

Oikodomē. April 3, 2011.

Jesus Christ and Him Crucified

By Pastor Christopher Seah

This month, Christians the world over will commemorate the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. While each Lord's Day is meant to be a remembrance of those historic Gospel events, many Christian traditions have found it helpful to devote a portion of the year—the Lenten season in March and April—to a sustained contemplation of them.

Why is Christ's death so important to us Christians? Why should it matter more than the great events chiseled into our history books? Why should it continue to rule our attention even as chaos rips across our world? Why should it matter to the point that Paul would say, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2)? The death of the Lamb of God is so important for one simple reason: *It was an event of cosmos-redefining proportions.* How so?

Firstly, *the death of Christ is God's great work of salvation, God's solution to the most pressing problem of the human race.* Mankind's most troubling problem is not poverty, terrorism, or poor health. It is the twofold problem of sin and God's righteous wrath. But at the cross, all the sins of God's people were laid on Christ: "...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). When that happened, God answered with his righteous judgment: "...By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3). The result of this unleashing of divine retribution on the sin-bearing Christ is our release from debt: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:13-14). Now that your sin has been paid for at the cross, God no longer demands its punishment. As far as God is concerned, justice has been served (Rom 8:34).

But if Christ's death is the satisfaction of God's justice, the satanic powers that inherited the world as part of God's punishment no longer have grounds to rule those that have been counted crucified with Christ. Which brings us to the second cosmos-redefining fact brought about by our Savior's execution: *The death of Christ was the fatal blow to the cosmic*

powers of darkness. Having proclaimed that Christ's death has cancelled our debt, Paul adds: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Col 2:14). At the cross, those ugly rulers who lurk behind every dehumanizing human tradition—from jihadism to kiasuism—are stripped off their power. Since Christ has paid our debts to God, we can say no to the powers because they no longer have a right to us. Still, the most important accomplishment of Christ's death lies not in our forgiveness or even in our liberation from demonic rule. It rests in *our reconciliation to God and all for which he stands.* The death of Christ reorders the cosmos by creating a new humanity, the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). This human race is a break from the old. It has new values: The values of Christ. It has a new King: The Son of God. It has a new politics: Justice, mercy, and holiness. It is a new nation: The Kingdom of God. It has a new purpose: The glory of God.

For those of us who have been Christians for some time, it is far too easy to look back on the Gospel with an overly-familiar "That was nice" and rush to the real business at hand (whatever that may be). But if we see that the cross of Jesus reorders life as we know it, if we understand that the Gospel is a seismic shift that cuts across all spheres of life, we might not be so quick to pass over it. In Christ, the Future has arrived. In Christ, we are a new creation. "The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Praise be to God.