

# The Wider Impact of The Cross

(Summary of Chapter 5 “Dying to Live” from Rob Bell’s book “Love Wins”)

Hebrews 9:26 – Jesus “has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself”<sup>1</sup>. Ancient civilisations regularly sacrificed animals in the hope that would be enough to make amends, find favour and get what you needed. No longer needed as Jesus was the last sacrifice. This was huge and “The psychological impact alone would have been extraordinary – no more anxiety, no more worry, no more stress, no more wondering if the gods were pleased with you or ready to strike you down.”<sup>2</sup>.

But there is more...

- Colossians says that through the cross, God was reconciling “to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven”. Reconciliation represents relationships – settling differences, making peace.
- Romans 3 speaks about being justified by grace through faith in Jesus – justification is a legal term so a different take – courtroom – guilt/punishment/’paid price’, so we can go free.
- 2 Timothy – Jesus destroyed death and John 5 speaks of victory that has overcome the world – terms for battle. Jesus won the battle against evil.
- Ephesians – We have redemption through his blood – word from business and finance. Redeem something is to give it back its worth, revalue it.

So is the cross the end of the sacrificial system or broken relationship that’s been reconciled or a guilty defendant who’s been set free or a battle that’s been won or the redeeming of something that was lost? Yes to all of the above. For the first Christians something massive and universe-changing had happened so they used things from the world around them to explain it. For the first 1000 years the metaphor of victory in battle and Jesus conquering death was the predominant understanding of the cross.

Then comes Sunday. Jesus’ death and encounters with him after his death led them to believe something massive had happened. Resurrection after death was not a new idea. Eg winter/dead – spring/life, seed buried rises to life, food we eat/dead becomes life to us, cells dying/replenished, etc. It’s built into creation. So the cross and resurrection was an event as wide as the world and extending to all creation. Jesus rose on the first day of the week – a sign of the first day of a new creation, one free from death.

*“When people say that Jesus came to die on the cross so that we can have a relationship with God, yes, that is true. But that explanation as the first explanation puts us at the center. For the first Christians, the story was, first and foremost, bigger, grander. More massive. When Jesus is presented only as the answer that saves individuals from their sin and death, we run the risk of shrinking the Gospel down to something just for humans, when God has inaugurated a movement in Jesus’s resurrection to renew, restore, and reconcile everything “on earth or in heaven”<sup>3</sup>, just as God originally intended it. The powers of death and destruction have been defeated on the most epic scale imaginable. Individuals are then invited to see their story in the context of a far larger story, one that includes all of creation.”<sup>4</sup>*

A gospel that leaves out its cosmic scope is too small. A gospel that has as its chief message of avoiding hell or not sinning is too small. A gospel that repeatedly, narrowly affirms and bolsters the “in-ness” of one group at the expense of the “out-ness” of another group is not being true to the story that includes “all things and people in heaven and on earth”

---

1 – NIV

2 – p:125

3 – Colossians 1

4 – p:134

We need to see the story in the context of a far greater story, one that includes all creation. Yes – it includes people – for everybody

- Corinthians 15 says all of humanity died through the first humans so “in Christ all will be made alive”.
- Titus says “the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people”.
- Romans 5 – “just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all”
- 1 John 2 says that Jesus is the “atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”

*“Jesus talks about death and rebirth constantly, his and ours. He calls us to let go, turn away, renounce, confess, repent, and leave behind the old ways. He talks of the life that will come from his own death, and he promises that life will flow to us in thousands of small ways as we die to our egos, our pride, our need to be right, our self-sufficiency, our rebellion, and our stubborn insistence that we deserve to get our way. When we cling with white knuckles to our sins and hostility, we’re like a tree that won’t let its leaves go. There can’t be a spring if we’re stuck in the fall.*

*Lose your life and find it, he says.*

*That’s how the world works.*

*That’s how the soul works*

*That’s how life works when you’re dying to live.”<sup>5</sup>*

Ruth Smart

25-11-2020

([www.CanberraForerunners.org](http://www.CanberraForerunners.org))

**COPYRIGHT**

*Quotes are the copyright of their authors.*

*Free graphics are from [www.cler.com](http://www.cler.com) & free photos are from [commons.wikimedia.org](http://commons.wikimedia.org) unless otherwise credited.*

*This document is free to copy, republish and distribute, but only 'as is'. It is free to quote from at length.*

*All Canberra Forerunners' documents are licensed under*

*Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License*

**(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)**