

CRYSTALLIZATION STUDY - Ezekiel, Book 4, Week 19 (Verses with excerpts in the red box)

The Cross—the Center of the Universe

- Ezekiel 43:13 Now these are the measurements of the **altar** by cubits (the cubit is a cubit and a handbreadth). The bottom shall be a cubit in **height**, a cubit in **depth**, and its surrounding border on its edge a span. Now this is the base of the **altar**.
- Ezekiel 43:14 And from the top of the bottom upon the ground to the top of the lower ledge shall be two cubits, and one cubit in **depth**; and from the lesser ledge to the greater ledge shall be four cubits, and a cubit in **depth**.
- Ezekiel 43:15 And the **altar** hearth shall be four cubits in **height**; and from the **altar** hearth there shall also be four horns projecting upward.
- Ezekiel 43:16 And the **altar** hearth shall be twelve cubits **long** by twelve cubits wide, square on its four sides.
- Ezekiel 43:17 And the greater ledge shall be fourteen cubits long by fourteen cubits **wide** on its four sides, and its surrounding border shall be half a cubit, and its bottom shall be a cubit all around, and its steps shall face east.
- Ezekiel 43:18 And He said to me, Son of man, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, These are the statutes of the **altar** to be observed on the day when they make it, for offering up burnt offerings on it and for sprinkling blood upon it.

I. The altar (signifies the cross) is the center of the premises of the temple, the centre of the universe

- Romans 6:6 *Knowing this, that our **old man** has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;*
- Col. 1:20 And through Him to reconcile **all things** to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His **cross** -- through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.*
- Hebrews 2:14 *Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil,*

The **altar** signifies the **cross**. The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross was an all-inclusive death involving God, man, and all the creatures.

II. The principle of the cross is to be terminated, put to death

- Colossians 2:14 Wiping out the **handwriting in ordinances**, which was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the **cross**.*
- Colossians 2:15 Stripping off the **rulers and the authorities**, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*
- 2 Cor. 5:21 *Him who did not know sin **He made sin on our behalf** that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
- 1 Peter 2:24 *Who Himself **bore up our sins** in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.*
- Galatians 2:20 *I am **crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and **gave Himself up for me**.*
- John 12:31 *Now is the **judgment** of this world; now shall the **ruler of this world** be **cast out**.*
- Galatians 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the **cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.*
- Ephesians 2:14 *For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity,*
- Ephesians 2:15 ***Abolishing** in His flesh the **law of the commandments in ordinances**, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,*
- Ephesians 2:16 *And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the **cross**, having slain the enmity by it.*

We need to realize that in the universe there is an **invisible scene** behind the **visible scene**. When **Christ was crucified**, there was a **visible scene**. All the people standing there saw that visible scene. The soldiers put Christ on the cross and nailed His hands and His feet, they saw these things, but they could not see and they did not see that behind the visible scene there was an **invisible scene**: **God and Satan were fighting** there. In this fighting God **stripped off** all the troublesome rulers and authorities, and He made a public show of them, **triumphing** over them **in Christ and in the cross**.

III. The crucified Christ was the unique **subject**, the **center**, the **content**, and the **substance** of the Apostle's Ministry

- 1 Cor. 2: 2 *For I did not determine to know anything among you except **Jesus Christ**, and this **One crucified**.*
- 1 Cor. 1:23 *But we preach **Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,*
- 1 Cor. 1:24 *But to **those** who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power of God** and the **wisdom of God**.*
- John 12:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the **grain of wheat falls** into the ground and **dies**, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*
- John 12: 25 *He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.*
- 2 Cor. 4:10 *Always bearing about in the body the **putting to death of Jesus** that **the life of Jesus** also may be **manifested in our body**.*
- 2 Cor. 4:11 *For we who are alive are always **being delivered** unto death for Jesus' sake that **the life of Jesus** also may be manifested in our **mortal flesh**.*
- 2 Cor. 4:12 *So then death operates in us, but life in you.*

The **death of Christ** has become God's power to eliminate all the problems in the universe; thus, Christ crucified is **God's power** to abolish all negative things and carry out His plan. The human way of solving problems is to negotiate, but **God's way is to terminate**; the best way to solve problems among people is to terminate everyone involved. The crucifixion of Christ has silenced the entire universe and simplified the extremely complicated situation in the universe. When we experience the crucified Christ, all that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do are completely **terminated**, and **His resurrection life is imparted** through us into others.

IV. In His economy God gives us one person—**Christ**—and one way—the **cross**

- Phil. 2: 5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in **Christ Jesus**,*
- Phil. 2: 6 *Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped,*
- Phil. 2: 7 *But **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a slave, **becoming in the likeness of men**;*
- Phil. 2: 8 *And being found in fashion as a **man**, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a **cross**.*
- Phil. 2: 9 *Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*
- Phil. 2:10 *That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
- Phil. 11:11 *And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

The one person—Christ—is the center of God's economy, and the one way—the cross—is the center of God's government. God governs everything by the cross and deals with everything by the cross.

- Col. 1:18 *And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the **first place** in all things;*
- Col 3:10 *And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*
- Col. 3:11 *Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but **Christ is all and in all**.*

By the cross God has dealt with all the negative things in the universe, and He is still governing everything through the cross. In the church life Christ must be all and in all; everything that is not Christ must go to the cross.

God's intention is to dispense Himself into man, but man was occupied, surrounded, and even utilized by **negative things**.

There are at least eight negative things in the universe which Christ needed to deal with on the cross. The first item of these negative things is **Satan, the Devil**, God's enemy, God's adversary. Along with Satan, there is the negative item of the **world**. The world is a satanic system and organization that occupies God's people. The third item is **sin**. In this universe and on this earth, within and among men, is something personified, something living, and something powerful and very evil. This is sin. The fourth negative item is the **flesh**. Our flesh is evil, rotten, corrupted, ugly, and rebellious against God. The fifth negative item is the **old man**. Regardless of how young we are, we are still a part of the old man. All the items in the universe have become old; everything is dying or decaying. Seventh, on this earth among mankind there is **no unity**, no peace. There is an organization called the United Nations, but they are fighting against one another, and this division comes from Babel. The final negative item, which is the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), is **death**. As the people made by God for His own purpose, we were all occupied, surrounded, and taken over by these eight things. **For God to dispense Himself into man, He surely had to clear up and rid the universe of these eight items.**

The only way that God could **clear up** these eight items was by Christ's marvelous death. By His death, He cleared up all these negative things, and this is why His death is all-inclusive. **His death destroyed Satan, judged the world, condemned sin, crucified the flesh, crucified the old man, terminated the old creation, and abolished all the ordinances that caused divisions in the human race. His death has even destroyed death.** Hallelujah for such an all-inclusive death!

- 1 Cor. 1:17 *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to announce the gospel, not in wisdom of speech that the **cross** of Christ may not be made void.*
- 1 Cor. 1:18 *For the **word of the cross** is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
- 1 Cor. 1:23 *But we preach **Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,*

Through the cross we need to become nothing, to have nothing, and to be able to do nothing; otherwise, what we are, what we have, and what we can do will become a substitute for Christ.

In the book of Colossians we see a clear vision of the cross as God's way in His administration.

- Col. 1:20 *And **through Him** to reconcile **all things** to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His **cross** -- **through Him**, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.*
- Col. 1:21 *And you, though once alienated and **enemies** in your mind because of your evil works,*
- Col. 1:22 *He now has **reconciled** in the **body of His flesh through death**, to present you holy and without blemish and without reproach before Him;*

To reconcile all things to Himself is to make peace with Himself for all things; this was accomplished through the blood of the cross of Christ. Because we were sinners, we needed redemption, and because we were also enemies of God, we needed reconciliation.

Col. 2:14 **"Wiping out the handwriting in ordinances"**, which was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Ordinances refers to the ordinances of the ceremonial law with its rituals, which are the forms or ways of living and worship. Nailing it to the cross means to abolish the law of the commandments in ordinances.

Col. 2:15 **"Stripping off the rulers and the authorities"**, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it." This verse portrays the **fighting that took place at the time of Christ's crucifixion**. Activities involving Christ, God, and the evil angelic rulers and authorities were brought to a focus on the cross; thus, **the cross became God's eternal, central, and unique way**. At the same time, the evil rulers and authorities were busy in their attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ, pressing in close to God and Christ; thus, a warfare was raging at the cross. **God openly made a display of the evil angelic rulers and authorities on the cross and triumphed over them in it, putting them to shame.**

V. The effect of Christ's crucifixion

- Matt. 27:51a *"The **veil of the temple was split** in two from top to bottom," which signifies that the separation between God and man had been abolished because the flesh of sin taken by Christ had been crucified.*
- Matt. 27:51b *"The **earth was shaken**," which signifies that the base of Satan's rebellion was shaken.*
- Matt. 27:51c *"The **rocks were split**," which signifies that the strongholds of Satan's earthly kingdom were broken.*
- Matt. 27:52a *"The **tombs were opened**," which signifies that the power of death and Hades was conquered and subdued.*
- Matt. 27:52b *"Many **bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised**," which signifies the releasing power of the death of Christ.*

VI. The life-releasing aspect of Christ's crucifixion

- John 12: 24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the **grain of wheat falls** into the ground and **dies**, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*
- John 19:34 *But one of the soldiers **pierced** His **side** with a spear, and immediately there came out **blood and water**.*
- John 19:36 *For these things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "**No bone of His shall be broken**."*
- Ephesians 5:29 *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes** and **cherishes** it, even as Christ also the **church**,*
- Ephesians 5:30 *Because we are **members** of His Body.*

The water that flowed out of the Lord's pierced side is for imparting life, dealing with death, and producing the church. As a grain of wheat, the Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died in order to produce many grains for the church. The bone is a symbol of the Lord's resurrection life, which nothing can break; this is the life with which the church is produced and built.

The Lord's having **none of His bones broken** was typified by the bones of the Passover lamb. In the institution of the Passover, God ordained that none of the lamb's bones should be broken (Exo. 12:46; Num. 9:11-12). This was a wonderful type. Later, in Psalm 34:20 this was also prophesied. Both the type and the prophecy were fulfilled in the **Lord's death on the cross**.

In Genesis 2:21-23, we find the Scripture's first mention of "bone," which was a **rib** taken out of Adam **for producing and building** Eve as a match for Adam. **Eve** was a type of the **church** produced with the Lord's resurrection life that was released out of Him. In other words, the church came out of the resurrection life, the unbroken life, the incorruptible life of Christ. His is the life which can never be hurt, damaged, or broken. **Adam** is a type of **Christ**, and the **bone** is a type of the **resurrection life of Christ**. The unbroken bone of the Lord Jesus indicates that He is the resurrection life which cannot be broken by death.

The **Lord's side was pierced**, but **not one of His bones was broken**. This signifies that though the Lord's physical life was killed, His resurrection life, the very divine life, could not be hurt or damaged by anything. Jesus was hurt, damaged, and put to death in His psuche life, His soulish life, not in His divine life. Although His human life was destroyed by death, His divine life could not be damaged. This is the life with which the church is produced and built.

After the incident regarding the Lord's bones, one of the soldiers **pierced His side** with a spear, and "immediately there came out **blood and water**" (19:34, 37). Although the Lord's resurrection life was not broken, He Himself was broken that His divine life might be released. Here, **water signifies life**. This is portrayed in the Old Testament by the smitten **rock** out of which the living waters flowed to quench the thirst of the children of Israel (Exo. 17:6). The Lord is the rock who was smitten on the cross. He was broken so that His divine life could flow out of Him as living water. Not only did water come out of Him but also **blood**, the symbol of **redemption**. Before we can take the Lord as the living water of life, we must firstly be cleansed. Thus, blood is mentioned as the first item and water as the second. After we have been **cleansed by the blood**, then we are enabled to **receive the Lord as life**.

VII. The cross leads us to the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:18; 12:12-13, 27:

Romans 6: 6 *Knowing this, that our **old man has been crucified** with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;*

Romans 8:13 *For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you **put to death the practices of the body**, you will live.*

Romans 12: 4 *For just as in **one body** we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,*

Romans 12: 5 *So we who are many are **one Body in Christ**, and individually **members one of another**.*

1 Cor 12:12-27 *For even as **the body is one and has many members**, yet all the members of the **body**, being many, are **one body**, so also is the Christ. For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one **Body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit. For the **body** is not one member but **many**. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the **body**, it is not that because of this it is not of the **body**. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the **body**, it is not that because of this it is not of the **body**. If the whole **body** were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be? But now God has **placed the members**, each one of them, in the **body**, even as He willed. And if all were one member, where would the **body** be? But now the **members are many**, but **the body one**. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But much rather the members of the **body** which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the **body** which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness, But our comely members have no need. But God has **blended the body** together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked, That there would be **no division** in the **body**, but that **the members would have the same care for one another**. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. **Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.***

Colossians 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were **called in bone Body**; and be thankful.*

The cross operates in the sphere of the Body. The work of the cross goes as far as the Body of Christ and consummates with the Body of Christ. Not only does the work of the cross bring us into the Body, but also the Body becomes the realm within which the cross works.

Ephesians 2:16 *And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the **cross**, having slain the enmity by it.*

Matt. 16:24 *Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him **deny** and take up his **cross** and follow Me.*

Matt. 16:25 *For whoever wants to **save** his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever **loses** his soul-life for My sake shall find it.*

Matt. 16:26 *For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life*

In the Body of Christ we cannot go on without the cross. The cross will dig away our natural life, our own activities, and any disproportionate growth.

*Galatians 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have **crucified** the flesh with its passions and its lusts.*

*Romans 12: 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to I think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a **measure of faith**.*

*2 Cor. 10:13 But we will **not boast beyond our measure** but according to the **measure of the rule** which the God of **measure** has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.*

*2 Cor. 10:14 For we are **not extending ourselves** beyond our bounds, as if we did not reach you, for we were the first to come even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ.*

*2 Cor. 10:15 We are **not boasting beyond our measure** in bothers' labors, but have the hope, as your faith is increasing, to be magnified in you **according to our rule** unto abundance,*

*Ephesians 4: 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the **measure** of the gift of Christ.*

*Ephesians 4:16 Out from whom all the **Body**, being **joined** together and being **knit** together through every joint of the rich supply and through the **operation in the measure of each one part**, causes the **growth of the Body** unto the building up of itself in love.*

Life and work in the Body necessitate drastic dealings with the flesh, and such dealings necessitate a deep knowledge of the cross of Christ. The restriction of the Body will take away our freedom and drive us to the cross. All of God's dealings with us have been with a view to prepare us for the Body; all His work in us is a process of elimination so that we can become functioning members of the Body.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the aHead of the bBody, the church; He is the cbeginning, the 1dFirstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

*1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **fellowship** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **fellowship** of the **body** of Christ?*

If our natural life is dealt with by the cross and if we submit to the headship of Christ and live the Body life, we will have the Spirit's anointing and enjoy the fellowship of the Body.

VIII. We meet the cross **everywhere** in our Christian life, we experience the cross in a **particular way** when we come to the altar at the center of God's building:

To come to the altar at the center is to realize that **all that we are** and **all that we have**, have been **terminated at the cross**. In our fellowship with the Lord, we are brought to the point where we touch the cross in a de nite way and sense that God will no longer allow us to live in our natural man. As we pass through the cross, our flesh, our old creation, our self, and our natural man with the natural life will all be dealt with. This is the experience of the cross—the center of the universe.

Everywhere ... Particular way

There are two ways to know and experience the cross. One way **begins with a great light** and proceeds step by step with small dealings is normal, solid, and quick. The other way **begins with small dealings** and continues step by step toward a great light is weak and slow.

May the Lord in His mercy show us that if we begin from the smaller end, we will have to deal with matters one by one before we see the great light, but if we begin from the larger end, we will see a great light and many things will be terminated by the shining of the light. *Galatians 2:20* says, "I am crucified with Christ." This refers to the **seeing at the larger end**. *Romans 8:13* tells us to "put to death the practices of the body." This refers to the **dealing at the smaller end**. These two verses seem to speak of two different experiences of the cross, but they are on the same pathway of knowing and experiencing the cross.

A PROPER ATTITUDE AND ASPIRATION

We should experience the cross gradually, but we should begin with a full knowledge of the cross. We should not be content with what we know or have experienced, nor should we be satisfied with beginning from the smaller end. Rather, **we should aspire and seek after the better beginning, that is, to see the great and complete light of the cross and then let this light lead us on the way of the cross.**

We may feel that we have seen the great light of the cross, but we should not be too confident or satisfied, because our feeling may not be accurate, and what we have seen may not be complete or solid. Hence, we need to seek with a humble heart and a deep aspiration. Our knowledge and experience of the cross can never be too deep or too solid. Even if we have some amount of knowledge and experience of the cross, there is much more for us to know and experience. We need to be humble, and we also need the Lord to create a deeper hunger and a more pressing desire in us.

We should not be satisfied with the gradual knowledge and experience of the cross, nor should we despise it. The **accumulation of gradual knowledge and experience will lead us to see the great light**. If we are faithful in every step of knowing and experiencing the cross, the light that we see will increase. However, we must beware of being content with our knowledge and experience of the cross, because this contentment will hinder us from seeing greater light.

Our knowledge of the cross depends on the revelation that we have received, and **our experience of the cross equally depends on how much we have seen**. We must **seek** revelation and **pursue** vision. If we have revelation and vision, we need to be faithful to **pay the price to obey**. Whatever the Spirit touches needs to be condemned, and we must deal with it. We should forsake whatever needs to be forsaken. If we are not willing to obey, we will have very little genuine knowledge and experience of the cross. May the Lord be merciful to us!