

# The Cross of Christ and its Cosmic Consequences

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[ 0 : 00 ] You can be seated.

The question for this evening is, how is it, through the cross, Jesus is going to reconcile all things to himself?

So this shouldn't take long, I just want to talk a little bit about all things. The common focus on Good Friday pertains to how Jesus reconciled one thing, namely you and me.

But I want to broaden our vision tonight and simply consider what God means in his word when he talks about this idea that because of the cross of Jesus, God is reconciling all things to himself.

Again, I don't want to neglect the glory of your salvation, but I want you to see that that is actually not the only thing God is up to as he crucified his only begotten son.

[ 1 : 22 ] Your redemption matters to be sure, but your redemption is just one thing that God is doing as he reconciles all things to himself.

You'll see this all over the Bible. For instance, in Ephesians 1, verse 7, In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Your redemption certainly, certainly brought about because of the suffering of the son, but so much more has been brought about as well.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ triggered God's plan, fulfilled God's plan in some sense, to unite all things in Christ. So how do we think about this?

This has been the major subject of my sermon prep this week. How do we talk about this? How do we do so in a confined period of time like we have tonight?

[ 2 : 47 ] One way I thought about communicating this idea of Jesus redeeming all things comes from an unlikely verse, and that verse being Ecclesiastes 7, 8, that simply says, the end of a thing is better than the beginning.

The end of a thing is better than the beginning. And I thought, okay, maybe that'll work. So here's the beginning.

John 19. He, Pilate, delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, they divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

[ 4 : 18 ] After this, Jesus, knowing that all was finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst. A jar full of sour wine stood there.

So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. That is actually the beginning. Here's the end. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. [ 5 : 21 ] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne said, behold, I am making all things new. Also he said, write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.

And 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment.

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with sulfur, which is the second death. The end of a thing is better than the beginning. If you want to understand or begin to attempt to understand what Jesus is doing on the cross concerning the reconciliation of all things, you have to see that when Jesus says, it is finished, in John 19, he means that he has done all of the work necessary to unleash the power of God into this world so that it transforms from one degree of glory to the next until the day will come when we stand before him in a world completely perfected by the very blood shed on the cross of Jesus Christ.

[ 7 : 08 ] To put it another way, in John 12, 23, Jesus says, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. So the fruit of that first Good Friday is still blooming to this day. And it will keep blooming. There will be a whole new creation, a whole new heavens, a new earth, a total banishment of evil, total unleashing of levels of joy that our minds physically cannot currently comprehend, nor can our bodies currently physically tolerate.

We will be in a world full of countless saints who dwell with Jesus Christ and reign with him upon the earth forever and ever. So you have to think about how miraculous this is.

Way back when, when the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of Ecclesiastes to say that the end is better than the beginning, the Holy Spirit in his infinite mind was able to think of all sorts of ways that is true.

[ 8 : 23 ] But one way in particular, and that's the thing I'm thinking of tonight as we remember our Lord's gruesome, yes. Shameful, yes.

Crucifixion. But that was just the beginning of what Jesus would do for thousands and thousands and thousands of years to follow in shaping this world according to his good and perfect will.

Now, I think it is both possible and profitable for me to try to tell you a rough sequence or chain reaction, if you will, that God uses to accomplish this will we see in Ephesians, we see it in Revelation 1, we see it in Hebrews 1 and 2.

All over the Bible, we're told that the big plan of the cross is to reconcile all things to himself. And I think I can give you a sketch anyway of what exactly is going on in this great plan that was paid for by the blood of Jesus.

Now, keep in mind that on this subject and definitely in this setting, this is only going to be a sketch. But I think it would serve us tonight to think about how Jesus is reconciling all things to himself and how it will be that one day we wind up in that glorious place we just read about in Revelation.

[ 9 : 59 ] There seem to be four steps that God uses in sequence all over the world to accomplish this universal reconciliation project.

And the first one is salvation through justification. And the second one is the silencing of Satan. The third one is the joyful and generous courageous people of God performing good works.

The fourth is a flooding the world with the common grace of God in good works. And the fifth one is more salvation through justification.

And more silencing of Satan. And more joyful and generous deeds. Those joyful and generous deeds observed by the world lead some to believe in Jesus.

And now we have more justification salvation. And more Satan silencing. And more good works.

And so this I think is what the Lord is doing through his cross as he reconciles all things.

[ 11 : 10 ] I have some clarity from the Bible of how this all turns out. Though the middle passage is always a bit sketchy. We do have some certainty of how this will all play out.

and that is simply this that at a certain moment after this cycle has repeated itself and all of the elect saints are brought in to the household of faith Jesus will return and he will renew the new heavens and the new earth.

I get this in part from 1 Corinthians 15 verse 21 for as by a man came death by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive but each in its own order Christ the first fruits that's what we'll celebrate in a couple days then at his coming those who belong to Christ and then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to the God to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. I see also in Romans 8 that Paul says that all of creation is groaning it's under futility it wants to be released from the curse placed on it by God and that one day that will happen.

[12:42] When will it happen? Romans 8 18 the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. The idea being that one day when the full number of God's chosen are gathered into his household then comes the end and the way that this full number is assembled and gathered is through the steps I just described so let me work through those steps just quickly for you.

the first thing that I think God does to change the world entirely and reconcile all things to himself is that he saves us not of our own works but through the imputation of his righteousness he saves us through justification.

You know there's this interesting passage in 2 Corinthians 4 that I had never really noticed before Paul says this so death is at work in us but life is at work in you and it just occurred to me as I was meditating on that passage that that's exactly what the gospel is the death that was at work in Jesus brings life to you and me we were born into this world as sinners and as soon as we had any opportunity we quickly set about rebelling against God both in sins of commission and sins of omission I have a young grandson I'm reminded of how early sin strikes us but by the time we even have clarity to think about these things by the time we're even aware of the amount of sin debt we've accumulated before the most high it's too late there's just too much of it when you sin against an infinite God you incur an infinite debt that can only be paid for with an infinite atonement you need

God to satisfy God you need God to propitiate God you need God to give you his righteousness even as he receives your eternal sin debt and so the very first thing that Jesus accomplishes that unleashes this sort of ascending spiral this chain of events this chain reaction the very first thing he does is he saves people and he saves people by grace not of works lest anyone should boast the Bible says that Jesus is the one who knew no sin and yet became sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God so the very first thing Jesus does to fill this world with his glory and to reconcile all things to himself as he saves some people through the act of justification well the next thing I think we could think of and this is where the steps are perhaps the idea of steps is not completely the best way to communicate it

I'm just doing my best to give you some basic sense of what the Lord's up to but I think if I'm understanding correctly the next thing the Lord does after he justifies us is he silences Satan the legal justification of God's people effectively disbars the devil from his role as prosecuting attorney does that make sense when we are justified simply because God said so or simply because the blood of Jesus Christ has been applied to us this immediately closes the case of the accuser and suddenly the one who could harass us with guilt and shame and the one who could even lead us with the power of sin that one suddenly has no standing in God's courtroom you know we've read a number of times as we've worked through John over the past several weeks

[16:47] Jesus saying things like this now the ruler of this world is judged judged and I want to be honest with you I've been studying the Bible diligently for decades and I still don't know entirely all that that means if some of y'all would stop you know sinning I could spend more time studying no I'm kidding kidding I still need to grow in my understanding of this but one of the things I can tell you for certain I really can see clearly is one of the ways the ruler of this world has been judged is he has absolutely shut the mouth of the accuser and I know that because the book of Romans chapter 8 verse 33 tells me that when it says who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of

God who is indeed interceding for us once Jesus says you're forgiven the devil has no standing and not only does he have no standing to accuse but because you have been saved through the righteousness of Christ you have been released from the power of sin you now no longer need to follow the power the pattern of the prince of the power of the air as Ephesians 2 describes it you have been set free to some degree from the power of sin itself and here's a good point to remind you that beating Satan was always a top level agenda for the gospel he loves you don't get me wrong he's glad to save you but he's not only interested in you the very first gospel promise from Genesis 3:15 is that the seed of Eve Jesus Christ would arrive on the scene do battle with the serpent the serpent would strike his heel he would damage him but Jesus would crush the serpent it's the very first gospel promise and so we see these two things now kind of beginning to flow in some sequence

Jesus gives us his righteousness he declares us righteous the devil has nothing left to say who can bring a charge against God's elect it is God who justifies and we are suddenly free of this pesky accusation this pesky shame and guilt cycle and a third thing happens believers once Satan's power over us is eliminated are now free to walk in uprightness and courage and transparency and humility we now have a freedom because the prosecuting attorney who had all the dirt on us who had a huge blackmail file on us who stood before the father day and night accusing the brethren he has been silenced why has he been silenced because you have been justified by his God and your God now what emerges out of a person who is no longer being chased down by the lion good works joyful good works courageous good works

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that this was indeed a clear intention of Jesus' death Hebrews 2:14 and 15 since therefore the children share in flesh and blood he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery what happens when you get a people who know they're forgiven who already know the worst things about them are actually true what happens when you assemble a group of people who are freed of guilt and shame who stand on the justification of Jesus Christ and are no longer hounded by the great harasser of the brother what happens to those people they start serving in joy they start living in joy they start doing things in love because perfect love casts out fear and there is no fear in love and this is what we see as the gospel sequences presented in scriptures often the case that after we have been saved set free from the devil in some respect if you know your

Ephesians 2 which I know many of you do you can see it you can see the sequence we were dead in our sins and trespasses we were enslaved to Satan but God being rich in mercy because of his great love for us lifted us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places we have been saved by grace not of works lest any man should boast and then what what comes next Ephesians 2:8 for by grace you've been saved through faith and this is not of your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them we are justified Satan is silenced we live lives of relief and joy and faith fear becomes less of a factor to us people's scorn becomes less of a factor to us you actually begin to recognize the accuser of the brethren speaking sometimes through people and you begin to learn to not listen to them either and more good works abound and what happens when these good works abound well they affect the world good works affect the world

[22:57] Athanasius talked about it this way this is brilliant he says that the Lord's work through the church is like a sun shining on a blind man though he does not see the face of Christ he feels the warmth of the sun's work on his face indeed though the blind man cannot see Jesus his whole life is made better because of Christ and because of the work of the church in the world so now we have a group of people justified free from satanic harassment living out their lives in faith and integrity performing good works and these act like heat lamps to the world warming the world up pointing them to Jesus even though they perhaps do not see Jesus and the truth is that some people will live into this golden sun of Jesus grace and glory and they'll never see him but there'll be other people who will let me give you an example in the

Bible of a situation where someone is just free they're full of joy and it is their good works that lead someone to faith in Christ Acts 16 about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them and suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and

everyone's bonds were unfastened do you see the joy Paul and Silas are in prison but they are not worried about it they have been justified by the good grace of Jesus Christ Satan has no hold on them sin has no hold on them they are at midnight praying and singing hymns to God the other prisoners are listening to them an earthquake strikes all the doors of the jail are opened and when the jailer woke and saw that all the prison doors were open he drew his sword and was about to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had escaped but Paul cried with a loud voice do not harm yourself for we are all here and the jailer called for lights and rushed in and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas and then he brought them out and said sirs what must I do to be saved and they said believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved you and your household and they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house and he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds and he was baptized at once he and all his family then he brought them up into his house and set food before them and he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God here's an example of some people who were free in Christ free of satanic harassment standing firmly on the justification of Jesus doing amazingly beautiful works nothing nothing massive per se they're singing they're staying put they're trying to help someone avoid suicide and what's the result this blind man who could only feel the heat of the sun on his face suddenly his eyes are open and he says sirs what must I do to be saved and so the sequence continues this is actually what

Jesus predicts in Matthew 14:5-14 you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven so we're answering a question how is it that Jesus through his cross reconciles all things to himself how do we get from the beginning where Jesus paid the debt necessary to redeem the world to the end where all evil is banished and we stand in a new heavens in a new earth how did he do that well I think I would tell you that my understanding of scripture is that he justifies people silences Satan gives those people relief from all the pressures of accusation and shame and guilt they live godly and upright lives people see that people see that and many more are converted many more are justified many more are saved through justification and they find that

Satan has been silenced in their lives and they go out and do good works and those good works show other people the glory of Jesus and those people put their faith in Jesus and they've been justified and then they become freed from Satan's accusations and then they go and do good works and I'm trying to answer the question I think you get the drift I thought it might be helpful to hear how Athanasius in 300 AD saw this cycle at work this is 300 years afterward this is what Athanasius says for now that the savior works so great things among men and day by day is invisibly persuading so great a multitude from every side both from them that dwell in Greece and in foreign lands to come over to his faith and all to obey his teaching he is pricking the consciences of men so that they deny their hereditary laws and bow before the teaching of

[ 28 : 48 ] Christ so that the adulterer no longer commits adultery and the murderer murders no more nor is the inflictor of wrong any longer grasping and the profane is henceforth religious he drives away and pursues and casts down the false gods said by the unbelievers to be alive and the demons they worship for where Christ is named and his faith there all idolatry is deposed and all imposture of spirits is exposed and any spirit is unable to endure even the name nay even on barely hearing it flies and disappears so that's my attempt to answer the question how is it that Jesus will reconcile all things to himself he will justify he will silence the devil he will work good works in us according to his purpose people will see those good works and give glory to Jesus placing their faith in Jesus and on and on it goes so yes by all means look at the cross but remember that the end is better than the beginning the original seed the logos by whom all things were made 2,000 years ago fell to the ground and died and we are still watching the harvest and will still be watching the harvest for many years to come these things are working together and they will keep working together until all the tears are wiped away and an eternal weight of glory rests fully upon us until that time we have this table which by partaking it we do what proclaim the Lord's death until he comes so first we would say come

Lord Jesus let's get to the end let's hit fast forward on this thing all in his due time until then we find ourselves in a really happy condition my sin has been imputed to Jesus Christ and he has died on a cross for it and his righteousness has been imputed to me no one dare bring a charge against

God's elect it is him who justifies I am now free to live a life of joy and generosity no longer fearing exposure or death and that life of joyful generosity courage and honesty winds up convincing some that Jesus loves them and so and so it goes so I want to invite you to come and take the elements of this table if you're a follower of Jesus Christ come and take the elements of this table and understand that sometimes this act is mostly about proclamation to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes and all that is promised in that great death so if you're a follower of Jesus come and get a cup get a piece of bread go back to your seat and I'll lead us in partaking singing