



EASTER 2013

Psalm 24

"Jesus UnCrossed"

Saturday Night Live got blasted for its parody of the recent Quentin Tarantino film, *DJango Unchained*, starring Christoph Waltz, who was guest hosting SNL.

They called it *DJesus Uncrossed*. Playing off Tarantino's style of hyper violence and revenge fantasy, Jesus exits the tomb and goes off to mercilessly kill as many Romans as possible.

"He's risen from the dead, and he's preaching anything but forgiveness," the narrator states, with images of Jesus slaughtering Roman soldiers in the background. Another tagline described it as, "The ultimate historical revenge fantasy."

The skit was tasteless, some say blasphemous; but, truth be told, **Jesus did win a great battle both *on* and *after* the Cross.**

It wasn't a victory *against* the Romans; they weren't His enemy. He didn't die then exit the tomb to kill them, but rather to give them life - eternal life.

They and every other human being who has ever been conceived were captives for which He went to the Cross.

Jesus was battling on the Cross. We're told Jesus, in His death, "disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities [of this world]. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross" (Colossians 2:15). We are told "that through death [Jesus] might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

These "spiritual rulers" were far more powerful than the Romans or any other mere men, for that matter. They are elsewhere called "principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this age... spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Their leader is the devil, Satan - a powerful fallen angel. He is called "the god of this world" (Second Corinthians 4:4), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The entire world is said to be "under his power" (1John 5:19). He is described as going about like a wild beast, seeking whom he may devour (First Peter 5:8), and as holding most of the human race as his unwitting captives (Second Timothy 2:26).

You realize, don't you, that Satan is not bound in Hell; that he is not ruling a kingdom in Hell? He is alive and well and affecting events on planet earth in opposition to God.

Wait a minute. I thought we just said Jesus defeated the devil and his minions at the Cross? What's going on?

We want to address and explore the question of what is going on. We could do it from any number of passages. The passage I've chosen is Psalm twenty-four. Please note its battle imagery.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.

Psalm 24:2 For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.

Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

Psalm 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalm 24:5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Psalm 24:6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face. Selah

Psalm 24:7 Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

Psalm 24:8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

Psalm 24:9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

Psalm 24:10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

To begin addressing the question of what is going on, we need to go back to the beginning. We just read,

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.

Psalm 24:2 For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.

Those words shout, "Creator," and take us back to the beginning and the Bible's account in Genesis of the creation of the universe out of nothing by the Word of God.

Maybe you don't believe in the Genesis account of the creation of Adam and Eve. I do.

Jesus believed the Genesis account, by the way, and He was there, so He ought to know. "For in him all things were created: things in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 2:16).

Creation, however, isn't quite what it was at the beginning. There's something very wrong with the universe. It was ruined for us by something Adam and Eve did.

Look at the next verse in our psalm.

Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

This psalm was written by King David probably as a call to worship. You can almost hear pilgrims coming from all over Israel to enter Jerusalem, ascending to the Temple, to offer their sacrifices for one of the annual feasts.

In this question is a great spiritual truth. Not just anyone can walk directly into the presence of God. We used to be able to do that. That is, our original parents could. God visited them everyday in the Garden of Eden.

Then something happened; something awful. It's what made creation go wrong.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one, clear command. He warned them of the consequences: it would bring sin and death and separation. But they disobeyed anyway.

As their descendants we inherit a sin nature from them. From sin follows death then separation.

What it takes to "ascend" into the very presence of God is summarized in verse four.

Psalm 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.

I would wager that none of us has "clean hands and a pure heart." I'd lay odds each of us has "lifted up [our] soul to an idol," or "sworn deceitfully."

If you think you're clean in all those categories, OK; I will reluctantly believe you. Jesus also said things like, "If you've ever lusted in your heart, you've already committed adultery," and "if you've been angry with someone, you are guilty of murder."

Sound extreme? Not when you understand God is absolutely holy. His standard is perfection. And not simply in behavior; He requires perfection in mind and in heart. You must be perfect *inwardly*... And none of us are.

It's why the Bible declares that "there is none righteous, not even one. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The trouble is, "falling short" leaves you outside of Heaven. Eternally. Forever. And the only other address is Hell.

Did I just say "there is none righteous?" It's a word we should probably define. It means to be right with God. Because we inherit sin, we are wrong with God.

What if we *could* somehow be righteous? The very next thing we read in our psalm is,

Psalm 24:5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The human race of verses three and four, so far from God, with no hope of ascending to Heaven or ever standing in God's presence, whose eternal address is Hell, can nevertheless "receive blessing from The Lord, and righteousness from the God of [our] salvation."

The "blessing" we are talking about **IS** "righteousness." Applied to you it means you can be right with God. He can, in fact, allow you into Heaven; you can stand in His presence.

How can God do that? He can do it precisely because Jesus is 'uncrossed' and risen from the dead.

Jesus, on the Cross, was battling. We mentioned a few of His supernatural opponents. He had the three other enemies from Adam and Eve's decision that seemed equally unconquerable. They were sin and death and Hell.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they brought sin into the human race. The penalty for sin was, and is, death. The destination for sinners after death is Hell.

Those are powerful enemies indeed. No weapon fashioned by man can defeat them. Take death, for example. We might learn how to cheat death to live longer but, eventually, we will die.

Living longer doesn't solve the problem of sin; and it certainly doesn't overcome Hell.

Jesus died on the Cross to defeat sin. Since He was fully God, He was sinless. He met God's standard of absolute perfection. Inwardly as well as outwardly.

Since He was also fully human, He could represent all humans. He could take our place, die our death as it were; pay our penalty, take our punishment.

Having defeated sin as the God-man by dying on the Cross as a willing sacrifice, Jesus defeated death and proved it by rising on the third day. He didn't simply resuscitate in a body that would die once again. Oh, no; He was raised in a glorious, new body that is fit for eternity.

Then, on the 40th day after He rose from the dead, He ascended into Heaven to show that all who receive His salvation can ascend there, too, and stand in God's presence.

Jesus righted all that Adam and Eve had wronged so we can be right with God again.

When you believe on Jesus, God is able to declare you righteous on account of what Jesus has done. It's called justification. Here is how to understand it: Because I believe on Jesus, God can treat me ***just-as-if-I'd*** never sinned. I am forever acquitted of guilt and the punishment for my sin.

If Jesus won so great a victory, how is it the devil continues, and sin, death, and Hell have still brutally, cruelly claimed lives these last 2,000 years?

In one passage we are told that God "put all in subjection under Jesus, He left nothing that is not put under him. **But now we do not yet see all things put under him**" (Hebrews 2:15).

There is a delay; it began in the Garden of Eden and it's lasted since Jesus died on the Cross. Jesus conquered all enemies, but today He sits in Heaven, poised to return, waiting to take full control.

What is He waiting for that could be worth all the brutality and cruelty that exists in our fallen world?

There is a one-word answer to that question: **Longsuffering**. God is longsuffering with sinners, not willing that any should perish, but that all would receive His salvation.

God's longsuffering waits because there are some **here** who are the unwitting captives of Satan, who are sinners on their way to death and Hell.

If you are one of them, God is not willing **you** should perish; He battled on the Cross to save **you**. But you must believe what He has done.

One day God's longsuffering will end. History has a climax and we see it as the psalm ends.

Psalm 24:7 Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

Psalm 24:8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

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While these verses could be sung right after David penned them... and while they certainly applied to Jesus in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday... they really look to the future.

He's coming again.

According to the Bible, which has proven 100% accurate thus far, Jesus is coming at the end of a seven-year period of Great Tribulation.

He will come to earth, to Jerusalem, and these verses will be profoundly true as the survivors of that Great Tribulation receive Him as their Savior, Lord, and King.

He could be coming for *you* even sooner.

- First, you could die before He comes. At any age; at any moment; of many causes - both natural and accidental. For sure if you are alive in the Great Tribulation there is a 4 out of 5 chance you will be killed by some natural or supernatural disaster.
- Second, He could come *before* the Great Tribulation and *before* you die, but you might not be ready to go with Him. You see, The Lord said He was coming to resurrect the dead and rapture living believers before the Great Tribulation; and He said this coming could be at any moment so we should watch and be ready.

If you are not saved, *you are not ready*. You are not ready to die; you are not ready for the rapture.

But you are here; and, as Martha Stewart says, "it's a good thing." In verse six of our psalm it says,

Psalm 24:6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah

"Jacob" was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham, to whom God promised He would bless his descendants by sending Jesus to save all who would simply believe on Him.

Abraham's physical descendants are the Jews. He also has spiritual descendants. Believing Jews and believing non-Jews are considered his spiritual offspring.

The psalmist is saying **anyone** - Jew or Gentile - **anywhere** at **any time** can be included in the promises made to Abraham by God.

I can accurately say of you, the believers gathered here, "**this** is Jacob." You are "the generation of those who seek Him."

You have "received" the "blessing" of His "righteousness." It could never have been achieved by any good works you could have done; but it was received as the gift it was. You believed God and He counted it as righteousness.

If you are not a believer; if you cannot be called "Jacob" in this spiritual sense; honestly, *What are you waiting for?*

God is waiting for you, but you don't know for how long.

The story is told of a man who waited to be rescued. You've probably heard it. It goes like this.

It rained for many days and days and there was a terrific flood. The water rose so high that one man was forced to climb on top of his roof and sit in the rain. As the waters came up higher a man in a rowboat came up to the house and told him to get in.

"No thank you, the Lord will save me!" he said, and the man in the rowboat rowed away.

The waters rose to the edge of the roof and still the man sat on the roof until another rowboat came by and another man told him to get in. "No thank you, the Lord will save me!" he said again, and the man rowed away.

The waters covered the house and the man was forced to sit on his chimney as the rain poured down. A helicopter came by and another man urged him to get in or he'll drown. "No thank you," the man said again, "The Lord will save me!"

After much begging and pleading the man in the helicopter gave up and flew away. The waters rose above the chimney and the man drowned and went to Heaven where he met God.

"Lord, I don't understand," he told Him, frustrated, "The waters rose higher and higher and I waited hours for you to save me but you didn't! Why?"

The Lord just shook his head and said, "What are you talking about? ***I sent you two boats and a helicopter?!"***

Every time you hear about Jesus, God is sending out a rescue to you.

- Maybe for you it's just started to rain.
- Maybe you're sitting on the roof (although you don't realize it since you don't know the future).
- You ought to feel as if you are hanging on to the chimney and this - today - is your last chance.

One detail that the story gets wrong. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ; if you never get saved; you won't be going to Heaven and talking to God.

The time for talking will have passed. It will be too late for you. Sin, death, and Hell will claim you.

What must you do? Jesus said, "Repent and believe" this Good News (Mark 1:15).

Let's stop to do that, right now; to "repent" and "believe."