

“Tau Cross, Old Testament, Anticipatory Cross”

2/25/1

Numbers 21:4-9; Colossians 2:13-15; John 3:9-15

Second Wednesday in Lent

Grace, Mercy, Peace, and Forgiveness are yours from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The **“Crosses of Lent”** this Lenten Season, are a reminder that there isn’t a God like our God. Time and time again His people turned away from Him. Time and time again God forgives and brings His children back under His wings of protection.

Last week’s cross was the **Latin Cross**. The Latin Cross is the most familiar of all crosses. It is believed to be the most common cross used by the Romans to crucify the low life criminal. Crucifixion on a cross was so excruciating and dehumanizing that the Romans would not allow their citizens to die on a cross. Last week’s message was that we **empty the cross of the power of God** by taking it for granted. “It’s pretty or a nice symbol and we thank God for what He did,” **BUT** we lose perspective – we lose the understanding of exactly what took place on Calvary. God’s own Son died an excruciating death to pay for your sins, but not only your sins but the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). **Pain cried out from the cross as Jesus died with His arms stretched out and nailed to the tree.** St. Paul wrote, **“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who saved it is the power of God.”** Remember God destroyed sin and death when He destroyed Satan on Calvary.

This week’s cross is the **Tau Cross** [Place the Tau cross on the cross at the top]. This cross is named for the Greek letter “T” which is **“TAU”**, also the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is commonly believed, or at least often pictured as so, to be similar to the pole Moses used in the desert (Numbers 21:4-9) to place the bronze snake on. Many people believe that the **Tau Cross** was actually the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

The **Tau Cross** is also known as the “**Old Testament Cross**”, “**Anticipatory Cross**”, and among other names “**Healing Cross**” because of its reference in Numbers. Why did this event take place? Let’s review a little of Israel’s history. Jacob/Israel went to Egypt because of the famine that was taking place all over the world. Joseph brought them down (Genesis 43-45). After Joseph died and a new king/pharaoh was in place. No one remember the events leading to Israel’s coming. The Egyptians placed the Israelites into hard service and slavery (Exodus 1:8ff). Israel kept growing and with this they had greater hardship placed on them. God comes to Moses and tells him He has seen the misery of His people and heard their cry for help (Exodus 3). Moses is sent to deliver Israel from the Egyptian slavery. Israel is spared from the ten plagues. Israel was given silver, gold, and clothing from the Egyptians (Exodus 12), they were protected from the Egyptian army by a cloud, they crossed the Red Sea on dry land – the same Sea that destroyed Pharaoh’s army, but their grumbling had already started.

Can you imagine after ALL that God had demonstrated, showing them He would protect them, they would complain about anything? “**Why did you take us out? Now the army is going to kill us!**” (Exodus 14) Three days after the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army, Israel is complaining of no water (Ex. 15), “**What are we going to drink?**” (Moses places wood in water and it changes from bitter to sweet.) Then, 5 days after their departure (Ex. 16), “**If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt. There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out in the desert to starve us to death.**” Manna and quail is them provided. A few more days they changed location. Again they grumble (Ex. 17), “**Why did you bring us and our children and our livestock out of Egypt for us to die of thirst?**” Moses strikes a rock with his staff and all drank. Well, you would have thought they would have learned a lesson: THE LORD PROVIDES in ALL our needs. In fact, three months after their

departure, they told Moses and God (Ex. 19), **“we will do everything the LORD has told us to do.”** less that a month and a half later Moses was up on Mount Sinai for 40 days and Israel built for themselves a golden calf (Exodus 32). Now, Numbers 21, shortly after God turned the Canaanites over to them in battle, hear what the Israelites did, **“They became impatient.... And spoke against God, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is not food and no water, and we loathe the worthless food.’”** God was not a happy Camper. Oh, Israel was the camper. God was not happy! He sent fiery serpents among the people and many died from their bites. Israel confessed of their impatience and grumbling. God had Moses put a bronze serpent on a pole. Everyone who looked to the serpent on the pole had the sting of the serpent’s bit die and they lived. The people “anticipated” healing from the serpent by looking to the cross. (FYI: Symbol for medicine)

Furthermore, it is recorded in Ezekiel (9:4), **“⁴ And the LORD said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark [literally: make a tau] on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.”**” Literally “mark” can mean “make a tau on the forehead. The “tau” in the ancient text of Hebrew is the shape of a “X” / cross. The people with the “x / cross” on the forehead were saved. Or, there was the anticipation of being saved. This points to the passion of Christ and being saved by means of the cross. The cross had not yet been used as a means of crucifixion.

Do you see the irony of God? Jesus said (John 3:14-15), **“¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”** Looking to the pole and seeing the serpent and believing God the sting/bite of death is destroyed. Looking to the Cross of Calvary and believing God the sting/bite of satan is

destroyed and satan is destroyed. Only God could think up something like this. The cross brought healing to the impatient and grumbling Israelites.

Do you see yourself played out in the Israelite's history? God has provided you with freedom from the slavery of sin, death, and the devil. God has destroyed your greatest enemy, satan. God did so by His own battle while Jesus walked on this earth and was raised upon a pole. There wasn't anything God wouldn't do for you. He sacrificed His only Begotten Son. God also has provided you with all you need to support this body and life. Yet, what do you do? Complain, gripe, and grumble as you want more and more and more. We are never satisfied with all that God provides us. We want better food rather the manna: steak is better than hamburger. We want Pellegrino water instead of filtered water out of our faucet. We must have the finest chariots – cars. We prefer mansions as opposed to tents. Quail isn't good enough, we want pheasant. We prefer diamonds to rubies; Ann Taylor rather than Walmart; DeWalt tools instead of Black and Decker; and gold rather than silver. There's no end to our lack of contentment and trust in the Lord to provide all we need – not all we want.

How about waiting on for God's promise of salvation? Did Israel get tired of waiting for the promised Messiah, the seed of a woman, and the promise of a throne whose reign would never end? (2 Samuel 7:16-17) Was God really going to provide this utopia, this paradise? This perfection would be a reign over Rome.... Hmmmm... After 2,000 years will Jesus really return? Patience.....???

We can point the fingers all we want all day long at the Israelites and say, "**how ungrateful they were!**" But, the truth be known, we are the same, everyone of us. It was on the cross that Jesus was lifted up to die and pay for your impatience's, grumblings, lack of contentment with what the Lord has provided. It was on the cross that Jesus had to die because of your lack of trust in Him

to provide all you need when you needed it. Yes, Jesus was lifted up on a cross to pay for **YOUR SINS** so you wouldn't have to die an eternal and excruciating death.

St. Paul wrote,

“¹³ 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, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Colossians 2:13–15, ESV)

Believe this and you are forgiven and live forever. Look to the cross of Christ and the sting/bite of death is destroyed, by His wounds you are healed and you have eternal life. Now, that something to look forward to and anticipate. Let it be so! Amen!

