

## **He tells the finished vision from the start, #1**

Hi all,

Feel like you missed God's vision for your life, or are searching for His plan? Or wondering what the next age has for you?

In Exodus 3: 7-8 when Moses is standing before the Lord at the burning bush, the Lord says this: "...I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good land and a large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

And in Exodus 4: 30-31 we read: "And Aaron spoke all the words of the Lord that He had said to Moses, and did the signs in front of the people. And the people believed when they heard the Lord had visited the children of Israel...and they bowed and worshipped the Lord."

But not a single one of them save Joshua and Caleb, saw that land flowing with milk and honey. Did God lie, or can we miss Him to such a degree we never see the promises?

### **What we have here is a failure to communicate - or do we?**

Notice that in telling Moses He would bring them into the land of milk and honey, the Lord was sharing the highest and best and most appealing aspects of His plan. He didn't fill in the details about the walk through the desert. He didn't describe the fact they'd have to conquer the people who lived there. He gave the vision in completion, the mature and finished result - a land flowing with milk and honey. That vision was to sustain them.

In Genesis 12 over 400 years earlier, we see the Lord did the same thing with Abraham. In verse 1-3 we are told this: "The Lord had said to Abraham, 'Get out of your home country and away from your father's family, to a land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you, and make your name great, and you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'"

### **What a great promise!**

He laid out the complete and mature vision, the end result of a best case scenario. And of course Abraham starts walking. If you look at it on a map it is a distance of over 1,000 miles (1609km). But when he gets to where God wants him, 12: 7 says, "And the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, 'To your seed I will give this land.'" You've arrived Abraham. Put down roots!

And we are told Abraham built an altar to the Lord right there, followed by taking a walk around his new country. While he was still surveying the land v10 says: And there was a famine in the land, and Abraham went down to Egypt to stay there because the famine was so bad in his land."

Having a famine in the land isn't necessarily a sign you missed God. But you may have to change plans to adapt to the famine, and come back to the vision later - as Abraham after some years returned to the land.

### **Do you see a pattern developing?**

The Lord will always tell us the finished product, the mature vision, the complete plan in a best case scenario. He will always leave out the details of what it will take for us to see that vision come to pass. He might let you know it will be difficult, but He rarely fills in the blanks in any real detail. After all, we walk by faith, not by sight.

Even the apostle Paul experienced this. When he is retelling his testimony to King Agrippa in Acts 26: 15-19 he says this: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a servant and witness both of these things you have seen, and to things about which I will appear to you later. Delivering you from the people (Jews) and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you."

### **The Lord spoke of great things**

I'm appearing to you now, and I'll appear to you later with more information. I'll deliver you from the people and send you to the Gentiles. Wow that sounds amazing. But let us read what Paul went through to see that vision come to pass, from II Corinthians 11: 24-27:

"Of the Jews I've received 5 times, 39 stripes (195 stripes across the back in 5 separate beatings). Three times beaten with rods. (Custom of taking a cane and beating the bottoms of the feet). Once stoned (to death according to Acts 14: 19-20, which most believe he was caught up into heaven/Paradise as per II Corinthians 12).

Three times shipwrecked, a night and day floating in the ocean...and he goes on to talk of betrayals, peril of robbers, weariness, fatigue, fasting, in cold and not having enough clothes to stay warm, plus the emotional toll of care for people.

We do know the Lord told Ananias in Acts 9: 16 the Lord was going to tell Paul some of the things he would suffer if he accepted the call on his life - but if the pattern fits, the Lord didn't fill in a lot of details.

Do you think Peter knew when the Lord told him that He would make him a fisher of men, that he would one day die a martyr's death? He wasn't told that until John 21: 18-19. At that point he knew too much, was in too deep. Did he know when he left his fishing business in Luke 5: 9-11 that he was leaving it to die a martyr's death? Fishers of men sounds so meek and mild and noble and - just nice. By the way, you're going to die by crucifixion when you're older, people taking you where you don't want to go - still feel like being a fisher of men?

### **You are normal**

I can't think of anyone who has hit the mark perfectly all their lives. Abraham decided to 'help' God by producing Ishmael with Hagar, and look at the mess he left the world with as a result. He is the father of our faith, yet look at him. Moses never got to see the Promised Land. Jonah got swallowed up, Elijah hid in a cave, John the Baptist asked if Jesus was really Messiah or should they keep looking, Peter denied the Lord 3x, and on it goes.

Don't lose sight of the simple fact that you and I are already in eternity. We look at things God has told us and don't see them come to pass, and mark our mortality on a calendar wondering what went wrong, or continuing to repent of sins long since forgiven. We forget we are already in eternity, already living forever.

What doesn't happen in this life, can come to pass in the next age - in fact I think many things He says to us He intends to be for years or decades after this body has died. Our life Jeremiah says, is life in this age is like our breath we can see on a cold morning. That is the Lord's perspective, so He is invested in us for the long haul.

There is a lot of prophecy in the Old Testament that won't be fulfilled until the next age, so why is it so hard to believe something He tells us today will be fulfilled in 50 or 100 or 200 years? His Word will not return void, but will accomplish what He said. Look beyond the life in this body, and realize you're already in eternity.

In this way the pressure if you will, is on Him, not on us. If God ever gives you something and you think, 'I can do that', then it isn't God. If it were, you'd take glory in it yourself and could stand before Him saying 'Look what I did for you all on my own!'. That's not going to happen. The vision that is TOO big, TOO glorious - that is God's vision. The one which requires miracles to come to pass.

Miracles? Yes, like a way too old woman and man having a baby. Like a stuttering guy who requires his brother to speak for him and has this wooden staff that does miracles. Like an apostle who had people bring their sick lest even his shadow should pass over them, or a man who had pieces of cloth he had touched heal people. If you can do it yourself, it isn't God. If you will need miracles to see the vision completed, it may be God, that the glory is of Him, not of us.

More next week...how it works, the decisions we have to make, and what about all that lost time? Until then, blessings,

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**He tells the finished vision from the start, #2, personal transparency**

Hi all,

Barb and I came to the Lord in the mid-1970's in the Charismatic Renewal, when millions of people in denominational churches came to the Lord. We received the baptism with the Holy Spirit as did millions, and started meeting in home 'prayer meetings' during the week while remaining faithful to the denominational church on Sunday morning.

### **Promises, promises**

This was before the Word of Faith (WOF) movement of the 1980's taught the integrity of God's Word. Until then many of the charismatic home meetings lacked balanced teaching - it was like the wild west, anything goes. We had to rely on the Holy Spirit of Truth within to be the referee on all we heard and saw, and that's where I first learned to lean on Him and to know His voice and 'witness' inside.

But the Word of Faith (WOF) had its own issues, human nature being what it is, some people who went extreme in the Charismatic Renewal went extreme in the WOF, and that's where it affected Barb and I.

### **Those of you who know us know our oldest son is handicapped**

This December he will turn 39, but due to lack of oxygen during labor due to the cord around his neck, he is mentally about 4 years old. He is a joy, and also a heavy load for us. The diagnosis is Cerebral Palsy (CP), which is a brain injury occurring during labor or delivery, and that brain injury can be very severe or very mild: it's a matter of how long the brain was deprived of oxygen. CP is not a disease, but an injury to the brain at birth.

The influence of the WOF on charismatics like ourselves in the 1980's went beyond just learning the integrity of God's Word. That part of the WOF brought balance to the wild and crazy 1970's and was much needed. But out of that came an unhealthy church culture too.

### **The off-balanced part relating to healing is the part we experienced with our son**

The culture of many who had been influenced by WOF was to question us as to why our son wasn't healed. They asked if I had fasted. They gave us scriptures to confess and declare. Some noted the brain injury of CP caused part of the brain to die so they offered ideas from hyperbaric chambers to verses about air to confess.

Some wanted to cast demons out of him. But CP is an injury and there aren't any demons involved. (The Lord not only told me so in a visitation, but taught me the Word that showed He simply healed injuries as they are just injuries. He showed me injuries sustained from the man with the withered arm to various lame men before Him and Paul (Acts 14: 8-10), none of whom had demons - just injuries that needed healing.

Then there were those specializing in personal prophecy, who said in various ways, 'Thus saith the Lord' - followed by any of the following: You have a secret sin, God is trying to bless you by giving you a handicapped son, God is trying to teach you something. And let's not forget those who put time frames to healing: About a year from now he will be healed, or "I just feel like it's very near" or "right around the corner". And then there was the general culture that looked down their noses at us with "What's wrong with you that you aren't seeing the promises of God come to pass in your life".

### **What the Lord told Chris**

From the evening we first learned of Chris' brain damage when he was about 6 months old, until this day, we have a peace about his healing. Each night when Chris goes to bed the last thing I say to him is "By His stripes" and he responds, "I was healed". His handicap however has kept him from understanding time and past tense, so he responds because we've done it for years, not due to being able to grasp the past tense of 'by whose stripes you WERE healed.'

Chris has another point of view however. When he was about 22 he came crawling down the hall (he can't walk, so pulled himself along on his belly army man style) saying, "Dad! Dad! Know what Jesus said to me?! He said He's going to walk through the mountains with me! Yep, that's what He said! Yahoo! Isn't that great? Yahoo! Yep, that's what He said, He's going to walk through the mountains with me! Yahoo!"

Since that moment Chris has said upon seeing children run on TV: "When I get to heaven I'm going to run like that." And, "When I get to heaven; no wheelchair."

Picking up from last week, we can see the Lord gave Chris a promise for the finished, mature vision. Jesus never said His walk through the mountains with Chris wouldn't be in THIS age, but Chris assumes He was talking about heaven.

### **Because of the greatness of the word to him**

Because of the amazing effect of the Lord's promise to Chris, he is at peace with waiting until heaven to be healed. I cannot counter his faith. But we have to go through an awful amount of hardship in this life until that day he is whole. There is always a price to pay before seeing the promise come to pass.

I honestly don't know what to do with the peace I've had these 3+ decades about Chris being healed - maybe that peace means it will be as Chris believes, in heaven he will be whole. Maybe that peace means I'll see it this side of heaven.

The key for me and the 'take away for today' is to stay in peace after receiving a personal promise. That promise will be the finished vision, the complete package. Stay in peace and stop looking for the how and when. When Chris was about 5 years old and I had been continually confessing, declaring, quoting scriptures on healings with great focus and intensity every day lots of emotion, firmness in my words for I wanted to show the Lord I meant it, and suddenly the Father asked me something. He interrupted my confession, imagine that!

"What scripture are you standing on?" (We were still influenced by WOF so I had dutifully picked a verse and 'stood' on it). I replied, "I Peter 2: 24." He replied, "What is it?" So I quoted it to Him: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: By whose stripes you were healed."

He replied: "Very well. Can you just believe the promise, not looking for the manifestation?" That caught me off guard, but I replied after a pause to take stock what He was asking me to do, "Yes. I can." To which He replied: "Very well. Then just believe the promise. Rest in the promise. Get your eyes off the manifestation."

That was where my peace in the matter came - I stopped looking for the manifestation and since that day over 34 years ago, have stayed in peace. Have I fasted for his healing? Yes, 15 days, water only, until I realized I wasn't going to change the Father's or Lord's mind on the matter.

If you know me you know the Lord has been gracious to visit me many times since first seeing Him in April of 1986. Because He usually comes while I'm at home, Chris has been right down the hall and I SO wanted Him to just walk that way to heal my son. I've even had times with Chris right next to me in his wheelchair and the Lord standing next to me within arm's reach of my son - but all He did at that visitation was tell me why it is so difficult for people who have been in a long term condition to be healed. Still, I stay in peace, and haven't left peace, all these years. I guard peace jealously.

I pray you will go back to the last thing He told you about your loved one or situation, and find peace in the promise having taken your eyes off the manifestation - and stay in that peace. Chris as a little child has. I have. So can you. More next week, until then, blessings,

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### **He tells the finished vision from the start #3, why the promises**

Hi all,

Last week I shared about our (handicapped) son Chris, and his great but child-like faith.

There is a certain amount of peace in my heart knowing the Lord spoke to him and told him that He would 'walk through the mountains' with him. The peace in our hearts allows Barb and I to endure the management of Chris' life both at home and his group home. He lived at home his first 24 years, but

after his brothers grew up and moved on to school and marriage we realized Barb and I could not care for him on our own. So we made the most difficult decision in our lives, to place him in a group home, then moved closer to him to remain involved in his life. In December he will be 39 as of this writing, though mentally he is about 4 years old, but with the ability to take in and understand more than that mental age would suggest.

If you have ever cared for someone long term you can relate to our lives. There are the happy and care free Fridays where Chris and I run errands around town: I pick him up at his group home about 8am, shower and shave him, and out we go, usually to Sonic, a regional fast food drive-in restaurant. Once we push the button after we pulled in to 'our' stall, #21, Melissa the manager greets the push of the button with 'Hi John and Chris', and we always answer back...and so the day begins like that, people knowing us all over town.

About 4pm we head home where Barb has prepared a meal for the evening....and Saturday morning I get Chris into a bath, then he watches TV while I fix a big breakfast; he loves dad's 'cheese eggs' which are nothing more than scrambled eggs with cheese, but at the group home his standard breakfast is cereal, so it's a weekly treat. Most of Saturday is spent watching his favorite movies or tv shows - the only time of the week he can control where he goes, what he does, what he eats, what he watches on tv - the group home setting means others decide all those things.

We have fun together and he makes us laugh - and is used of the Lord. I've shared how one morning I was in a bit of a pity party internally and silently brooding as I was asking the Father how I can take care of Chris 2 days a week, do all I need to do with cwowi, travel, maintain a home and such, and generally feeling sorry for myself. I concluded my complaint to the Father with an internal 'What am I, a beast of burden?' At that moment I was kneeling down in front of Chris putting on his socks, and just then he patted me on the head and said, "You're a good horse." Message received Father. Change my attitude and mood and stop feeling sorry for myself. LOL.

#### **That's what people know and see - John and Chris around town**

But what people don't see are the meetings at the group home. The emails and calls with staff. Last week it was about adjusting his portions for meals as they are watching his weight. The week before it was scheduling an annual eye appointment. The week before it was taking him to the hospital for lab work. This week they want him to go to a sedation dentist that we've gone to before as it's been 2 years since his last cleaning (he has to be knocked out for it as he won't put up with dental work) but it's \$1500 we have to save up for and plan, and on it goes...continual care.

And eople don't see the other side of brain damage, whether that damage is from birth or war, car accident or fall, brain injury people don't like sudden changes to what they are doing. Loud noises, changes in schedule or direction, often leads to an immediate and violent reaction - yelling, hitting, throwing whatever is in his hand or nearby, biting, extreme behavior. Then once that tension is released, they are humble, apologetic, and back to their normal loving self. That is Chris. That is life with Chris.

I can't count the times I've been hit, slapped, bitten, scratched, had his nails dug into my flesh as he squeezes as hard as he can, had him yell and take a swing at me when simply rolling down a store aisle and unexpectedly I back up or change direction - that behavior is from brain injury.

#### **Why am I sharing this?**

Because while Chris (and we) have the promise that one day the Lord will walk through the mountains with Chris, until then we have the above to deal with, for the rest of ours, or the rest of his life, or until that healing happens. And the Lord knows this. The Lord saw this when He gave the promise. Yet still our lives with him are a constant burden and joy.

Even at his group home we wonder; What is Chris doing now? Is he warm? Does he need to go to the bathroom? Is he hungry, is he behaving himself, what kind of week will they say he has had when I pick him up on Friday? No matter where I am in the world, Chris is always, always, in the back of my mind. He is basically a 4 year old being cared for by others who can never do as good a job as Barb and I can. (As I said, he is almost 39 years old).

Yet the Lord knows this. The Father knows this. The Lord gave Chris the finished vision, the mature and complete promise: I will walk through the mountains with you. But between now and then is a whole lot of burden, anguish, and emotional toll to be paid by him and us. Yet his positive attitude is a joy, an inspiration to us. An example for us.

**In II Peter 1: 3-4 Peter says this:**

"...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness....by which we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of His divine nature..."

Did you catch that? He gave us great promises that we might be partakers of His divine nature. That statement is 100% opposite of every Word of Faith, Charismatic, Seeker Friendly, Evangelical and any other label we might put on a 'stream' of faith: The promises are given so we can be partakers of His nature.

Not to have answered prayer. Not to give us the desires (or lusts) of our heart. Not to give us our dream (fill in the blank; home, car, job, spouse, vacation, bank account, etc). But the promises are given that we might partake in His nature.

We see the receiving of a promise from Him as answered prayer to a need or desire. He issues those promises to us so we can grow in Him. Both are true, both are required. One is earth looking up to heaven, the other is heaven looking down to earth. He calls the shots, He is God. He issues a promise that we might become like Him. That's 1st priority.

He gives the complete vision, the mature and beautiful end result - but getting there requires becoming a partaker of His divine nature. Every promise issued requires growth to see fulfillment no matter when that fulfillment comes: This life or the next.

Settle that in your heart. Change your perspective in your heart to look for how you can grow as you stand on the promise He gave you, as you look with expectation for its fulfillment. Realize every promise has a condition, and that condition will always involve change in character towards godliness.

Next week about apparent contradictions in His promises and gaps in our time line of life...until then, blessings,

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**He tells the finished vision from the start, #4, gaps, different vision than what was shown**

Hi all,

Before we started cwowi in our home, while we were still in the auditorium church, Barb had seen a vision about our future, though at the time we had no idea what it was about, though we thought we understood it. That is key to today's main point - we thought we understood, but what was communicated was different from what actually happened.

**The vision**

She was standing at the open front door of our house looking outward, greeting a never ending line of people who were coming into our house and receiving ministry - healing physically, emotionally, spiritual balance and health, some born again, but all were made whole.

Then she saw these people after a time going out of our house able to live whole and balanced lives. With each person's first step as they left the house their feet touched down and created ripples like a pebble on a smooth pond, which represented other lives they touched. This went on and on until as far as Barb could see there was nothing but people stepping out and creating ripples that in turn touched each other.

At the time we were in the auditorium church, so we thought it was literally thousands of people who would be coming into our home. We took that vision and immediately saw it as a ministry headquarters, a working ranch and farm, a training center and community of believers centered

around our home. It was essentially a small Christian neighborhood able to be self-sufficient should society collapse.

It wasn't until the Lord appeared to me 2x in 2001 to tell me: "I want you to start a house church and house church network, and structure it in such a way to facilitate the development of house churches around the world", that we understood what Barb saw was CWOWI, for we started it out of our home. Though the network is now in many nations, spiritually speaking, people are coming into our home, becoming whole, and then going on in wholeness in their life.

The literal vision didn't happen, but the spiritual truth communicated in the vision has come to pass.

### **Paul's vision**

In the How to be Led by the Spirit 2 series I talk about a situation in Paul's life where the vision God gave him wasn't fulfilled in the exact way the vision described.

This is where we get into trouble. We have something in our hearts from the Lord and take it to be literal, right now, and it must be done exactly as the word/vision/burden from the Lord was told us. But that is not always the case, as seen here and in our own lives above.

In Acts 16: 6-10 Paul and his group have been going east to west across our modern nation of Turkey. At several points they kept trying to turn left to go south to the coast, but the Lord did not allow them the text says.

Being forbidden by the Lord to turn south, Paul kept going west until he found himself at the coastal city of Troas: He had run out of land and only the ocean before him. It was then he saw a vision of a man in Macedonia, across the sea, to 'come over here to Macedonia to help us'. This vision was a confirmation to keep going west, into Europe.

### **And this is the point:**

Paul never met the man in the vision. Acts 16:11-15 tells us instead he found a business woman named Lydia, and she hosted the first house church of the Philippians. Paul's later letter to her and them is the warmest and most transparent of his letters, and it is clear they held a special place in his heart. They also gave regularly into his ministry.

Some years ago Barb and I led a tour group retracing Paul's steps and we visited Philippi and her home, which became a chapel after Christianity was legalized. Not much is left except the lower walls and the beautiful inlaid tile floor. But there is no record of Paul ever meeting the man in the vision - the man who asked him to come to Macedonia to help.

### **Human nature being what it is...**

We start to question ourselves as to why 'the vision' hasn't happened, or where we missed it. Sometimes like the vision of the people at our door and in our house, or with the man of Macedonia, the vision, the dream, the promise is spiritual. It comes in a different form than what we thought it would. That word to you expresses the spirit of what God has in mind, not the detail. It isn't a blue print, it is an impressionist's painting of the spirit behind it. He sketches the outline but lets you and I paint the picture.

### **Examples**

A man says he is called into the ministry as a pastor but is locked in a career job, thinking he has failed God. The reason is he took the call to mean a pulpit, but NT truth is that Christ is in us, and the gift of pastor has nothing to do with how one earns a living. He doesn't realize in his work he is in ministry for Christ is in him, so how he conducts himself, the advice given to coworkers, the peace and wholeness of the department he oversees, are him serving as their pastor. Those who work for him feel safe, secure, loved, there is freedom and peace in the office - that is a pastor's anointing.

I've seen children pastor other children, tenderly caring for their friends. There are executives in industry whose office is like a personal guidance office, the executive loving the people in his or her charge more than the job, giving them life advice as well as instructions for their work.

The couple who can't help but to reach out to other couples with family advice, budgeting finances, and business planning. The shop owner who looks for opportunities to give the products in his shop to those less fortunate or provide some work for someone needing extra money. All these things and more are the spiritual gift called 'pastor' or literally 'one who tends the sheep'. Tending the sheep isn't in the pulpit, most pastors are men and women and teens and children of all walks of life. Christ is in us wherever we are, so the job title means little to Him.

### **I can imagine...**

NT truth is this: I was hungry and you fed me. Thirsty and you gave me drink. A stranger and you took me in. Naked and you clothed me. Sick or in prison and you visited me. That is NT truth. THAT is ministry. Pulpit isn't in there. Evangelistic campaigns are not in there. Basic love, caring for those around us, THAT is ministry. It flows from the individual's heart, then their home, then outward to others.

I can imagine a woman arriving in heaven at the end of a long life, but feeling horrible that she never entered into the ministry she felt the Lord had for her, feeling like she let Him down. She felt called to ministry as a child, then she fell in love, married, had a family, then by her 70's wondered what God thought of her because she was never 'in ministry.'

But as He reviews her life He assures her she was in ministry her whole life, she just applied her religious culture to what He had put on her heart, and therefore misunderstood the call on her life.

He shows her where she from a child helped others, was the first to talk to the new kid in class, volunteered as a teenager at the soup kitchen, gave up a career to stay home and raise her children, took food multiple times to those in crisis, wrote notes of encouragement to others....and the Lord would make her realize that was Him in her looking after those people, loving those people, caring for them as a pastor...she was in ministry the whole time, she had just applied her ideas to what was His heart, leading to a lifetime of feeling like she had let Him down.

When I was a pastor of a small church Barb was at first the recipient of scorn and derision by some when she told them she didn't sing, she didn't play an organ or piano, she wasn't a teacher, that her ministry was to be behind the scenes allowing me to pastor and lead the church.

Feeling horrible and self-conscious that she didn't measure up to the expectations of some women in the church, the Lord assured her, telling her that we are one as husband and wife, and that her ministry was first to me and our children, and after that to others as she is able. That word from the Lord and the security of peace it left in her heart helped carry her through much during those times. Hope this offers similar encouragement to you.

More next week...until then, blessings,  
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### **He tells the finished vision from the start, #5, too cross-minded, Perspective**

Hi all,

I've visited the catacombs of Rome a couple of times, spending hours considering the lives of the people whose bones I was now casually walking past as a tourist. Each time I've been deeply moved. The catacombs in Rome are a series of passageways and burial shelves dug into soft volcanic rock deep underground (about 20-60 feet or 6-20 meters).

Christianity became legalized in the year 312 and the State religion in 380. In the 250 years of Roman persecution the 40 catacombs discovered thus far, we find the remains of millions of believers. Those discovered cover a total of about 600 acres (2.4 square km) under Rome, and in the Catacombs of San Callisto alone there are over 500,000 of our early brothers and sisters in the Lord buried there. In St. Domitilla there are about 150,000, and those are just 2 of the 40.

The artwork in these underground chambers is quite amazing, not only for the images of the lives of the people buried there and the Bible stories depicted, but for the common theme: Death has no power and heaven is certain.



**Something is missing in the art**

What struck me and that which stays with me, is that there are no cross scenes depicted there. There are Bible scenes like Noah in the Ark and the '3 children' in the fiery furnace, but no crosses. Everything, and I mean everything, has to do with the resurrection. Their gospel was not one of the cross, but of the resurrection.

What they expressed in their art is consistent with the writers of the New Testament: Christ is in you! The resurrected Christ, the power of His resurrection, abides within you!

**Do you realize...**

...that 'cross' is only mentioned 12 times in the letters, and that between only 6 letters: I Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews. That's it! The word "crucified" is mentioned only 12 times among 5 letters.

By contrast as I've mentioned before and have emailed in an attachment to those who asked for it (and will do so if you'd like just email me at [cwowi@aol.com](mailto:cwowi@aol.com)) there are at least 108 mentions of us being 'in Him' or Him in us; Christ in us or us in Him.

If you study Paul's letters especially you'll find he referenced the cross only to teach it as the means by which the Father brought salvation, but not something to focus on. He always moved on from there to focus on the resurrection and Christ in us. "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. Behold! Old things have passed away, and all things are made new." II Corinthians 5: 17

There is no cross in that verse - the focus is on the resurrection power of Christ in us, the new creation in Christ.

A good example is Ephesians 1: 3-14, which says it is the Father who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (v3), and the Father adopted us by using Jesus to do so (v5), and it was the Father who purchased our forgiveness through the blood of His Son (v7).

Paul presents Jesus as the means by which the Father accomplished our salvation, and then he moves on to what being in the Royal Family means. Jesus is worthy of worship and honor for His role of course, but the Father used His Son to accomplish His will - great teamwork, but the cross is merely the means by which they brought us salvation and what we have now in Him.

In Ephesians 2:7 Paul says we are saved in this age "that in the ages to come He (Father) would continue to show us the riches of His kindness which is towards us in Christ Jesus."

Paul is not cross-minded other than to teach it as the tool used to bring salvation - and then he moves on to Christ in us.

**Consider...**

When you walk into a Christian bookstore, compare the number of crosses you see against the number of empty tombs. Except at Resurrection Day, those scenes are not prominent. How many of us were raised in a denomination that included a processional of a priest carrying a large cross at the start of each service? What if that priest carried a scene of the empty tomb? How many reading this have crosses hanging on a wall in their home or sitting on a shelf? How many empty tomb scenes do you have? Are you cross minded, or as Paul and the early Christians were, resurrection power minded?

**You may find this cynical, but consider...**

Historically speaking, the New Testament does not focus on the cross, but on the resurrection, Christ in us, and the certainty of heaven. The artwork of the catacombs and writings of the earliest church fathers are consistent with this focus on the resurrection.

That all changed when Christianity was legalized in 312 and became the state religion in 380, and many of the pagan temples were taken over by the new State religion. As a tour guide told us there, the pagan temples fit perfectly with the crowds coming out of the homes, for the pagan temples had pews, a platform, a pulpit - and the auditorium church was born.

Forgive me for this observation if you need to, but from what I've studied and seen, the constant reminder of the cross and that we were sinners in the past serves in part, to keep the flock coming to the auditorium, keeps them weak in their faith and always looking over their shoulders at their past. One cannot look forward to resurrection power if constantly reminded of what you used to be.

When you study the dynamics of the early home and family based church that was focused on Christ in you and the power of the resurrection to live holy and purpose filled lives versus the continual reminder of what we used to be before Christ, the contrast is startling.

### **The ultimate finished vision**

Whatever promise we have received now for our lives, for our loved ones, in this life, those promises are within larger promises of a finished vision. Like the Russian 'nesting dolls' in which one fits neatly inside a larger, and that inside a larger, and so on, so too is any promise we receive in this life. It is nested inside the larger Christ in us, heaven awaits us. The final scene in The Revelation is that of the city we call heaven coming to earth.

Paul directed the Philippians twice to remember our citizenship is in heaven (3: 17, 20), and to the Colossians he said, "You were raised with Christ, so set your mind on the things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. For you died already, and your life is hidden in Christ with the Father God." (3: 1-4)

Learn what you have in Christ - can you imagine Who we have in us!? The One who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, lives in you! (Exodus 3: 14, John 8: 58) Be thankful for the cross by all means, but that cross bought us life in Christ, our newly created spirit man, created by the Spirit of God that we may walk with the Father and Son - so do that - focus on walking with the Father, our ultimate destination!

New topic next week, until then, blessings,  
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