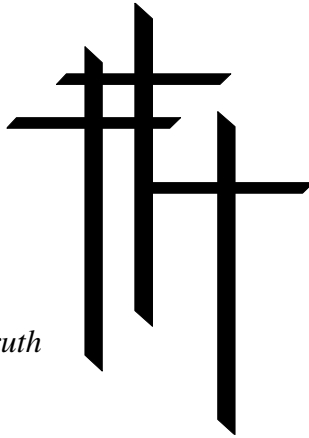


# Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth  
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 67 No. 7

July 2007

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## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SABBATH

By John LaVier

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If Jesus observed the seventh-day Sabbath, and if Paul, many years later, also seemed to observe it, then why do we gather for worship on the first day of the week? When was the Sabbath changed from the seventh day, Saturday, to the first day, Sunday?

These are interesting questions, the answers to which can only be found in the Word of God.

In Exodus 31:13,17 we learn that the seventh-day Sabbath was a sign between Jehovah and the

children of Israel. It was a part of the Mosaic law, and when Jesus Christ was here on earth, as a minister of the circumcision, He did not in any way interfere with Israel's law program. He was made under the law, He lived under the law, and He died under the law. As one with His nation, He kept the law and observed the seventh-day Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Christ did not come to bring an end to Israel's law regime. He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the proph-

ets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Remember, the law was given to Israel. The nation and the law stood together. When Israel rejected and crucified Christ and then continued in their rejection, God cast the nation away, temporarily (Rom. 11:1-5). Paul writes in Romans 11:25, "That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Surely those today who claim to be Israel, or who confuse Israel with the body of Christ, are also blinded. When Israel was thus set aside, the law, and all religion, including Sabbath-keeping, was set aside as well. When Paul was called out and sent to the Gentiles with the gospel of the grace of God, he resisted every attempt to put the Gentiles under the law. The council at Jerusalem was convened for that very reason, for some had said, "That it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Even Peter saw the folly of trying to force the law upon

the Gentile believers who had been saved by grace, without the deeds of the law or any religious works. He said, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). The decision of the council was, "As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing" (Acts 21:25).

Some time after this, Paul wrote to the Gentiles, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14), and that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). He also wrote that Christ had "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross," and that therefore no man should judge us "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, **or of the Sabbath days**" (Col. 2:14-16). The word "Sabbath" means "rest" and the be-

liever, in this dispensation, does not rest in a day, but in a Person, and that Person is the Blessed Son of God Himself.

While it is true, as stated in our question, that Paul seemingly did observe the Sabbath, let us note that during the early part of Paul's ministry the gospel was to the Jew first. He said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you." Naturally, in endeavoring to preach to the Jews, the best time and place to contact them would be in their synagogue on the Sabbath day. See Acts 9:20; 13:14; 14:1; 18:4; 19:8.

When Paul thus gathered with the Jews, it was simply that he might reach them. He was becoming a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews, but nowhere did he ever tell a single Gentile to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. In fact, it would seem that the Gentiles were accustomed to fellowship and worship on the first day of the week, as for instance at Philippi, "And upon the first day of the week, when

the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7). That this was the usual procedure seems to be indicated by 1 Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Nowhere, though, is the first day of the week referred to in Scripture as the "Christian Sabbath," nor even as the "Lord's Day."

During this age of grace God does not want man to be religious, but righteous. Those who turn away from the grace of God to religion, or to the weak and beggarly elements of the law, with its observance of days, are called "foolish" and "bewitched" and the inspired apostle said that he was afraid of all such. See Galatians 2:21; 3:1-3; 4:9-11.

However, even though we do not observe Sunday or any other day of the week because of commandment or legal constraint, and while we recognize the fact that every moment of every day

should be dedicated to the Lord, yet we do praise Him that we live in a land where we are permitted on one day of the week to lay aside our secular tasks and to come together for the worship and service of the Lord. Surely this is pleasing in God's sight, and He will hold us accountable for our use or abuse of this great privilege. It is a sad commentary on our times to note that America is fast changing Sunday into "Fun-day." It only proves that we are living in days when men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

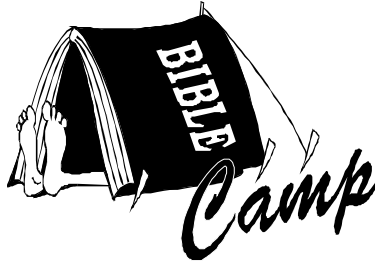
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**Blotting out the  
handwriting of  
ordinances that was  
against us, which was  
contrary to us, and  
took it out of the way,  
nailing it to His cross.**

**-Colossians 2:14**

# Family



## CANCELLED!

This year's Family Bible Camp, which was scheduled for July 2-6, had to be cancelled due to flooding conditions at Camp Arrowhead, which is right by the Brazos River.

Since we began having summer camps over fifty years ago, this is the first time one had to be cancelled. While we are certainly disappointed, this move was necessary to ensure the safety of all involved. We have to trust the Lord during such times and simply leave things in His hands.

We look forward to resuming camp next year as the Lord allows. Thanks to all who worked, and gave, and prayed for this year's camp.

## TIMELY MESSENGER

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*Gregg Bing — Editor*

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

### Sunday Services:

10:00 AM Sunday School  
11:00 AM Morning Worship  
6:00 PM Evening Worship

### Mid-Week Services:

Tues. 10:00 AM Ladies Class  
Wed. 7:00 PM Bible Study

## ADDRESS CHANGED?

If so, please notify us at the above address. Be sure to include both your name, your old address and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and thus reduce the cost of postage.

*Thanks for your help!*

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for  
correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*

*—2 Timothy 3:16*

## **THE DIVINE WORD**

*By Dennis Blankenship*

Lord Jesus, by thy Spirit,  
Refresh thy Word divine,  
That I might see its meaning,  
That Christ may in it shine.

Your Word is like a garden,  
But without the Spirit’s power  
I will not understand its depth,  
I will not see the flower.

Speak now in the stillness  
While I wait on Thee,  
Enlighten this small mind of clay,  
Your truth shall make me free.

Thy Word is once inspired,  
But many times revealed,  
To the hungry and the humble  
To whom the Spirit yield.

Lord, we thank Thee greatly,  
And praise You all night through,  
For the Word of God which gives us light  
And makes our spirits new.

## **DEVOTION**

It is said that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once had captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner,

“What will you give me if I release you?” “The half of my wealth,” was his reply.

“And if I release your children?” “Everything I possess,” he said.

“And if I release your wife?” He answered, “Your Majesty, I will give myself.”

Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, “Wasn’t Cyrus a handsome man!” With a look of deep love for her husband, she said to him, “I didn’t notice. I could only keep my eyes on you—the one who was willing to give himself for me.”

—Source Unknown

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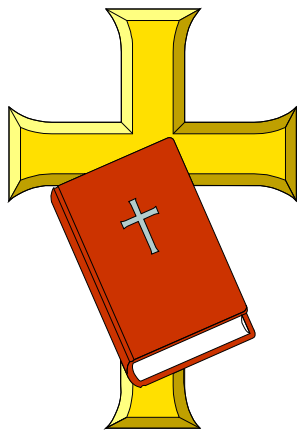
## THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS — Part 2

By Gregg Bing

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*Continued from last month.*

*“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18)*



The message of the cross refers not just to the symbol of a cross, or even to the historical facts of Jesus’ death, but to the meaning and significance of the cross on which Jesus died. Three key aspects need to be considered in order to understand the true meaning of the cross. Last

month we looked at the first of these considerations: the Person on the cross. While the world considers Jesus of Nazareth to be merely a man, the Scriptures plainly declare and give overwhelming proof that He is exactly what Simon Peter boldly declared of Him: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It is vital to see that the Person who died on the cross was very God Himself who “became flesh and dwelt among us” that He might shed His blood for our sins. In this issue, we consider the second important aspect of the message of the cross:

### THE PRICE OF THE CROSS

Imagine what it would be like to know exactly when and how you would die. From a human standpoint, such knowledge could be quite distressing. The Lord Jesus spoke of

how this knowledge of His own death distressed His soul.

*“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” (Luke 12:49-50)*

Jesus would “send fire on the earth” through His death. It was also His death He had reference to when He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with.” Many people think baptism always refers to a water ritual, but its basic meaning is identification. Jesus was to be identified with our sins when He went to the cross. Jesus spoke of the deep distress His impending death caused Him and expressed His heartfelt wish that it were already accomplished. After making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His crucifixion, Jesus uttered these words:

*“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I*

*say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour.” (John 12:27)*

What was so distressing and troubling to Jesus’ very soul? It was not just the prospect of physical death, but “the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:8 distinguishes between these two things. When Jesus left the glory of heaven to become a Man, He became obedient “to the point of death” (i.e. physical death), but this verse goes on to say, “even the death of the cross.” There is death, and then there is the death of the cross. They are not the same thing! Jesus’ death on the cross meant terrible sufferings for Him on several different levels.

### **Physical Sufferings**

The physical sufferings Jesus endured were as harsh as those any man has ever experienced. He was struck about the head with a reed (rod). He was scourged (whipped) until His back was terribly lacerated. He had a crown of thorns pushed onto His

head. His hands and feet were nailed to a cross, and He was left hanging there to die a slow, painful death—one of the cruelest forms of capital punishment ever devised. Jesus endured through all these sufferings, for the “joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2).

### **Public Shame**

The public shame Jesus was put through was an extremely humiliating experience. During His “trials,” Jesus was slapped and spit upon by the Jewish rulers. The soldiers put a purple robe on Him, placed a reed in His hand, and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matt. 27:16-18). He was paraded before King Herod who questioned Jesus and heard numerous accusations about Him from the Jewish rulers. When Jesus refused to answer, Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt and mocked Him (Luke 23:8-11). When He was delivered to the Roman centurion to be crucified, Jesus was led through

the crowded streets of Jerusalem to the place of crucifixion, being forced to carry His own cross. It must be remembered that crucifixion was a punishment reserved for the worst of criminals. He was crucified alongside two thieves, wicked men who were deserving of this type of death. As He hung on the cross, Jesus endured repeated blasphemy and taunts from the Jewish rulers who cried out, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40). Yet, “when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23).

### **Personal Sorrow**

Jesus also suffered tremendous personal sorrow throughout this ordeal. Consider how Jesus must have felt when Judas Iscariot, His own familiar friend, betrayed Him with a kiss into the hands of the Jewish rul-

ers; when all of the disciples forsook Him and fled after His arrest in Gethsemane; when Simon Peter denied three times even knowing who Jesus was; when His own people preferred to have Pilate release Barabbas, a notorious murderer and rebel, instead of Him, and then cried out for Jesus to be crucified (Luke 23:18-21). He came unto His own, the very ones He had created, and they “did not receive Him” (John 1:11). How this must have deeply hurt Jesus on a personal level!

Yet, as Jesus anticipated these sufferings He must soon undergo, they were not the real reason for His great distress. Jesus’ soul was troubled knowing He would soon face a

### **Period of Silence**

After Jesus had hung on the cross from 9:00 in the morning (Mark 15:25) until noon, Matthew described what followed:

*“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about*

*the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:45-46)*

During this three hour period, Jesus endured an unbearable period of silence, silence from His Father. There was no communion with Him, no help from Him, no comfort from Him, no strength from Him. The Father had utterly forsaken His Son, abandoning Him completely. During the early hours of His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, calling God “Father” (Luke 23:34), but during that period of darkness, Jesus could only cry out to Him, “My God, My God,” asking the piercing question, “Why?” Being very God, Jesus certainly knew why the Father had forsaken Him. His cry of despair in the form of a question shows how painful the anguish was He felt at that time.

The 22nd Psalm prophesied of the anguish Jesus would experience hanging on the cross.

*“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.” (Psalm 22:1-6)*

This passage gives us a little more insight into the pain Jesus experienced as His Father forsook Him, and it answers the question Jesus asked from the cross, “Why?”—“Why have You forsaken Me?” Christ declared to God the Father, “You are holy ... but I am a worm” (verses 3 and 6). A holy God had to turn His back on His Son, because during those three hours of darkness, Jesus “bore our

sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). The One who knew no sin was made sin for us “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ “became a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree)” (Gal. 3:13). God’s full wrath and judgment were poured out on His beloved Son while He bore our sins on that cross (Rom. 8:3-4). The Lord Jesus not only shed His blood and died physically, He also died spiritually, being separated from God the Father because of our sins.

What a tremendous price Jesus paid for us on

the cross of Calvary. We cannot even begin to imagine how painful it was for our Savior to endure “the death of the cross,” but it is important we understand the reason for His sufferings. The gospel message is not simply that Christ died, was buried, and rose again, but that He died “**for our sins**” (1 Cor. 15:3-4), and not for ours only, but “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

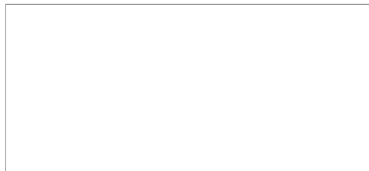
**Next Month** we will look at the third aspect of the message of the cross:

THE PRODUCT OF  
THE CROSS.

*(Continued Next Month)*

*For you know  
the grace of  
our Lord Jesus  
Christ, that  
though He was  
rich, yet for  
your sakes He  
became poor,  
that you  
through His  
poverty might  
become rich.*

*—2 Cor. 8:9*



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