is written: "Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself *[Jesus],* likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death."

The fear of death brought slavery to the soul of man.

Jesus became a man, went through the experience of death and has risen, to show men that He has the power to resurrect us from death and give us eternal life, because He paid for us the penalty of sin. The devil had the power of death (Heb 2:14-15) because all men had sinned and he imprisoned their souls; but Jesus came as a man, without sin (Rom 8:3), condemning it in His own flesh, buying us through His blood.

Jesus stayed in the tomb for three days, like Jonah in the belly of the fish. The book of Jonah, especially chapter 2, is a shadow of what happened to Jesus; hence, Jesus said that the only sign He would give the Pharisees would be the sign of Jonah:

Matt 12:38-41 (Lk 11:29-30): "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you'. But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster *[Jon 1:17],* so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!'"

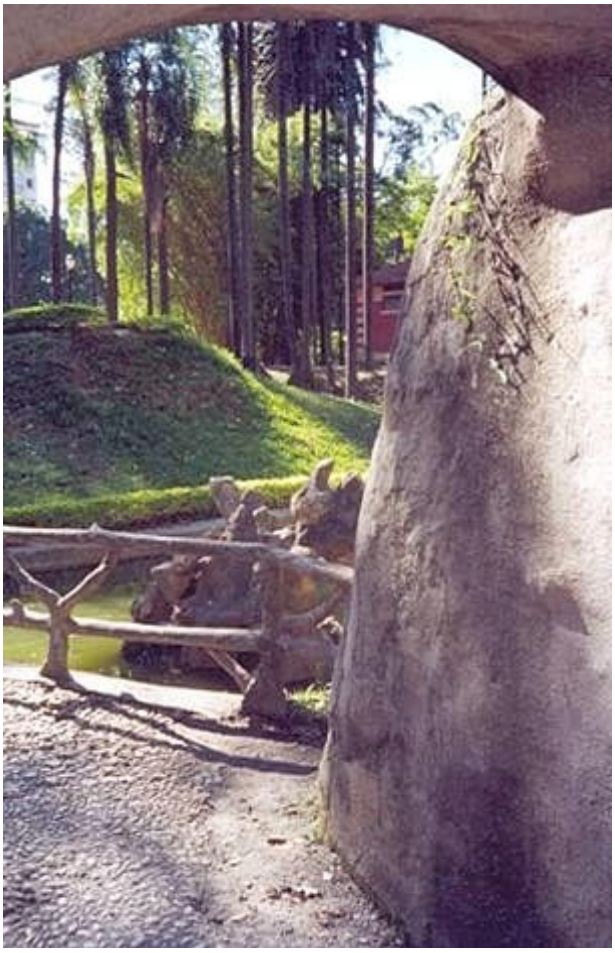
What He meant is that the Ninevites didn't see great signs from God, yet they repented with Jonah's preaching, after he stayed three days and three nights in the fish's belly. However, the teachers of the law, even though they heard Jesus' preaching during His ministry, still did not believe in Him. Perhaps some would be converted after seeing His resurrection or, at least, an account of it through the mouths of the disciples and apostles.

The prophet Hosea had already mentioned the resurrection of Christ (Hos. 6:1-2): "Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

Jesus confirmed this prophecy: “and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.” (Lk 24: 46)

On the third day the Holy Spirit came back into Him, bringing life and resurrection. By resurrecting and returning to earth, He brought the keys of death and hell with Him, therefore, taking away Satan’s dominion over the souls of men (Rev. 1: 18: “and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades”).

Just as God brought Jonah out of the belly of the great fish, Jesus was brought out of the realm of the dead. The stone at the tomb was removed.



Jesus delivered us from eternal death, which is the definitive separation from God generated by sin, and which we know as ‘hell’, which He referred to in His teachings: a place of eternal torment, a separate place for all the wicked who rejected Him, and where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (the moment of condemnation to hell: Matt. 8:12; Matt. 13:41-42; Matt. 13:49-50; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 24: 50-51; Matt. 25: 30. The moment of judgment: Lk. 13: 28).

The expression ‘gnashing of teeth’ can be used in the sense of hatred and anger against someone (Job 16: 9). ‘Weeping’ indicates suffering, grief, sadness. But in the above texts, Jesus went a little further in its meaning, indicating the moment of final condemnation, on the Day of Judgment, when His justice will be applied to those who rejected Him (Lk 13:28), portraying the suffering and despair of the wicked in the face of divine

condemnation, as well as hatred, discontent and anger at their situation ('gnashing of teeth'), that is, a very great degree of distress.

Lk 13:27-28: "But he *[the owner of the house]* will say, 'I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out."

Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to many people: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." (1 Cor 15:3-8).

At the moment of His ascension, Jesus resumed His position of glory at the Father's side.

If the Holy Spirit rescued Jesus, He will also do in our lives because we have His power within us. Nothing can hold us anymore. The hand of God can reach us in the deepest and most hidden places and rescue us. If He triumphed over the darkness, we will also triumph over what oppresses us. We no longer need to fear death. Death, which means separation from God, no longer frightens us because we are continually with Him within us.

Therefore, the work of the cross was completed with the resurrection of Jesus.

Once, the Lord told me: "As a loving and mindful father I care for you and I can identify your voice and your moans, even when you're afraid, hid in caves, or when you fall in the pits of the enemy. My hand will be always extended to rescue. But what I have for you is more than to rescue you from danger; it is to make you wield the sword with confidence and win."

Cap.7 – The salvation of sinners



"In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 Jn 4:10)

In creating man, God thought for him other purpose than death, but with the disobedience of Adam, death came as divine judgment:

Gen 2: 17: "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Gen 3: 19: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Rom. 5: 12-14: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come."

Adam and Eve sinned and Cain killed Abel. So, the blood has become a form of atonement.

The purpose of the animal's blood would be a spiritual act to cleanse man from his sin (death) and restore his life (communion with God). It was the substitute of human blood. Instead of killing the sinner for his sin, God would use a substitute, in case the animals considered pure, set apart for this purpose.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6 of Leviticus, the Lord talks about the offerings. Some animals were separated for the atonement of sins as calf (young bull), for the high priest and the congregation; goat, for the case of Prince; female goat or lamb for the people and turtledove or pigeon in the case of the poor. A tenth of an ephah [about 2 liters] of fine flour was used in case someone very poor.

But the bible also says that it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins (Heb. 10:4: "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"); so Jesus came as innocent blood to atone all our sins and iniquities. Only He was suitable for this atonement:

• 1 Pet 1:18-20: "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake."

Jesus was our substitute, he who took our place and died our death.

The bible says that the Lord died for our sins to redeem us and save us:

• Isa 53:11-12: "Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall

bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Many other verses say that Jesus died for our sins: Jn 3:14-16; 1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5-6.

And He made this atonement once for all, for it was sufficient to reconcile man with God:

• Heb 9:28: "so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."

• Heb 10:12: "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

• 1 Pet 3:18: "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

Sin

Sin is the failure to love God with our whole being; it's the active refusal to recognize Him and obey Him as our Creator and Lord, independence, to claim the position that only God can occupy, hostility toward God (Rom 8:7), manifested in active rebellion against Him.

One of the meanings of the word sin in Greek is HAMARTIA = to err the target. But there are others like: ADIKIA = iniquity, injustice; PONERIA = evil, of a vicious or degenerate kind; PARABASIS = transgression, to go beyond a known limit; ANOMIA = lack of law, disrespect or violation of law.

Thus, sin encompasses both serious acts of rebellion against God and His law, as well as minor deviations in our attitudes and thoughts—for true perfection is found only in Him.

That is why the Bible says: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); in other words, a sinful nature is part of human flesh. Yet, Jesus died for us and left His Spirit with us to teach us and to sanctify us once again.

Jesus came to replace us and propitiate our sins, to redeem us and save, so the old covenant no longer made sense.

To redeem is to buy back, either as a commercial transaction or as a ransom. We were redeemed by Christ, not merely freed:

• 1 Cor. 6: 19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

• 1 Cor. 7: 23: "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters."

• Rev. 5: 9: "They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation.'"

His blood justified us, that is, we were forgiven, accepted, and made right with God; we became righteous in His sight:

• Rom. 5:9: "Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God."

• Rom. 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Man is not justified by works of law but through faith (Gl 2:16; Tt 3:5). Therefore, it is not our good works that save us, but our faith in Christ—in the work He accomplished on the cross for us:

• Eph 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Cap.8 – God's justice



"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him." (1 Jn 4:9)

Another achievement of the cross, is the revelation of God's character: His love and justice.

Rom. 5:8: "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."

Love

On the cross, Jesus revealed God's love for us, and this love is poured on us through the Holy Spirit:

Rom 5:5: "and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

God's love is above and beyond natural affection or loyalty to blood or family. It is an unconditional love, of total self-giving and detachment, without partiality. Jesus demonstrated this kind of love during His ministry, and its highest expression was His sacrifice on the cross.

As a man, Jesus felt compassion for those who were not directly connected to Him as disciples or close relatives; the Bible uses verbs that express His interest in and compassion for those who were suffering; for instance, "he was grieved" (or "he was deeply distressed") in Mk 3:5, regarding the man with the withered hand, and "he had compassion" in Lk 7:13, regarding the widow of Nain. It also mentions that He wept upon seeing Martha and Mary at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:33: "he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled").

Jesus did not go to the cross devoid of emotions, for He was in the flesh. His suffering was not merely spiritual, but also emotional and physical.

The Bible describes feelings in God, such as jealousy for us, anger or sadness in the face of sin, injustice, or affronts, and rejoicing over the children who please Him and walk in His ways, among many others. Jesus also set an example, saying, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." (Rom 12:15)

Jesus demonstrated divine love:

• Jn 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

• Isa 53:4-7 (NKJV): "Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was

upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed [NIV: the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed]. 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. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth."

• Isa 53:11-12 (NKJV): "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors."

• 1 Cor 6:20: "For you were bought with a price *[Jesus blood];* therefore glorify God in your body."

• 1 Pet 2:24: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

• 1 Jn 3:16: "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."

• 1 Jn 4:10: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

• 1 Jn 4:19: "We love because he first loved us."

In the Old Testament, God gave the commandment to love one's neighbor (Lev 19:18): "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." "Love your neighbor as yourself"—this phrase established the measure and the model based on the human ego.

Later, He would give His people a greater challenge, which would be to love their fellow men with a more encompassing love, with the same quality of divine giving. Thus, Jesus did not change or revoke the commandment to love; rather, He Himself became the measure and the model for that love. He repeated: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34-35; Jn 15:12-15;17).

Jesus loved with a love that was more all-encompassing, sacrificial, and unconditional, and ready to serve others, even to the point of laying down His own life. Human love is limited, restricted in its affection and care, even toward the few people closest to us. Therefore, it should be expanded to more people and, logically, under the spiritual anointing of the new Covenant, since only the Spirit of God could pour out this kind of empowerment.

The apostle John wrote, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." (1 Jn 4:18).

Jesus also said in one of His sermons:

• Lk 6:32,35: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them... But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked."

Jesus did not oblige us to love all of humanity with the love of a friend (with personal affection), for He here separated natural human love from the unconditional love of self-donation, of being available to whoever needs it, when the Holy Spirit fills our soul for His work. He understands that the natural affection of human beings for their loved ones and close friends cannot be forced. He Himself chose the twelve as His closest friends to

carry His work forward (Lk 6:12-16), and with them, He opened His heart and shared His secrets (Jn 15:13-15).

Human love is limited and dependent on emotions, for it involves "liking" (affection), that is, the natural human affinity for some people and little affinity for others. "To like is human, to love is divine."

Our way of showing love to God is to keep His word and obey Him in everything He asks us to do, whatever it may be:

• Jn 14: 21,23: "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them… Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

Thus, we can understand that on the cross, Jesus revealed God's love for us. Therefore, whatever our pain or our need may be, we can be sure that Jesus is the most qualified person to fill our empty spaces and restore and remake us. His love is infinitely stronger and more powerful to defend us and provide for our needs.

Justice

God's justice is His righteous way of justifying the unrighteous. Through the sacrifice of the cross we were purified of our sin and justified before God, men and the spiritual world.

There is a distinction between the divine justice, in its biblical significance, and human justice, as we understand it from the legal point of view.

In the Old Testament, the word justice was commonly used to refer to rectitude, the rectitude that God required of His people in following His law:

• Am 5:24: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

• Mic 6:8 (NIV): "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

In the New Testament, God's justice required in the Old Testament, i.e., the straight and faithful obedience to His word was fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

In Phil 3:1-11, when Paul warns about false teachers and false workers, he says (v. 9-11): "... not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

When we read the text about God's armor in Eph 6:10-17, we understand that the justice achieved on the cross through Jesus is the breastplate that protects our feelings of what is hate and injustice. Justice conquered on the cross is the connection of man with God through repentance and forgiveness of sins. When Jesus was already dead, the Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear, that is, Jesus' heart was pierced by the spear, which represents our transgressions and the action of violence and hatred of the devil, so that we might be protected from the fiery darts he tries to throw on us. When we are under the love and justice of God in the person of Jesus we are spared and protected from evil.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

There is a parable in Matt 20:1-16 where Jesus gives the example of God's righteousness in relation to salvation and service to Him:

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning *[that is, six o'clock in the morning]* to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last." [KJV: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."]

The first hypothesis (in relation to salvation) concerns the Jews, as the first chosen by God to work in His 'vineyard', and the Gentiles who, receiving Jesus as their Lord, also received the right to salvation, being "the last" who were called to serve Him. The condition for the reward would be acceptance of the grace of the Lord of the vineyard. The hired workers represent Israel; they were the ones who had the promises and the covenant (Rom 3:1-2; Rom 9:4). The Gentiles didn't have an 'employment contract', would be similar to the Jewish people when they received salvation through their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22-24; 28-29; Rom 11:17; 24; Gal 3:13-14; Eph 2:13-16; Eph 3:6).

The second hypothesis (in relation to service to Him) concerns the intentions of the heart with this service to God, that is, without selfishness, without interest, without bargaining, without 'employment contract', just the confidence that they will receive what is right. In other words: the desire to serve and trust in the grace of the Lord of the vineyard comes before the interest of receiving a reward from Him for the work done. Verse 16 here [Matt. 20:16: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (KJV: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.")] is the repetition of the previous teaching of Matt. 19:30 (regarding those who left everything for Jesus): "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." Thus, this parable is for those who have a relationship with the Lord Jesus and are called by Him to serve in the kingdom of God.

Human thought on justice differs from God's thought in these three groups of laborers. Although all true disciples will be rewarded, the order of rewards will be determined by the spirit in which the disciple served. The first group of workers [from 6 o'clock: "early in the morning"] negotiated the wages for the day's work. The second group [at 9, 12 and 15 o'clock] simply trusted that they would receive what was right ["You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right."]. The last group of laborers, who were standing around because no one had hired them yet, were called at five o'clock, and simply went to the vineyard, without even being sure who they would receive anything for just one hour of work ["They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'"].

The men of the six o'clock worked all day and were jealous of those who worked less and who, in the end, received the same salary as them. Apparently it wasn't fair. Their spirits were greedy and charged for what they did (As if the lord of the vineyard owed them anything!), but the lord of the vineyard paid based on the men's needs, what they needed for themselves and their families, not based on their greed. The service of the men in this first group was motivated by pride and selfish ambition. The others who served out of love and gratitude, even without negotiating their salary, were honored by him.

Thus, the teaching is: what matters to God is fidelity to the call. Only He knows the motivation of each heart to serve Him, so each one will receive his reward, for the parameter is God's grace and sovereignty towards those He calls. The other workers were honored because they trusted in the grace of the Lord of the vineyard. Therefore, the reward not only depends on the kind character of the Lord of the vineyard and His right judgment; It also depends on the way in which each person decides to serve God. This is still an expression of what is written in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and in 2 Cor 8:12 about each person serving with good will and with what he has. It doesn't matter what gifts each person receives from God, whether they are many or few in human eyes, what matters is to serve Him wholeheartedly with what we have gained from Him and not burying our talent. In any case, each one will receive his reward from God (1 Cor 4:5).

"The last will be first, and the first will be last," according to the sovereignty of God. The Lord leaves no work unrewarded, but He values simple faith in Him more than the greatest effort made for His sake. And the one who demonstrates the most faith is the one who obeys the call and goes wherever He sends them, without a thought for the reward. A true servant of God serves their fellow men and glorifies the name of the Lord through the way in which they carry out his work.

In conclusion, justice, as understood in the NT, is the union of humanity with God again, made through the cross, bringing us salvation. Thus the text above, does not talk about finances or employment, but on the prize of salvation, eternal life and the reward for serving God, which is equal for everyone, both those of the past, those of today, and those to come. The price is the same for everyone: to accept the Son and carry one's own cross (= calling, vocation) and serve out of love and joy.

Justice is linked to the trial or judgment that, at principle, is prerogative of God (Isa. 33: 22: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us"); hence, He guides us with respect not to judge our brothers in faith without really knowing what goes on in their heart or their lives:

• Matt 7:1-5: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck [NIV = speck of sawdust] in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log [NIV = plank] in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."

• Lk 6:37-38: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

• Rom 2:1: "Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things."

• Rom 14:4: “Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”

• 1 Cor 4:3-5: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.”

• Jam 4:11: “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.”

Despite everything we read above, however, the Word shows us many examples where Jesus teaches us how to judge, not by flesh but by the Spirit, i.e., not according to appearance, but with righteous judgment:

Jn 7:24: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Lk 12:57: “And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?”

The bible also tells us to judge all things and keep only what is good:

The 5:21: “but test everything; hold fast to what is good.”

In Matt 12:18 it’s written: “Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles [NVI, ‘the nations’].”

The word above ‘justice’, in Greek is krisin (κρίσιν, Strong #2920: a decision, judgment, judging, divine judgment). Krísis is a feminine noun derived from the verb krinó (krínō, κρίνω, Strong #2919), meaning: to judge, decide, I judge, decide, I think (it) good; to separate, distinguish, judge, come to a choice (decision, judgment) by making a judgment – either positive (a verdict in favor of) or negative (which rejects or condemns).

This makes us think that to judge means to discriminate, that is, to separate right from wrong. In this way, we understand that God has given us the ability to judge evil, the situations that surround us, false prophecies, and false teachings as well as the choices for our lives, as Paul says in 1 Cor 14:20 [NKJV], “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.” The Greek word used here for ‘understanding’ is phrén, φρήν, Strong #5424, which means: the mind, intellect, thought, understanding.

However, God has not authorized us to judge people by what we imagine of them. An example is the adulteress who was to be stoned (Jn 8:1-11) and Jesus said, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her’” (v.7). God does not approve adultery, because the Lord was the first to criticize this commandment in the Law but what Jesus meant is that the reasons that led this woman to commit adultery were hidden from the eyes of men, so they had no right to judge her, stoning her without hearing her reasons first. They were exercising the Law in a blind and hard way, accusing the adulteress, but without examining the whole situation because they were judging according to the flesh, not by the Spirit. Therefore, the Lord instructs us to leave judgment to Him, for only He knows all truth.

In the NT, God used servants as Paul and Peter to exercise severe trial and judgment on some people as Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), for example, and Elymas the magician (Acts 13:4-12). However, they were not in the flesh, but acting through the Spirit of God.

God's justice is linked to salvation and the "Last Day" when it will be completed. In the first coming Jesus came to save (to do justice: Jn 8:15-18; Jn 12:47-50); in the second coming He'll come to judge (exercise judgment on those who rejected His justice: Jn 5:22-30; Jn 12:31-32; 47-50).

At present, His justice and judgment are still made to see His precepts fulfilled. He can show this in various ways: 1) repaying us from what have been stolen from us; 2) putting us in honor before those who humiliated us in the past; 3) bringing repentance to the hearts of those who have hurt us; 4) justifying us before those who falsely accused us or have a misconception relating to us; 5) manifesting His truth in a given situation. I short: bringing into existence His promises for our lives. And He can use human, judicial means for that as well. He Himself placed human authorities on earth to be respected:

• Rom. 13:1: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God."

The exercise of divine justice by His Church is to preserve its salvation and generate salvation in other lives. God also desires that we properly exercise human justice, in accordance with His commandments, showing the world that He cares about the injustices we experience on earth:

"For I the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." (Isa. 61:8).

"And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk. 18:7-8).

God is the just judge who hears and answers our prayers. And when He seems reluctant to answer, it is so that we may persevere and that He may develop in us some quality that we do not yet possess, such as aligning our requests with His will, for the glory of His kingdom, but not to satisfy selfish desires (cf. Jam 4:3). In the case of Lk 18:7-8, Jesus may have been referring to the daily and desperate prayer of Christians under persecution, pleading for His justice and prompt intervention. God is not like the unjust judge in the parable. When He returns, He wants to see the genuine faith of those who do not lose heart in prayer and who truly know who He is.

Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we can trust in God's good intentions toward us. The Bible says that God is love and that His plans are for our welfare and not for harm. His will for us is always good, acceptable and perfect.

Cap.9 – The victory over evil



"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God and since then has been waiting until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." (Heb 10:12-13)

Victory over the devil

One of the greatest victories of Jesus on the cross was over the devil. God delivered us from bankruptcy only by paying our debts on the cross of Christ. He canceled the debt and destroyed the document in which it was recorded:

Col 2:13-15: "And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record [NKJV: handwriting] that stood against us with its legal demands [NIV: having cancelled the written code, with its regulations]. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. [NKJV: And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross]"

"The record" (the handwriting or written code) refers to the list of our debts (offenses or trespasses) before God, a debt that only Jesus could pay. This list gave Satan legal grounds to afflict us, but Jesus paid that debt on the cross, and the enemy no longer has anything to accuse us of. The verb 'to cancel' (or erase) implies 'something completely clean', much like the whitewashing of a wall in ancient times, meaning the accusations against us have been entirely swept away and covered by the blood of Jesus. The weapons used by the enemy, such as threats and fear, were defeated by God's love and forgiveness; this is why the Bible says that Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers. The phrase used by Paul ("he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross") means that, just as the Romans and Jewish leaders seemingly defeated Jesus by exposing Him to public contempt, He did the same to the demons of high hierarchy, redeeming us for God, paying our debt, and stripping the forces of darkness of their weapons against us. In the spiritual realm, this victory was like a Roman triumphal procession, in which a general and his soldiers would return victorious from battle, bringing with them prisoners and spoils for all the citizens to see. Jesus triumphed, not by His own strength, but through obedience and submission to the Father. And because of this, He was also able to destroy the one who held the power of death, the devil:

Phil 2:8: "he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross."

Heb 2:18: "Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested."

Heb. 2: 14: “Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Rev. 1: 18: “and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.”

By forgiving His executioners, He closed the emotional wound in Himself so as not to be ‘snatched’ by Satan; He defeated evil with good:

Lk 23:34: “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots to divide his clothing”

Victory over death and the Law

Through Christ we are no longer under the tyranny of the Law:

Rom 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

Gal 2:19: “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.”

Death = nature of the devil, separation from God. Sin is what causes death and brings the divine judgment, but Jesus destroyed he who had the power of death. Taking our sins, death lost its power of harming us and therefore to bring us dread:

Isa 25:8: “he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Acts 2:24: “But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.”

Rom 6:8-9: “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.”

1 Cor 15:55-57: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Heb 2:15: “and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.”

Rev 2:11: “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.”

Jesus broke the curses of the law

On the cross, Jesus completely broke the curses written in the Book of the Law (summarized in Deut 28:15-68), a just punishment from God for men’s sin of transgressing His commandments. Therefore, He was the complete fulfillment of the Law and opened the door for us to eternal life. The old dispensation has been revoked, and the new dispensation has brought us into a different level of relationship with God. Therefore, we are no longer under the curse of the Law, that is, it is not by our good deeds that we will be saved (by fulfilling the Law of the Old Covenant), but by the blood of Jesus. He bore the curse in our place (Gal 3:13). Whoever receives Him into their life is justified and set free. Whoever rejects Him remains under the wrath of God (Gal 3:10).

Even so, our sinful act and what came out of our mouths brought about a bad consequence for ourselves and for others, which will only truly be undone with our new

position in Christ: learning to bless lives, asking forgiveness from those we have hurt and releasing forgiveness to those who have hurt us, restoring what was stolen, changing our attitude, acting as a true disciple of Christ and fighting for God's justice on earth. This part is our responsibility. It is the way for us to lay hold of the victory already won by Jesus on the cross.

In Christ we are new creatures (2 Cor 5:17), we have been forgiven and now we are entitled to His blessing if we walk according to His will for our lives. However, the mere act of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior does not instantly transform us into perfect, holy beings. Our spirit is completely new and redone, but our soul and our body do not follow this immediate transformation. We enter into a process of deliverance, healing, purification, and life change. That is why the apostle Paul speaks of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and confirms that not even he was able to attain perfection (Phil. 2:12b; Phil. 3:12-16). In other words, in our earthly lives, we appropriate, the blessing Jesus has already won for us in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:3,20-23; Eph. 2:6; Eph. 3:10; Eph. 6:12).

A believer in Christ may experience illness, poverty, persecution, and even death (2 Cor 4:8-10) without these things serving as proof of God's condemnation or a curse upon him (Rom 8:1;35-39). Paul knew plenty and want, abundance and need; he knew hunger, yet he never interpreted this as an absence of God's favor (Phil. 4:11-13). In the New Testament, many faithful churches, such as Smyrna, were materially poor yet spiritually rich (Rev. 2:9). The blessing of Christ does not consist in occupying a superior economic position to that of any other person or nation, but rather in being reconciled to God through Christ and participating in the spiritual blessings He bestows upon us (Eph 1:3-7): receiving adoption as children, being holy and set apart for Him, and experiencing the joy of being chosen and redeemed from God's own curse.

And God will not deny us the material blessings we need in our daily lives, for He knows we need them all, even to glorify His name (Matt 6:33; Lk 12:30-31; Rom 13:7-8; Phil 4:19; 1 Tim 6:8-10). Therefore, it is wrong to judge our brothers and sisters or to interpret certain hardships we Christians face as a sign of a curse. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33b, NIV). And in this fallen and limited world, we go through many experiences, both good and bad, yet we are certain of one thing: "In in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37).

Victory over the world

The world means everything that has to do with time, with people and with the natural life, where there is wickedness, for the world is under the legality of Satan.

Jesus said in Jn 17:16-17: "They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth".

His word, which is the truth, can keep us away from the snares of Satan and the temptations of the world. He tells us not to love the world:

1 Jn 2:15-17: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever".

In Jn 16:33 Jesus says, "I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

In 1 Jn 5:4-5 the Lord says that the victory (victory (the way of, the means of) that overcomes the world is our faith:

"For whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

The faith that John speaks of here is our faith in Christ—our ongoing trust in Him—which does not depend on what we do. We are victorious because we are born of God, and because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And this faith does not only mean to believe, but to trust, to confide in Him, to commit to Him, entrust with Him, to rely upon Him. The Greek word used here is Pistis (NT, πίστις, Strong #G4102) means: faith, believe, trust, belief, fidelity, confidence, assurance, fidelity, faithfulness; conviction of truth, conviction that God exists and conviction of His deeds, to believe in the impossible. So, the world we conquer with our faith.

The devil we defeat with the blood of Jesus and in His name (Mk 16:17-18: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover").

Victory over the flesh and the disease

The flesh is the foothold that the devil has within us to afflict us and move us away from the cross. The world is the means by which the devil exerts pressure on us from outside. When we believe in Jesus Christ our values change:

Rom 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."

The flesh has great weight:

Rom 7:18: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

Gal 4:29: "But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh *[Ishmael]* persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit *[Isaac],* so it is now also."

The bible speaks so much to put away the works of the flesh: 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Cor 6:18; Gal 5:16-21; Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:5-10; 1 Pet 1:14.

The sacrifice of Jesus leads us to be aware of the need to crucify our flesh so that our bodies also remain sanctified:

1Cor 6:20: "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body".

Through the cross, we are united to the Lord in spirit and begin to have dominion over the flesh:

1 Cor 6:17: But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him".

Causes of disease and illness in the bible

When talking about victory over the flesh, we also have to talk about the diseases. As the disease began to take place in man's life after his fall in consequence of sin, it also moved us away from the original plan of God for us: the perfect health.

The disease, sometimes in the bible, was described as a form of punishment or penalty for sin or as a consequence of sin itself:

Num 12:10 (Miriam became leprous); Deut 28:21-22; 27-28; 59-61 (curses for disobedience); 2 Kin 5:27 (the leprosy of Naaman fell upon Gehazi, Elisha's servant); 2 Chr 21:14a-15 (the bowels disease of King Jehoram); 2 Chr 26:19b (leper on King Uzziah's forehead); Mk 2:5 (the paralytic of Capernaum).

Other times, was to manifest the glory of God. The diseases here were not directly related to the sin of the person or the ancestors, but He allowed them so that through them His power could be manifested:

Lk 8:42 (Jairus' daughter); Jn 9:3 (the man born blind); Jn 11:4 (Lazarus); Mk 5:25-34 (the woman cured of hemorrhage). In these cases, the very fragility and human imperfection favored the onset of the disease, because Adam's sin brought imperfection to the human body and its genetics and at birth these deformities are established. Thus the glory of God was able to show itself to men as a way to express His divine perfection that heals and frees us from all deformity and imperfection.

Other times, it was described as generated by unclean spirit:

Mk 5:5 (The wounds of the Gadarene man were caused by unclean spirits); Mk 9:17-18 (The boy with an evil spirit); Lk 13:11-12 (The bent woman).

Other times, physical illness can be generated by a depression of soul and spirit (Prov. 17:22) or be sent by God with a purpose (sterility, in the case of some women in the OT and NT) and this one lead to emotional illness (sadness, bitterness), which in turn may aggravate the initial physical illness or cause another.

That's we can see in 1 Sam 1:5-8, in the case of Hannah. Peninah provoked her, and Hannah wept and didn't eat. The bible does not say that sterility was a curse, but had been allowed by the Lord to accomplish His purpose in the life of Hanna, through Samuel (1 Sam 1:19b-20). The fact of Hanna be sad and embittered by the sterility and refuse to eat because of it, this could aggravate her sterility or take her to another type of illness, for example, anemia or inanition.

Another sterile woman was Samson's mother and, through her, God exercised His purpose to give Samson to Israel as judge and deliverer and show to His people that He still continued to do miracles (Judg. 13:2-5). In the NT, also Elizabeth was sterile (Lk 1:5-7;36) and through the miracle of God, she gave birth to John the Baptist to fulfill the divine purpose as a forerunner of the Messiah.

The difference between the words "disease" and "illness"

• Matt 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease [NIV: disease; KJV: sickness] and every sickness [NIV: sickness; KJV: disease] among the people."

• Matt 9:35: "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: sickness] and every sickness [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: disease]."

• Matt 10:1: "Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease [NIV: disease; KJV: sickness] and every sickness [NIV: sickness; KJV: disease]."

"Disease", in Greek, νοσον, nosos – Strong #G3554 means: a disease, malady, infirmity, sickness. And "sickness", μαλακιαν, malakia – Strong #G3119 means: weakness, illness, sickness, bodily weakness. It comes from 'malakos', meaning: softness, i.e. enervation (debility): a feeling of being drained of energy or vitality; fatigue. Sickness is a health problem of a social or short-term nature.

Cassell (An American physician and bioethicist, Eric Jonathan Goldstein, who changed their name to Eric Jonathan Cassell – 1928-2021; in his work 'Illness and disease' – published in 1976) defines 'illness' (the bible writes, 'sickness') as 'what the patient feels when he goes to the doctor' and 'disease' as 'what the patient has when he leaves the doctor.' 'Disease, then, is something that an organ has; sickness is something that a man has.' Sickness is the patient's subjective response to the fact that he is not well, the experience and the feeling of poor health; change in a person's health status. The disease refers to abnormalities in the structure and function of body organs and systems (Eisenberg 1977), such as diabetes, tuberculosis, etc.

In other words, illness means that a person is not or does not feel in full health. On the other hand, disease is a disorder of structure or function that produces specific signs or symptoms or that affects a specific location of the body and is not simply a direct result of physical injury. Leon Eisenberg (1922-2009), an American child psychiatrist, established the usefulness of distinguishing 'disease' from 'illness.' For him, the term illness refers specifically to the patient's personal experience of his or her disease. A person can have a disease without being ill, that is, he (she) can have an objectively definable medical condition, but not feel sick or distressed by it; or then, to be ill without being diseased (a person feels unwell without having a physical sickness, and feels embarrassed for not being in total vigor and interprets this feeling as sickness rather than normal emotions).

Whatever the cause of disease or infirmity, the sacrifice of Jesus came to rescue us from it:

• 1 Pet 2:24: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

• Isa 53:4-5 (NRSV): "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed."

Infirmities (or griefs) = choli or ḥĕlî, חֳלִי, Noun Masculine, Strong #2483, which means: disease, sick, sickness, illness, affliction, grief, griefs.

Diseases (or sorrows) = makob or mach'ov, מַכְאֹוב, Noun Masculine, Strong #4341, meaning: grief, pain, sorrow, painful, sufferings. Mak'ov encompasses the notions of physical pain, emotional grief, and spiritual anguish. The Scripture uses this noun for both physical affliction (Job 33:19) and inner sorrow (Ps 32:10), allowing a single word to portray the entire spectrum of human suffering.

The Servant is "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" or "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isa 53:3). Verse 4 says: "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our disease." Here, the Messiah ('the Servant') identifies with human suffering, confirms His atonement for sin, and brings His comfort.

This shows that Jesus took upon Himself all our infirmities, diseases, and pains—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—which is truly a great achievement for us and a promise that should not be disregarded. It depends on our faith. But it depends solely on Him to allow this healing in one area or another, or in all areas, according to His sovereign purpose for our lives.

Thus, the Lord determines how to heal us, whether through an instant miracle or by using earthly methods (doctors and science). What matters is our faith, which enables the powerful healing action of the Holy Spirit.

The bible says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you." (Rom 8:11).

Theologians cite this verse in relation to the Day of Resurrection, when our mortal body will be resurrected with a glorified, incorruptible body (1 Cor 15:42-44, 51-53), like that of Jesus, but I myself have experienced during my own walk with Him the power of the Holy Spirit in times of illness and disease, when my body showed an astonishing regeneration, without leaving any physical aftereffects.

When we talk about crucifying our sins and problems on the cross to be free ("crucifying the flesh', as I mentioned at the end of Chapter 4), we often don't know how to do it or what really happens when we accept this word as truth in our hearts. We know that everything happens through faith, but we don't know what to do at that moment. It is not enough to simply declare with our lips that He has already taken our pains, sufferings and sins, but to ignore the deformities that exist in our flesh. Isa 53:4-5 is a powerful and living Word which confronts us with the cross and brings us true repentance through the revelation of our errors. With the heart in this inner disposition, we will be ready to be truly freed and healed, in every way.

Praying before the cross is making an exchange: to give Him our worst and receiving His best. We must get in touch with our negative emotions during prayer and talk to Jesus about them so that they may be corrected and truly purified right there. We must acknowledge our mistakes and be willing to correct them. We need to admit our weakness and how much all of this weighs us down and bothers us, and accept what He says in His word so that we can change our attitude.

We must fully trust in God's justice, not our own, and allow the entire spiritual process to unfold, for only He knows to do it. When I sought clarification and revelation of God to write this topic—because some people had asked me before how the liberation occurs or what they should do to achieve it—the Spirit of God reminded me of two situations in the Old Testament that illustrate the process of the Cross: Surrender.

That's what happened, for example, to Hezekiah when Sennacherib came to challenge him (Isa 37:14-20). He did not react on his own, but he presented the affronts before the Almighty and transferred them to Him, for in truth, the enemy was insulting Hezekiah's faith, and therefore the God in whom he believed. That's what we must do: present, through our prayers, before the cross everything that weighs us down and let the blood of Jesus purify us.

Another passage that the Lord showed me is in Josh 10:26-27: "Afterward Joshua struck them down *[The Amorite kings imprisoned by Joshua in the cave of Makkedah]* and put them to death, and he hung them on five trees. And *they hung on the trees until evening*. At sunset Joshua commanded, and they *took them down from the trees* and *threw them into the cave* where they had hidden themselves; they *set large stones* against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day."

The words in *italics* are important revelations for us. *Hung on the trees until evening* means that we should pray, surrender our problem to the cross and wait for God's answer. It doesn't take days, but seconds, because it's the instantaneous process of blood, which comes through faith.

Then Joshua commanded that they *took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave,* that is, we must bury and forget what has already been purified, forgiven

and healed. Soon after, the bible says that they *put large stones*, that is, to build walls, to put the word of God in the place of what has been healed, so that it can work and rebuild what was destroyed before. We must have a new behavior after the act of repentance and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus.

In other words, liberation does not come only from the knowledge we have about the subject written above, nor is it conquered by our rationality or will, but through the spiritual action of God, which touches our soul in a profound way. He alone accomplishes this kind of healing. So when you identify your problem, pray as if you were standing before the cross and tell Jesus everything that is in your heart, until you feel the Holy Spirit touching 'the wound', for it is a sign that your soul is prepared to receive healing. Probably the emotions will spring up and you will cry. But keep talking to Him and let Him finish the process. Open the bible and listen to what He has to say to you. The relief will come as a sign that the liberation has been achieved.

Thus, through the sacrifice of the cross we are transformed into new creatures and what we were before we met Jesus becomes part of yesterday, because with Him we begin to live our today and sow and build our tomorrow.

This way of praying with faith applies both to the emotional healing and the physical healing we seek from the Lord, for we need to understand what lies within our soul behind the physical illness. Just once is enough to bring light and direction regarding the situation that is causing distress.

Anyway, we were benefited by the cross.

I want to finish this chapter by writing a message that God gave me some time ago: "When I decree victory in the life of a child, it is established, because my word is firmed in heaven and on earth. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words shall not pass away. What I liberated over you was love, peace, joy, rescue and victory and you will receive them because you believed in me. You have nothing to be ashamed of. You were washed and justified by my blood."

These words are also upon you to give you the assurance of victory over all areas that the Lord has won for us on the cross: the devil, the Law and death, the flesh (and disease) and the world.

Cap.10 – New relationship with God



"Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22)

By the cross, we were not only reconciled to God, but Jesus placed us in a new level of relationship with the Father, giving us boldness in our communication with Him as well as joy and love.

Boldness

We can talk to Him openly, with sincerity and simplicity:

• Eph 3:12: "in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him."

• Heb 4:16: "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

• Heb 10:19-23: "Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience *[the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus]* and our bodies washed with pure water *[the grace of the Holy Spirit]*. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful."

• 2 Tim 1:7: "for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

Love

His love has freed us from sin and makes us serve Him in love. Before, we were afraid of Him, of His wrath. Now His love cast out fear, and as children of God, we can talk openly to Him about what we feel, to ask what we need, receive His love and enter into His throne whenever we need or desire, covered only by the blood of Jesus:

• 2 Cor 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them."

With the cross we can call God Father, because we were adopted as His children, so Jesus teaches us to pray: Our Father, Daddy, Abba Father (in Aramaic).

Since the time of Moses, God was seen as the Father of mankind and the Father of Israel (Isa 63:16; Isa 64:8; Jer 3:19) but with an imposing image of Almighty God and Lord, and without the intimacy that Jesus had through the love for Him. After the coming of Jesus, we got to know the Father as He really is, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9b).

• Rom 8:14-17: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."

Joy

We rejoice in the Lord who redeemed us from bondage, which was too oppressive for us. Therefore, we should celebrate and praise the Lord:

• Acts 2:46-47: "Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." The early Christians rejoiced in the salvation, and thus, those who did not know Jesus were brought to Him for the joy that His people manifested.

• Rom 14:17-18: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval." Joy is part of God's kingdom.

• 2 Cor 3:17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." We are free to rejoice and praise through the Spirit.

• Eph 5:19-20: "as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Joy is like a commandment of the Lord, for we now have a master and a defender; we already have someone who solves our problems and defends us and this is cause for joy.

• Phil 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

• Phil 4:11: "Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have." The fact that we are His enables us to live happily, no matter the circumstances that surround us. Although it is not an easy attitude to assume, it is developed, as with Paul, running along to the degree of spiritual growth and the revelations that we receive from Him. With Him, everything has a good end.

• Col 1:11-12: "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." We can have joy for the certainty that now we are heirs of a great heritage.

• 1 The 5:16: "Rejoice always."

• 1 Pet 4:13: "But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed." As we suffer with Him, we are also glorified and resurrected from our afflictions.

• Rev 22:14: "Blessed are those who wash their robes *[in the blood of the Lamb],* so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates." We are happy to be with the Lord in eternity.

As I said above, it is not easy for the soul to feel joy when circumstances around us are adverse. However, the Holy Spirit brings us comfort and reminds us the victories that

Jesus left available for us. Then, we can feel the joy of entering into His presence, receiving His solace, and being sure of the solutions we seek.

"He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14). Therefore, we are princes, having boldness to enter His presence and ask for help. Today we are children of God, with authority over evil, and winning all our battles. We can rejoice because we are ready to fulfill God's purpose for us here on earth and see our dreams come true, because we have an eternal covenant with Him.

I want to finish, putting a message from the Lord:

"I will be with you that you take my presence and my perfume to the poor of life and light. Speak of my love; especially exude my love so that others may know that I'm real. The language of the heart is wiser than the language of the mind. Draw near to me and I will reveal you the secrets of my heart".

Cap.11 – Our cross and our conquest



"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."
(Rom 8:37)

The bible says that our sacrifice is daily.

• Ps 44:22: "Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

• Lk 9:23: "Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'"

• Rom 8:36: "As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'"

We take on our frail body the death of Jesus, but at the same time His life, that is we leave behind out 'old self' to follow Christ:

• Rom 6:5-14: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

• 2 Cor 4:7-11: "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh."

• Gal 2:20: "and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The tendency to sin causes death; however, the life of the Holy Spirit makes us overcome it

Everything is done by the presence of the Spirit in us, not by our own strength. The secret is surrender. This is not necessarily painful, because the love (His for us and ours for Him) ease the process and frees us from any power struggle with God. The Holy Spirit brings a daily change to our new self. The bible also says that we should work out our own salvation with fear and trembling:

• Phil 2: 12: "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

The acknowledgement of our mistakes is the surrender that the Lord expects of us. He made a covenant with us and we must keep ours with Him. We just need to surrender to Him and He Himself will go, naturally, perfecting us through our daily relationship with His Spirit.

Jesus emphasized the need for a disciple to take up his cross. In Matt 16:24-27 and Lk 14:26-27;33, He talks about those who lose their souls because of Him, and end up finding it. And those who turn away from Him, end up losing their souls. Jesus also talks about to love less our parents, relatives and land to be His, that is, to put Him in the first place. In all these texts, He emphasizes self-denial.

In Matthew 16:24 it is written, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Deny, in Greek, is aparneomai, ἀπαρνέομαι, Strong #533, which means: to deny, disown, repudiate (either another person or myself), disregard, disinherit, turn his back on something, to renounce. From 'apo' and 'arneomai'; to deny utterly, i.e. disown, abstain. This means to deny or disown our own beings, renouncing our supposed right to follow our own path. It is the decision not to satisfy our tastes and desires that lead to sin.

Therefore, cross is the symbol of the death of the self. It is a symbol of surrender and victory.

Jesus also uses words like soul and life, showing His concern about this part of our being, for it was for this that He came: to save our soul.

And still in relation to the soul, He uses verbs like to lose, to win, to exchange; for example in Mk 8:37: "Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" or "Let a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Surely He teaches us that He was the only one who could make a fair exchange, through His innocent blood; that we could not do anything for ourselves, we had nothing to exchange for our lives but through the acceptance of His sacrifice and His words we would be united with Him. We would die and rise with Him, and have our souls saved.

• Jam 1:21 (NKJV): "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Jesus also tells us in this text that is necessary to lose our soul to the world, in order to win it for Him, and consequently, experiencing real life.

In Lk 9:23, Jesus says that this process is daily: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

In several other texts of the bible, we find God's guidance to deny the desires of our flesh daily, to die to sin and to the world:

• Eph 4:22-23 (NKJV): "put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

• Col 3:5-8: “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth.”

Through our cross we can experience in our lives what Christ felt. Our tests are similar to His:

1) Helplessness and abandonment for being different from the world or for doing His work

2) To suffer unfairly

3) To learn to see forgiveness as a way of deliverance

4) To learn to overcome the voices that affront our faith

5) To learn how to donate ourselves, especially for those who do not deserve or betray us

6) To be made perfect till holiness.

The cross was the calling, the mission of Jesus. Our cross is our calling, our mission on earth.

Therefore, all the trials and unpleasant experiences we pass are proof that we are carrying our cross and, just as Jesus surpassed it, we will surpass it, because the cross is today for us who are saved, a symbol of surrender and victory. The cross is the end of a story and the beginning of another. We carry the marks of Jesus but also His victories. As Christ was restored, glorified and exalted, we too will be resurrected with Jesus from the situations of shame and humiliation:

• Rom 8:17: “and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

• Rom 8: 28-30: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

• Rom 8:37: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

• 2 Cor 4:14: “because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.”

• Gal 6:14;17: “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world... From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.”

• Phil 2:9-11: “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Our cross becomes lighter when we perform with love what He has asked us to do, and when we deliver Him our imperfections and desires, seeking holiness.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11:29-30).

“Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.’” (Rev 21: 6-7).