



March 2021

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

**T**here is one central symbol by which we remember Jesus. Today that image is coated with gold and worn around the necks of athletes and beautiful women, an example of how we can gloss over the crude reality of history. The cross was, of course, a mode of execution. It would be no more bizarre if we made jewelry in the shape of tiny electric chairs, gas chambers and hypodermic needles, the preferred modern modes of execution.

The cross, the most universal image in the Christian religion, offers proof that God cares about our suffering and pain. He died of it. That symbol stands unique among all the religions of the world. Many of them have gods, but only one has a God who cared enough to become a man and to die.—“Where is God When it Hurts?” by Phillip Yancey

With the diminished and overlooked cosmic significance of the centrality of the cross of Christ in mind, consider the upside-down, counter-intuitive life and teachings of Jesus:

- Those who would become great must become small.
- Those who would be first must put themselves last.
- Those who would become truly rich must become poor and impoverished.
- Those who want to be strong must become weak.
- Those who desire to find meaning and significance in their lives must deny and lose themselves as they follow Christ and therefore, through him, receive ultimate meaning.

There is no cross without the cradle. There is no resurrection without crucifixion. There is no grace without suffering. There is no glorification without sacrifice and humiliation. There is no spiritual life without spiritual death.

Of all paradoxes Jesus preached and exemplified, perhaps the most important for us as Christ followers is this:

*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:39).*

HERE'S HOW JESUS PREPARED THE WAY AND INVITED US ON THE PATH TO FOLLOW HIM AND LOSE OUR LIVES FOR HIS SAKE:

1) The Eternal Son of God, the second divine Person of the Trinity, descended out of heaven to this earth. We call it the **incarnation**, when God, in the person of Jesus, came down. We celebrate this ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL birth at Christmas.

2) Following his birth (the cradle if you like) and his life and teachings in which he revealed the love, grace and mercy of God, in the ultimate expression of the love of God, Jesus was lifted up (John 3:14; 12:32) on his cross. Impaled to his cross, Jesus was *lifted up from this earth* and in so doing drew us all to himself. We call the crucifixion of Jesus “Good Friday” because this ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL gift was good for mankind—all humanity is drawn to Jesus because of Good Friday.

3) When his crucified human body was taken down from the cross, Jesus descended into lower, earthly regions (Ephesians 4:9) for us. This second descent is somewhat like the first, in that both, in contrast with the glories of heaven, involve *a self-sacrificing literal descent into humiliation*.

4) The first ascent of Jesus is the resurrection, when the man Jesus and his body was raised from death to life. We celebrate this ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL earth-shaking event at Easter.

5) While there are two descents of Jesus, so there are two ascents—the second ascent being when Jesus was with his disciples after his resurrection and *he was taken up before their very eyes* (Acts 1:9). *He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe* (Ephesians 4:10).

Make no mistake—Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection but he did not leave us. He didn't go away—he hasn't abandoned us. He is not physically present as he was when he walked this earth during his first coming, but he is omnipresent all around this world and lives with us forever.

When he initially descended from heaven Jesus came in the flesh, born of Mary, adding a human body to his divinity. When he ascended into heaven, Jesus ascended with his now incorruptible, resurrected body. When he ascended he went to prepare a place for us (John 14:3). **The place he has prepared for us is our true and forever home.**

*Everything we believe—our faith in God is defined by Jesus. He came down as one of us, with us. He was lifted up and rose victoriously for us that we might live in him and he in us!*

**Our true and forever home** is the grand promise of God—our true and forever home is what the book of Revelation calls a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1). In the new heaven and new earth God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—will dwell forever with his people. In this heaven on earth, Jesus says he will *make all things new* (Revelation 21:5).

The new heaven and new earth will be a perfected world, a world purged of all impurities. We will dwell in this new heaven and new earth in our glorified, resurrected bodies. Like that of our Savior, our bodies will also be incorruptible, eternal and perfected.

The reason for the incarnation was not merely so that God could come and visit this earth, his creation. **Jesus didn't come to this earth on a sightseeing trip.** The reason for the incarnation and all that followed it was so that humanity could be given eternal life in God's new heaven and new earth.

In this new heaven and new earth God will dwell with us and live with us forever and ever. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The Grand Plan of the Gospel is A PARADOX—*a truth that is contradictory to common beliefs and common sense.*

**In his first descent** God in the person of Jesus came down into this world, **to be one of us/with us/among us.** But **then he descended again**—this time, again he fully became one of us dying for and with us. He willingly and self-sacrificially allowed himself to be lifted up as the ultimate declaration of his love, showing he will stop at nothing to reveal his love to us. We too, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, may be buried with him and ALL are invited to be raised with him. **THIS IS THE GOSPEL!**

In Christ, God became flesh and blood—he became human—and suffered death on a cross—the ultimate instrument of torture. The cross is the all-inclusive, complete demonstration and the full revelation of God’s love—and as a result the world, all humanity, can be transformed. **THIS IS THE GOSPEL!**

*All of God’s grand plan paradoxically centers around the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus—the ultimate revelation of God as love is his birth, as Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, and his death on a cross.*

**There he was**, hanging on a cross between two criminals, outside of the walls of Jerusalem, executed by the Romans at the instigation of his own people, the Jews. **There he was**, betrayed and abandoned by his dear friends and disciples. **There he was**, suffering and bleeding out in the most pain, shameful, and wretched death that anyone can ever experience.

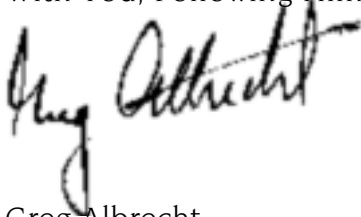
No doubt about it—the love, grace and mercy of God is a mysterious paradox to the human mind. In Christ, God became God in the flesh. Instead of hanging on “for dear life” to his heavenly glories, God in Christ came down, humbling himself, self-emptying himself so that he might relentlessly reveal the enormity of his love to the likes of you and me.

This is the time of the year when Christ-followers remember Jesus’ final weeks and days on earth. We resolutely walk with Jesus as he determines to visit Jerusalem. Once again, we remember that our ultimate mission is to lose our lives serving him—living in him, with him and for him.

These days leading up to the Cross and the resurrection serve to remind us of our priorities in an upside-down world. As Christ-followers, our priorities are indeed a paradox to the kingdoms of this world.

As citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we do not exist for personal gain—we live that we might serve Jesus. We do not grasp to take and gain and maintain physical and temporal things—we surrender to Jesus and serve him and receive spiritual gifts. We self-sacrificially follow Jesus in the love, mercy and grace of God—to whom be glory and praise forever and ever!

With You, Following Him and Focusing On Him,



Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

**PS.** We share this note of thanks from a friend of CWR/PTM...and **THANK YOU** for your prayers and financial support for this ongoing media ministry.

*There are no words to properly convey how important you all are to my life and I pray for abundant financial and spiritual blessings to everyone at CWR/PTM.—California*

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—March 2021

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

*Please pray for my daughter, who had a motorcycle wreck. The doctors found damage to her foot which now may need surgery.—Louisiana*

*I have a “mass growth” on my left kidney and I will be having diagnostic surgery soon. Please keep me in your prayers.—Ontario, Canada*

*Please pray for my severed relationship with my daughter. Her husband has what I believe to be a personality disorder. He has turned against us and she has chosen to cut ties with us. They were just recently married.—Michigan*

*Please continue to pray for my wife who is in remission with lung cancer and for myself experiencing the effects of old age.—New York*

*My blood pressure has gone up a lot, and I am suffering with severe back pain. Thank you in advance for your prayers.—California*

*Please pray for my wife. She is 81 and she fell and broke her left shoulder and then fell again and broke her right hip. Right now she is in a rehab facility.—Washington*

*Please pray that I'll become financially stable this year. I'm starting a home business. Even though I'm disabled, I can work from home without losing my health care.—Georgia*

*Please pray for my friend who is suffering with complications from COVID-19.—Arkansas*

*Please pray for my nephew, who is recovering from a double-lung transplant. He is only 37 years old and has a wife and two young children.—Nevada*

*Please pray for my brother who is suffering from severe Rheumatoid Arthritis. He can hardly get out of bed each day.—New Mexico*

*Thank you for your great work, especially for your inspiring letters Please pray for me as I have some important decisions to make.—Michigan*

*Please pray for my physical healing after a triple heart bypass surgery and also for my spiritual growth.—Louisiana*

*Please pray for my niece who is a home health nurse. In addition to her stressful job, she's trying to home-school her ten-year-old daughter now, too. Her stress is through the roof. Please pray for all the parents of young children in similar situations.—North Dakota*

*Please pray and ask God to help all those affected with the pandemic. Thank you for sharing these prayer requests with everyone at CWR/PTM.—Kentucky*

*One of my great-nephews is four years old and has a speech delay problem. He needs a full diagnosis. He is not mentally challenged and does not have ADHD. He recently started a pre-school program and loves it.—Pennsylvania*

*Please pray for my brother and sister who are suffering from bad health and live alone. Also please pray for my wife who has little energy and is depressed.—Florida*

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.