

PLAIN TRUTH®

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION®

God's Master Stroke for the New Year

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The Cross of Christ: Who, What, When, Where and Why?

Who? Jesus, God in the flesh, the Lamb of God, self-sacrificially, out of divine love, once and forever forgiving and giving mercy, love and grace to one and all. Everyone is included in his love! It was God on that Cross, for God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What? The Cross of Christ is the enduring visual representation, the eternal memorial of God's love for

you and me. It is the sign and symbol that "God so loved the world..." God in Christ **loved the world SO much.**

When and Where? The Cross of Christ is the historical event in time and space, when and where human lust, arrogance, violence, anger, spiritual pride, resentment and all manner of hatred crucified Jesus, God in the flesh.

The Cross of Christ is the historical event in time and space when and where Jesus, God in the flesh, the Love of God incarnate, accepted, absorbed, forgave and overcame all

human lust, violence, arrogance, anger, spiritual pride, resentment and all manner of hatred.

Why? The Cross of Christ is **God's Master Stroke...** the masterpiece of his love... the center and fulcrum and yes, the CRUX of his love for all mankind.

It was not nails driven by human hands that ultimately held Jesus there, but rather the love of God that empowered and energized Jesus to be impaled on his Cross, and to receive and absorb human hatred and violence.

God's Master Stroke is good in return for evil—love for hatred—forgiveness instead of retaliation.

Our salvation has been accomplished. It is a reality. **We are forgiven—all of us, whether we want to be or not, and more to the point, everyone else is also forgiven whether we want them to be forgiven or not.** God has done all that needs to be done for our salvation... we have nothing to offer. We don't bring any righteousness of our own to him.

"You'll remember, friends, that when I first came to you to let you in on God's master stroke, I didn't try to impress you with polished words and the latest philosophy. I deliberately kept it plain and simple: first Jesus, and who he is, then Jesus and what he did—Jesus crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2, The Message Bible).

God's Master Stroke is plain and simple.

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God's Master Stroke is Jesus... who he is and what he did... Jesus crucified.

God's Master Stroke is centered in and on Jesus. Jesus is the Master Stroke—who he is and what he did, with the capstone being his Cross.

God's Master Stroke is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ is the starting point—it is ground zero of our faith. It is God's Master Stroke. The Cross of Christ is the heart and core of the gospel.

The Cross of Christ crushes the tyranny of attempting to please God on the basis of obedience to laws, while at the very same time the Cross insists that the love and grace of God, poured out and exemplified on the Cross of Christ, is the bedrock of our faith and the foundation of our hope.

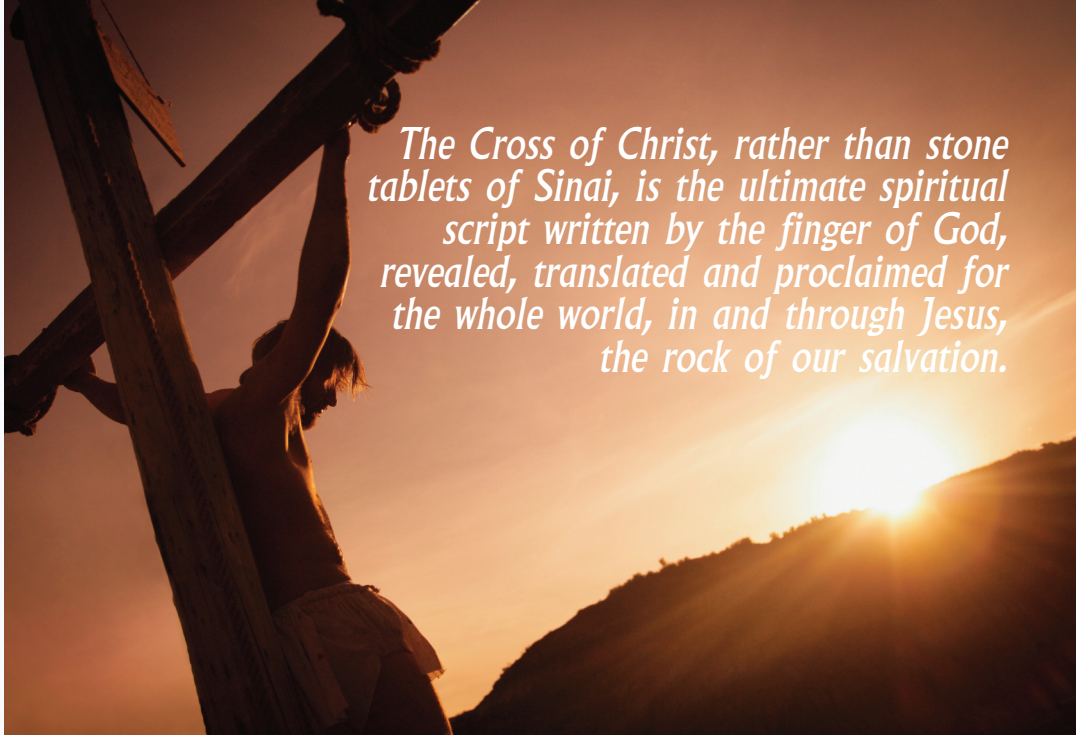
The Cross of Christ, rather than the stone tablets of Sinai, is the ultimate spiritual script written by the finger of God, revealed, translated and proclaimed for the whole world, in and through Jesus, the rock of our salvation.

What Can Happen When We Fail to Focus on Jesus

When our focus leaves the Cross of Christ, many other interests and agendas can subtly replace the gospel. Without mentioning them all, here are a few:

- When our focus leaves **God's Master Stroke**, political fervor and nationalistic zeal can overcome the gospel—so that people who say they are Christ-followers start to place greater value in their membership in a political party and their national interests, even militaristic interests, far more so than their affiliation to Jesus and their membership in his universal body.

Rather than worshipping Jesus and placing all our affection on him, it is so easy to become sidetracked with political platforms concerning our nation, our state or province, our local issues, and we can be overcome with greed and lust.



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Nationalism quickly morphs into justifications for violence and warfare, for control and dominance, for subjection of others. Good citizenship within the nation and province and territory and state and city in which we live is a priority for citizens of the kingdom of God, but most of all and more than anything, we are citizens of the kingdom of God.

- When our focus leaves **God's Master Stroke**, the Cross of Christ, individual and corporate economic interests overcome the needs of the poor and the impoverished, so that those who say they follow Christ have little compassion for the homeless, the imprisoned, the sick and diseased and the cast offs of society.

- When our focus leaves **God's Master Stroke**, we can begin to define success in terms of possessions and money, in terms of earthly wealth and security, and even justify such pursuits as proofs that God is blessing us. We leave the **Jesus Path** of self-sacrifice and take another road, that of self-aggrandizement and self-interest

- When our focus leaves **God's Master Stroke**, we can quickly forget about the humility and self-sacrifice of our Savior and instead chase after power, domination and greed.

Winning and having power was the concern of Judas, the disciple

who betrayed Jesus... winning, succeeding, and acquiring more was not what Jesus was all about.

The dangers of power and greed distort the lives of citizens of the kingdom—the dangers of power and greed can take us off the **Jesus Path**, they can remove our focus from the Lamb of God, our Savior, and his Cross.

- When our focus leaves **God's Master Stroke**, the Cross of Christ, we exchange the mind of Christ for other priorities. Our heart closes up and it shrivels, it shrinks into a self-absorbed world where there is little room for the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus.

When we remove our gaze and our attention from the Cross of Christ, we can become convinced that social programs for those in need are entitlements they don't deserve.

When we remove our gaze and our attention from the Cross of Christ, we can close our hearts to the cries of the homeless, the poor, the aliens.

When we remove our gaze and our attention from the Cross of Christ, we can forget the little children and we can forget the elderly... both of these bookends of human life. The bookends of the very young and the very old are front and center in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look Up!

God's Master Stroke, the Cross of Christ, is our focus because the Cross has been and is lifted up before us as the center of our attention. He was lifted up physically, by virtue of being on a Cross above the ground, and he was lifted up spiritually, by virtue of all that the Cross of Christ means to the entire world.

Jesus predicted his death and the precise way in which he would die.

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32).

The Cross of Christ is enshrined and memorialized as God's love letter to you, me and the whole world, lifting up Jesus and drawing all humanity to himself.

When we follow Jesus, we follow in full submission and in complete devotion to the Cross of Christ, **God's Master Stroke**.

As Christ-followers, the Cross of Christ defines our community with one another, all those followers of Christ we can see and know, and so many invisible to us because we do not know them—but nonetheless we are in communion with them because we are united, in union with Jesus.

As Christ-followers, our community with one another is the community of the Cross, **God's Master Stroke**, for all that we are and all that we will ever be is because of the slain Lamb of God, now glorified and resurrected, our risen Lord who lives within us, now and forevermore.

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"The Tree of Life"
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In need of mending from Christless religion?



Jesus brings hope, comfort, encouragement & healing.



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