**The Gospel Truth About Jesus Christ**

**Mark 15:25, "*Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 26 And the inscription of His accusation was written above: "THE KING OF THE JEWS.*"**

**Roughly 2000 years ago a man was executed by the means of Roman Crucifixion. From a world view, this man was born in an obscure town, the child of a peasant woman who became pregnant with Him by means other than her betrothed husband.  He was the son of a woodworker, growing up in an insignificant city in lower Galilee.  He never owned a home, He never wrote a book, He never married and had any children, He never served in any kind of public office, He never traveled more than a few hundred miles from the place of His birth.**

**When He was thirty years old He became a traveling preacher who proclaimed a new message that was different than the prevailing national religion. He was known for keeping company with some of the lowest class people in society.  He was homeless until death. When He was still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him.  One of His friends betrayed Him to the authorities, another one denied Him and after He was arrested they all ran away and left Him alone with His accusers.  He went through a total mockery of a trial and after having been declared innocent of any wrongdoing, was sentenced to death anyway.  He was nailed naked to a cross between two thieves and while He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He owned on earth; His coat.  After His death, He was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb.  Throughout His entire life on earth, He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.  And yet, despite all this, no other person who ever lived has affected the life of humankind upon earth as powerfully as this one man has.  2000 years later this man is still both the most loved and most hated man in all of history.  He is loved by His followers and hated by the world and known by name to almost everybody alive today.**

**The scene is a hill, visible from afar, outside Jerusalem called Golgotha which means 'the skull' (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, John 19:17).  Luke called this place 'kranion' (Luke 23:33) which is where we get the English word 'cranium'.  The Translators have called it Calvary because in the Latin Vulgate the word for 'skull' is 'calvaria'.  In either event, whether we call it Calvary or Golgotha, the scene before us is a place of death.  In this place we have three crosses, each bearing a victim condemned to die.  The two on either side were convicted criminals (Luke 23:41), the man in the center is the only man who ever lived on earth who never did anything wrong in His entire life (Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5).  Not only was this man innocent of the charges that caused Him to be there, hanging on that cross, He was innocent of doing anything wrong, ever.  He never lied about anything, He never took something that did not belong to Him.  He never swore, or harmed anyone, or cheated anyone out of anything.  He was the only person who ever lived in all the history of humanity that never did anything wrong and He was being publicly executed by the most horrific means ever devised in the minds of men.**

**The fact that He was sinless is one of the most significant elements in Christianity.  This completely sinless condition made this man uniquely qualified to die on that cross.  He was on that cross for a specific purpose, totally unknown to the people who were there at the time.  From a study of scripture, especially old testament, we learn of the nature of God.  There are some Characteristics that He has which govern His actions.  God is incapable of denying or going against His nature (2 Timothy 2:13).   The thing that we need to understand is that in God's case, His characteristics or attributes are absolute.  We are made in God's image, and we share His characteristics, but our characteristics are not absolute.  Meaning we may be able to go against our attributes from time to time but God cannot.  We share the nature of God in many things.  While we may be fair to a degree, God is absolutely fair.  Where we may have an honest nature, God is absolutely honest.  Where we may have a sense of justice, God is justice absolute.    
  
To illustrate, we as a parent may tell our children not to steal cookies and eat them.  And if our children are hungry and do it anyway, we may choose to overlook that with a light penalty or we may even choose not to punish them at all.  We love our children and don't want to see them punished so against our better judgment, we may overlook a minor infraction with just a warning not to do it again.  God cannot do that.  God cannot just overlook sin.  God's absolutely just and fair nature demands an equal and just penalty for all sin, no matter what it is, what the circumstances are and who did it.  With God, there is only one penalty for all sin and this penalty is equally applied to all because His divine nature is absolute.  The penalty for all sin is loss of fellowship with Him.  The term for this penalty is eternal and it must paid by everyone who sins with no exceptions.  To lose fellowship with God is spiritual death.  Romans 6:23 reads, "For the wages of sin is death (loss of fellowship with God forever); but the gift of God is eternal life (restoration of fellowship) through Jesus Christ our Lord."   That gift of God through Jesus Christ was that innocent man dying on that cross.    
  
That man who was dying on that cross at Golgotha was paying the penalty that God demanded for sin by sacrificing himself.  But not just any man could do that.  In order for a sacrifice to be effective, it must be worth what it is being offered for.  Sacrifices are conditional.   Under the old law of Moses, the blood of choice animals was used as a temporary atonement for sin.  But, even though these animals were the very best of the stock, their sacrifice was not worthy enough to permanently erase sin from the mind of God.  Hebrews 10:3-4 teaches us "*But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year  For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*"   Moving on down to verses 12-14 of Hebrews 10 we read, "*But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.  For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*"  That man dying on that cross at Golgotha was offering His life in place of the death penalty that every accountable man or woman that ever lived on earth owed for sin.  He was offering to pay the sin debt of all mankind with His life.  The life of one man in exchange for the lives of everyone from Adam to you and beyond.**

**That homeless man hanging on that cross at Golgotha was no mere man.  The scriptures teach on Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" No man who has ever sinned can offer His life as a sacrifice for all the rest of mankind.  A sinful man is already lost.  He is already dead.  A dead man's life is not even as good a sacrifice to offer as the bulls or goats that died under the law of Moses.  That man dying on that cross had to be sinless in order for His offering to be of any value at all.  That man dying on that cross at Golgotha was the only man who ever lived who was still in fellowship with God and was not spiritually dead Himself.  His sinless condition is the basis upon which all of Christianity depends.  He not only had to live His entire life without ever doing anything wrong, He had to endure the agony of being wrongfully accused, abandoned, mocked, rejected, hated, abused, humiliated, scourged and then crucified by the pagans in the presence of His own countrymen and His mother without sinning.  He had endure all of that, to the end, in order for His offering to be accepted by God.  I can't hardly stub my toe and pull that off.  We need to pause once in a while and reflect on just what was really hanging in the balance while that man was enduring His execution.  The fate of every human who ever lived depended on Him enduring that ordeal without sinning.  Because if He would have ever sinned, that would have disqualified Him from being an acceptable sacrifice, and we would all be lost.**

**Going back to the scene at Golgotha? who is this man really?  Who is this man dying on that cross at the place of the skull?  In 1 Corinthians 6:20, Paul wrote, "...*For ye are bought with a price*..."  In Ephesians 1:14, Paul refers to Christians as the "*purchased possession*".   How is that one man can purchase the lives of all mankind with one life?  How can the life of one man be valuable enough to pay the sin debt of all mankind?  How can the life of one man, even though He is sinless, be worth that much?  The answer to that question lies in just who that man really is.  Yes, He was sinless.  Yes, He was innocent.  Yes, He never in all His life did anything wrong.  Yes, He is the only man alive on earth who was not spiritually dead and still in fellowship with God.  Yes, He is the only man that ever lived who can even appear before God to offer His life for all mankind.  Why is His life so valuable?    
  
In Acts 20:28, we get a clue as to who this man really is and why His life is worth so much.  By inspiration, in Acts 20:28, Paul wrote, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."*     
  
That man on that cross at Golgotha, who purchased the church, meaning the saved in the body of Christ, is God?.  Indeed He is.  John 1:1-2 reads, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.*"  Then moving down to verse 14, we read that the "*Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*"  The Word that was with God in the beginning and was God was made flesh and lived among us.  In a dream, Joseph was told to take Mary as his wife and that the child she was carrying would be called "Emmanuel" which means "*God with us*".   In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul wrote that Jesus, "*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Paul says Jesus was previously equal to God.  Let that sink in for a moment.  That man hanging on that cross at Golgotha was formerly an equal with God in heaven.  And He willingly surrendered equality with God. He willingly took on a submissive role and came here in the flesh to obey God in Heaven and die on that cross.  The man, Jesus Christ, who lived as an equal with God in heaven became the Son of God.  Jesus, the Son of God is God the Son.**

**That man hanging on that cross is the great "I Am", John 8:58, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*"**

**That man hanging on that cross is 'all seeing', Hebrews 4:13, "*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*"**

**That man hanging on that cross is 'all knowing', John 16:30, "*Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*"  
  
That man hanging on that cross is the alpha, the beginning, the creator,  Colossians 1:16, "*For by him*[Jesus Christ]*were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him*"  John 1:1-3, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*"**

**Than man hanging on that cross is the omega, the end, Matthew 25:31-33, "*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*"  
  
That man hanging on that cross is the executor of divine judgment, John 5:26-29, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;  27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.  28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,  29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.  
  
Going back to the scene at Golgotha, those people spit in the face of God the Son of God.  They hammered a crown of thorns on to God, the creator.  They scourged God, the all seeing.  They mocked God, the all knowing. They humiliated God the Alpha.  They stripped God, the I AM and spiked Him to a cross.  They gambled for the coat of God, the Son of God.  They pierced the side of God, the Omega.   When God said He was thirsty, they gave God, the judge of all mankind, vinegar to drink.  And after God died on that cross, they took the earthly body of Emmanuel, God with us, and laid God, the eternal in a borrowed tomb.**

**That man who died on that cross was the only sinless man who ever lived and His life was worth enough to purchase the lives of all mankind because He is God.  The life of God the creator for the sins of the created.  The life of God the humiliated for the penalty of prideful mankind.  The life of God the rejected for the lives of man, the accepted.  The life of a glorious, wonderful, loving, gracious God freely offered and given so that the sinful, spiritually dead race of humankind could live.**

**Let's illustrate this in human terms.  God created man.  Man disobeyed God, lost fellowship with Him and spiritually died.  God loves mankind and does not want man to be disfellowshipped from Him and lost but we sinned and He just cannot overlook that.  So God takes it upon Himself to die in man's place, at the hands of men and allow that death to pay the penalty for the sin that He demands from men.    
  
Or on other words.  Let's suppose one of you gives me a place to live free and clear.  But I mess up and transgress against you in such a way that the only way your sense of justice can be fulfilled is for me to perish.  What I did to you was so bad, I have to die.  Well, let's say you love me and you don't want to have to kill me.  You want to forgive me but you cannot just let what I did go without the penalty of death.  So, this is what you do.  Your son agrees to pay that penalty for me so you don't have to kill me.  So you send your son, your only son, to my place.  You do this knowing beforehand that I am going reject him and kill him.  But you do this anyway.  Your son shows up, spends time with me and teaches me all about you and tells me how wonderful you are.  And I reject you and then kill your only Son.  But, I didn't just kill your son outright did I?  I mocked him, I humiliated him, I beat him, I whipped him, I spit in his face and I tortured him to death publicly and in front of you and his mother.  And when it was over and he finally dies, because he freely offered to do this, instead of demanding justice for the wrongful murder of your son at my hands, you allow his suffering and death to serve as the death penalty that I owe you in the first place.   And then after it's all said and done, you forget all about it, and you are going to invite me to come live in your home with you forever.**

**Someone might say, well preacher, I'm not the one who nailed Christ to that cross..  Yes you did.  Christ died on that cross for your sins just like He died for the sins of His executioners.  You, we, all of us, are just as guilty of the blood of Christ as those who were spitting in His face.  We are no different than the howling mob at Golgotha screaming 'crucify Him'.   
  
When one takes the time and really thinks about what was done on our behalf it can, and should, get a little overwhelming.  To think that we serve a God who loves us so deeply and wants us to live with Him so much that He was willing to do what He did for us.  Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:15, "*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*"     
  
Jesus Christ, the creator, the alpha and omega, the great I AM, the eternal, the Son of God and judge of all the world,  willingly offered Himself to be beaten, rejected, hated, scorned, mocked, tortured and killed to save your life.  The Judge, jury and executioner has stepped down from His exalted bench in Heaven and has offered to serve the sentences of every convicted criminal that ever lived.   We have all sinned. We are all convicted and condemned to death.  Jesus Christ has offered to serve your death sentence for you so that you can live.     
  
In fact, not only has He offered to do this, He has already done it.  Romans 5:8 reads, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"  He has made the first move.  The next move is up to you.  Everyone who has not made that move is a convicted criminal on death row, condemned to die.**

**What criminal on death row, facing execution is gonna refuse an offer by the Judge to serve that sentence for him?  Who's going to turn down a deal like that?  *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23)..  All have sinned and are convicted sinners on death row.   Who is going to pass up an offer from the judge to escape death?**

**Jesus Christ, the creator, the alpha and omega, the great I AM, the eternal, the Son of God and judge of all the world, has made the first move.  The next question should be the same question asked by several mentioned in Acts 2:37, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*"  What's my next move?  I'm convicted.  I'm doomed.  I'm going to die.  Jesus has offered His life in place of mine so I can live?  What do I have to do to access that gracious offer?  How do I accept His unspeakable offering of love and mercy?  How do I escape death row?  The answer is right there in Acts 2.    
  
The scene has shifted now. We are no longer on Golgotha.  Jesus Christ, the Son of God has finished His end of the bargain.  The deal is done, the sacrifice is made and accepted, He's been resurrected and gone back to Heaven where He reigns at the right of the Father.  It's 50 days later on Pentecost in Jerusalem and a great many people are gathered there for that feast.  The first people ever to hear the gospel preached after the cross are there.  Peter was preaching.  They heard what Peter said as recorded in Acts 2:37, "*Now when they heard this*"  They realized they had killed the Son of God and they knew they were guilty of the blood of Christ.  Acts 2:37 goes on to say they "*were pricked in their heart*" and they then asked, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*"  We're guilty Peter, what must we do to get off death row?**

**They believed what Peter said that day after they heard the word of God.  Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"  Peter went on to say in verse 38, "Repent..."  Repentance is a sorrow of heart that leads to a change in behavior.  Peter went to tell them to "*be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*".  In verse 41 of Acts 2, we read that about 3000 of them responded to the call.  After that in verse 46 we see these same people praising God and proclaiming Him to the Jews in the temple.  They were confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God.  So now all in all, we have them hearing, believing, proclaiming or confessing Jesus as the Son of God.  They were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins and they were continuing "*stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"**

**So what do we do today to get off death row?  We do the same thing they did to accept the offer of Jesus Christ.  They heard and believed (Acts 2:37), we hear and believe.   They confessed Jesus before men (Acts 46-47), we confess Jesus before men.   They repented (Acts 2:38), we repent.  They were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38), we are baptized for the remission of our sins.  They continued in obedience (Acts 2:42) so we continue in obedience.  If we will do what they did, we will be what they were.  Christians..  And this is what God did with them.    
  
Acts 2:47  
*Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*  
  
They were added to the church as they were being saved.  When we do what they did, we will be what they were and God will add us to that great Ekklesia, the church, the body of Christ.  Christians only, in the only body of Christ there ever was.  The church of Christ.**