

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. As the title indicates, tonight we are going to talk about an intense topic. Crucifixion means death, and we are going to talk about things that God will require His Body to die to in the days ahead. The Lord put this message on my heart last month as I was passing through a season of very intense pruning, refinement, testing, and discipline. As we move forward tonight, I want to make it very clear up front that I am sharing this message out of the vivid awareness of my own sinfulness and brokenness apart from the light of Christ. This message is first and foremost to my own sinful heart.
- B. The church of Jesus the Messiah is about to enter into a time of intense purification, and we need to brace ourselves for it by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The landscape of “Christianity” as we now know it is about to change. It will involve change at levels that will be shocking at times. During this time of transition, we want to be among those who voluntarily choose the path of the cross.

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected (crucifixion of Jesus) has become the capstone (resurrection); the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls (voluntarily submits) on this stone (Messiah crucified, cf. vs. 42) will be broken to pieces (in sanctification as we carry our cross with Jesus, cf. Mt. 16:24), but he on whom it falls will be crushed (in the Day of the Lord, when each man’s work is tested by fire cf. 1Corinthians 3:10-15).” (Matthew 21:42-44 NIV)

- C. God the Father is zealous to present His Son with a pure and spotless Bride. He burns with a passion to present to His Son a people who have been molded into the image, character, and likeness of Christ by means of the refinement processes that occur in context to the saints choosing to remain loyal and faithful to Jesus through suffering, chastisements, discipline, pain, difficulty, and persecution. Jesus is coming back for a “pure virgin.”

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Revelation 19:6-8 NIV)

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2 ESV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4 NIV)

- D. The goal of discipleship according to the Scriptures is very simple: becoming renewed in the image of God. This means our lives progressively looking more like Jesus’ life over time. In

order for us to inherit the kingdom of God at Jesus' appearing, we must become like the King of the kingdom. His Bride must be one with Him to rule with Him.

...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:10 NIV)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV)

- E. The way we are made worthy of inheriting the kingdom of God in the age to come, is by letting God kill and mortify in us everything that is out of sync with His own ways and character. It means letting the Holy Spirit crucify in us everything He considers unworthy of passing into the age to come.

But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead... (Luke 20:35 NIV)

Put to death (KJV—"mortify"), therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (Colossians 3:5-8 NIV)

- F. Our willingness to carry our cross in this age is the criterion by which we will be rewarded or punished when Jesus returns. The Messiah himself carried His cross before receiving His crown of glory in the resurrection. In order to receive our own crown of glory in the resurrection, we too must first carry our cross in this age. Jesus is our example of unwavering faithfulness to the Father even through suffering.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross (daily—cf. Lk. 9:23) and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world (in this age), yet forfeits his soul (in the age to come)? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done (the degree to which we carried our cross). (Matthew 16:24-27 NIV)

I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:31 NIV)

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him (even through sufferings, like Job, cf. Jam. 5:11). (James 1:12 NIV)

- G. Jesus and the apostles were candid and up-front with their disciples about the cost of following Jesus in this age.

“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you... (John 16:1-4 NIV)

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith (without which they would not be saved, cf. Mt. 24:13, 1 Cor. 15:2, Col. 1:22-23, Rom. 2:7, Gal. 6:9, Heb. 3:6, 14, Heb. 4:14, Heb. 6:4-6, 2 Pet. 2:18-22), and saying that through many tribulations (in this age) we must enter the kingdom of God (when Jesus appears). And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23 ESV)

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless (ESV – “in vain”). (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 NIV)

- H. We are about to enter a season of history more difficult than anything the world has ever known. God's judgments will be released on the world with great devastation.

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger. (Isaiah 13:6-13 NIV)

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. (Matthew 24:6-8 NIV)

- I. The saints will face the most sinister and calculated persecution ever experienced by the church.

All these are the beginning of birth pains. “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (Matthew 24:8-9 NIV)

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it....He (the anti-Christ) will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. “But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’ (Daniel 7:23,25 NIV)

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. (Revelation 13:5-10 NIV)

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.” (Revelation 14:9-13 NIV)

This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. (Revelation 17:5-6 NIV)

- J. In the days ahead, the pressures and temptations are going to be so intense that multitudes of people who presently call themselves followers of Jesus will abandon the faith.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:9-13 NIV)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up (through the intense eschatological events just mentioned in Luke 17). He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’...And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice (the Second Coming, cf. vs. 8) for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night (come Lord Jesus!)? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes (to bring justice and deliver his saints), will he find faith on the earth (those who haven’t given up, cf. vs. 1)?” (Luke 18:1-3, 6-8 NIV)

- K. I believe that we are on the verge of a dramatic increase in the beginning of birth pains (see our page Why the Urgency?). Though they will be difficult, the beginning of birth pains will actually be God’s gift to the church to prepare us for the Great Tribulation during the final 3.5 years. If we yield to the pressures and temptations of the Anti-Christ during that time period, we will go to the Lake of Fire (cf. Rev. 14:9-10). I believe that God will use the beginning of birth pains to reposition the cross at the forefront of the church’s life and consciousness before we pass into the final trouble and the “hard labor,” when passing the test will have eternal consequences. The beginning of birth pains is His gift/mercy to a church that has largely forgotten the path of the cross. Judgment begins with the household of God.

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Peter 4:17-19 ESV)

- L. In the days that are coming, we will have every reason and opportunity in the world’s eyes to turn our backs on God. In order to persevere, we must understand and view our coming afflictions in terms of carrying our cross, following in Jesus’ footsteps; in terms of our sanctification and cleansing, apart from which we cannot enter the kingdom of God; and in terms of the loving discipline of our Father. And we must have clarity about the true nature of our hope – the reward that awaits us on the other side of the coming shakings. In the coming days, God is going to crucify the church not in spite of His goodness, but because of His goodness and His zeal for us to be cleansed of every wicked thing that will be uprooted from the earth in the age to come. God’s motives are completely pure when He disciplines His people. He is more zealous for our eternal inheritance in the age to come, than He is about preserving our life of ease and comfort in this age.

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes

discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. (Hebrews 12:7-13 NIV)

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire (i.e. submit to the refinement of the cross, cf. 1 Pet. 1:7), so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:14-20 NIV)

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32 ESV)

- M. As the church, we need to brace ourselves for the coming crucifixion of our love affair with man’s definition of “wisdom,” our “strength,” and “riches.” In the days ahead, we must let God crucify the propensity of our hearts to boast in these things. In order to persevere when it really counts during the final time of testing, we must have one boast alone: Christ crucified.

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23-24 NIV)

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who

has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:27-31 NIV)

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14 NIV)

II. THE COMING CRUCIFIXION OF MAN’S SO-CALLED “WISDOM”

A. The crucifixion of our definition of the “cutting edge” of missions and ministry

Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (John 5:19 NIV)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (Mark 1:35-39 NIV)

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10 NIV)

Behold, the LORD will empty (NIV—“lay waste”) the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the slave, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered; for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. (Isaiah 24:1-6 ESV)

B. Crucifixion of theologies that deny God’s faithfulness to creation

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. (Psalm 148:3-6 NIV)

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: “This is what the LORD says: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. (Jeremiah 33:19-21 NIV)

Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—and I will not lie to David—that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.” (Psalm 89:35-37 NIV)

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21 NKJV)

- C. Crucifixion of Platonic-based perversions of the doctrine of salvation. Gnostics/Platonic thinking—material world corrupt/imperfect->salvation=soul’s escape from the body->death=a friend, rather than an enemy

But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans (Irenaus – Nicolaitans a Gnostic group), which I also hate. (Revelation 2:6 NIV)

Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth (cf. Ac. 5:1-11, 13:9-11). (Revelation 2:15-16 NIV)

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:31 NIV)

And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17 NIV)

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you....We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8:11, 22-25 NIV)

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NIV)

As a woman with child and about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, so were we in your presence, O LORD. We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to

people of the world. But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. (Isaiah 26:17-19 NIV)

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” (Luke 24:39 NIV)

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NIV)

A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection....For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” (Acts 17:18, 31-32 NIV)

D. Crucifixion of theologies that militate against the cross and foster a Messianic complex

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matthew 16:21-23 NIV)

E. Crucifixion of kingdom now theologies and prosperity gospels

“The great day of the LORD is near— near and coming quickly. (Zephaniah 1:14 NIV)

“Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow— so great is their wickedness!” Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:12-14 NIV)

“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. (Daniel 2:44-45 NIV)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”...But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath (in Day of the Lord, cf. Rom. 2:8-9)? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire (cf. Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43).” (Matthew 3:1-2, 7-12 NIV)

“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. (Luke 10:8-12 NIV)

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. ¹⁵ Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. (1 Corinthians 4:7-15 NIV)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (i.e. submits to the crucifixion of the inward idolatries mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount). Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles (like Judas! cf. Mt. 10:1-3)?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers (they did signs and wonders, but were not righteous in heart before God)!” (Matthew 7:21-23 NIV)

F. Crucifixion of the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine

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For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake... (Philippians 1:29 ESV)

- G. Crucifixion of “once saved, always saved” (cf. Mt. 24:13, 1 Cor. 15:2, Col. 1:22-23, Rom. 2:7, Gal. 6:9, Heb. 3:6, 14, Heb. 4:14, Heb. 6:4-6, 2 Pet. 2:18-22)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NIV)

But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. (Colossians 1:22-23 NIV)

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward (ESV “the upward call” – i.e. the resurrection, cf. vs. 10-11) in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (Philippians 3:10-17 NIV)

- H. Crucifixion of theologies that deny the power of God

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NIV)

- I. Crucifixion of theologies that cultivate arrogance toward the Jewish nation (e.g. replacement theology)

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not

spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. (Romans 11:17-26 NIV)

For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. (Isaiah 62:1 NIV)

III. THE COMING CRUCIFIXION OF MAN’S STRENGTH AND RICHES

A. Crucifixion of our “stuff”

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs....Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:7-10, 17-19 NIV)

Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. (Mark 4:18-19 NIV)

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. (John 12:4-6 NIV)

Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) (John 6:70-71 NIV)

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they counted

out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. (Matthew 26:14-16 NIV)

B. The crucifixion of ministries/leadership/hearts enslaved to mammon and greed

“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” ¹⁴ **The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.** ¹⁵ **He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight. (Luke 16:13-15 NIV)**

“From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious (the deceit, driven by greed). ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them,” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 6:13-15 NIV)

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 NIV)

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. (2 Peter 2:1-3 ESV)

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. (2 Corinthians 2:17 NIV)

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Timothy 6:3-10,17-19 NIV)

“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds,

clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. (Ezekiel 24:2-3 NIV)

C. Crucifixion of ministries not building on the foundation of Christ-crucified

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15 NIV)

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. (Mark 4:16-17 NIV)

D. Crucifixion of power structures that attract people to themselves, rather than make disciples of Jesus the crucified Messiah

What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:12-13 NIV)

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31 NIV)

E. Crucifixion of mission/ministry/leadership strategies that operate out of mere human strength, planning, and ingenuity, rather than on true dependence on the Holy Spirit in context to weakness

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV)

F. Crucifixion of properties and possessions used to preserve and perpetuate self, rather than advance the gospel of Christ and promote the love of God.

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly

exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. (Hebrews 10:32-34 NIV)

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:32-35 NIV)

- G. Crucifixion of ministries that boast in the flesh of others in order to make a good outward impression

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh (cf. Mt. 23:15). (Galatians 6:12-13 NIV)

IV. CONCLUSION

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25 ESV)

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness (ESV—"virtue"); and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive (ESV—"unfruitful") in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling (your upward calling from the dirt in the resurrection, cf. Ph. 3) and election (chosen in the Day of Lord because counted worthy to inherit the kingdom) sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11 NIV)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Matthew 7:24-25 NIV)