



Two Parallel Scenes

Three million acres, nearly fifty thousand square miles of prime Montana/Idaho forest lay in charred ruins in the wake of one of the greatest forest fires in North American history. Timber that might have been harvested by the trainloads and used to build thousands of homes; forest where many different types of wildlife thrived; forest where campers and tourists came to enjoy the natural beauty and have their spirits revived, was now a scene of scorched, lifeless, total desolation. Green, the color most associated with life, the color most pleasant for the eyes to look on for long periods of time, had disappeared completely and been replaced by the grey ash and black char of smoking ruins.

This is the first of two parallel scenes I would like to draw to your attention. The second is halfway around the world. Although only three trees are involved, it is even more desolate. The three trees are really crosses made out of wood. They are set on a barren hill called Calvary. On each of the three crosses was nailed a lifeless body. According to the custom of the times, each cross had a small signboard nailed to it just above the head of the person crucified. Two of the signs had the word "Thief" written out on them. The sign on the middle cross had the words "King of The Jews" printed on it.



They were all executed as criminals but one was not a criminal. The man in the middle had for three and a half years walked through the countryside of Israel proclaiming the love, goodness, and mercy of God. The message he spoke was confirmed to be God's truth by the miracles he performed. He raised the dead, healed the sick and lame, gave sight to the blind, and even commanded a storm to cease. Now, at Calvary's hill, the one who

brought such life to others by word and deed has been killed and his lifeless body is hanging on the cross.

Let me fast forward you to the present. The year is 2007. Almost two thousand years after Christ's death, and nearly 100 years after the Great Montana forest fire of 1910. If you were to go to Montana today you would be hard pressed to find any remaining traces of the fire which laid waste to a large part of the state. The great forest has grown up once again. Timber is being harvested. Animals live in it. Tourists and outdoors people of all types visit it. The beautiful green has returned. Life has issued forth from that scene of desolation.

And what life has issued forth from that other scene of desolation! The body of the Lord



Jesus was carefully taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb. The mouth of the tomb was closed with a large rock. After lying cold and lifeless for three days in a state of death, the body of the Lord Jesus came back to life in resurrection. Rising he became the victor over death's awful power. He is now lifted up to the highest place in heaven. Seated at God the Father's right hand, his name is exalted higher than every other name.

Millions of souls have received the gift of eternal life by believing on his name. "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord." (Rom.6:23) They are millions who otherwise would have been swept away to everlasting destruction through the dark power sin had in their lives. Self-reformation, philosophies, or man's religion could never have set them free. But Jesus Christ, the risen Savior has the power to set the vilest sinner free, and to give them a hope of heaven. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Millions have found life by believing in him. Yet God is waiting for even more to come and be saved. Will you be one who decides to trust in the Lord Jesus for eternal life? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10: 9-10)

And what a life sinners may find in the Lord Jesus! "I am come that they might have life and they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) There is no other way to live life to the fullest but by drawing near to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "...The way, the truth and the Life." (John 14:6)

When this life is over and death claims the mortal bodies of believers, the spirits of them that belong to the Lord Jesus will enter into his presence in heaven. The bible says they are “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” (2Co.5:8) How wonderful it will be to see his face and hear his voice in the place where sin and sorrow may never come.

Yet God in his love has an event even more wonderful planned for those who love his Son. A grand, incredible moment is coming, in the near future, when all those who died in faith will follow their Lord in Resurrection. In a moment of time, their bodies will be made anew in a state suitable for glory. The same power that raised the Lord Jesus from the grave will raise them up. Bodies and spirits reunited, they shall enjoy God for all eternity. The theme of 1st Corinthians 15 is the resurrection. Here are some remarkable verses which sum up the great victory of believers rising from the graves. “So when this corruptible (body) shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave where thy victory?” (1Cor.15:54, 55) Won’t you believe on Christ that you might have part in the great victory Jesus Christ won when he was resurrected from the grave!

This is the life that flows from the crucified Savior. This is the life that has issued forth from Calvary’s scene of awful desolation. This is the life that God in grace has for you! You may never earn it, you will never deserve it, but God would have you receive it as a free gift. Will you believe on the Son of God that the gift of eternal life might be yours? “But these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you might find life in his name.” (John 20:31)