

# The Day God Died

by Richard J. Foster

WITH HIS EYE toward the cross, Jesus prepared for His highest and most holy work — to take into Himself all of the sorrows, hurts, angers, and evils of mankind in order to set us free from them. This He did, and then rose from the dead to be our present Teacher and to give us total victory over this present kingdom of darkness and death.

For three years Jesus worked with His disciples. He taught them, trained them, encouraged them. Yet they were not changed. They remained the same bickering, self-seeking men they had always been. They had seen miracles, had been under the best teaching in the world, and still they were not changed. Something more was needed. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus received the final confirmation that this "something more" must be done on the cross. In those night hours, Jesus was not asking if He could get out of this work, but He *was* asking, "Is this the only way that people can really be set free?" The answer was "Yes!"

Now the usual notion of what Jesus did on the cross runs something like this: people were so bad and so mean and God was so angry with them that He would not forgive them unless somebody big enough could take the rap for the whole lot of them. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was love — not anger — that brought Jesus to the cross. He saw that by His vicarious suffering, He could actually internalize all the evil of mankind and so heal it.

That is why Jesus refused the customary painkiller when it was

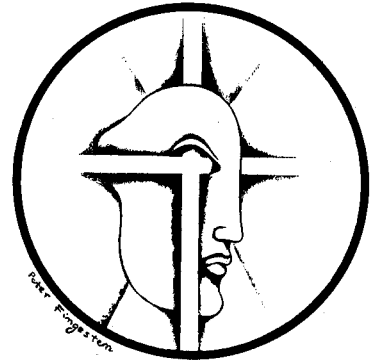
offered Him. He wanted to be completely alert for this greatest work of redemption. He was preparing to enter into the collective unconscious of the human race. Since Jesus lives in the "Eternal Now," this work was not just for those around Him, but He was taking in all the violence, all the fear, all the sin of all the past, all the present, and all the future.

Some think that when Jesus shouted, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me" it was a moment of weakness. Not at all! In fact this was Jesus' *moment of greatest triumph!* Jesus, who had walked in constant communion with the Father, now became so totally identified with mankind that He was the actual embodiment of sin. As Paul wrote, "He became sin for us." (1 Corinthians 5:21) He had succeeded in taking into Himself all of the dark powers of this present evil age, and He defeated every one of them by the light of His presence.

Having accomplished this greatest of all His works, Jesus then took refreshment. Soon after this He remarked, "It is finished"; that is, the work He was doing was completed. He could feel the last dregs of the misery of mankind flow through Him and come out into the Father's care. The last twinges of evil, hostility, anger, and fear drained out of Jesus and He was able to turn again into the light of God's presence. "It is finished." The task is complete. Soon after, He was free to give up His spirit to the Father.

## The Effects

In one of his most powerful hymns Charles Wesley wrote, "He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free." Sometimes we miss the fact that sin can be canceled out (i.e.,



forgiven) and still have power over us. Wesley saw so clearly that not only can sin be canceled out, but its power can be broken. Early Quakers, of course, knew this, for everywhere they went they fully expected to be defeating all Satanic powers and establishing the righteous and peaceable reign of Christ, their present Teacher and Deliverer.

Because of this wonderful work of redemption, the sorrows of the past can be healed. There is a fine book out titled, *Your Inner Child of the Past*. It analyzes so well how the little child that we were and that still lives in us can affect us today. But after such a brilliant analysis of the influence of our inner child of the past, it can do no more than advise us on how to *cope* with our past. Jesus can do a whole lot better than that. He can *heal* the inner child of the past. I know this not only because I read about it in the Bible, but because I have seen it happen more than once.

My first experience in this healing process was with a man who had lived in constant fear and bitterness for 28 years. He would wake up screaming at night and in a cold sweat. He lived in constant depression, so much so that his wife witnessed that he had not laughed for 28 years. He related to me how in World War II he had led a mission of some thirty men. They became trapped by enemy gunfire. With deep sorrow in his eyes, my friend related how he had prayed desperately that God would deliver them. It was not to be. He returned with six men — four seriously wounded while he himself had only a flesh wound.

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The experience turned him into an atheist. His heart was filled with bitterness, anger, and guilt.

I said, "Don't you know Jesus can heal that old memory, so that it will no longer control you?" He did not know that it could be so. Joyfully our small group prayed for him, inviting the Lord to go back and heal this sorrow of the past, adding that peaceful sleep would be one of the evidences that this redemptive work had been accomplished. Three days later he came up to me with a sparkle in his eyes and a brightness on his face I had never seen before. "For three nights I have slept all night

long and each morning I would awaken with a hymn on my mind. And I'm happy, happy for the first time in 28 years." His wife concurred that it was so. That was four years ago and the wonderful thing is this: although this man has had the normal ups and downs that go with living, he has never again been plagued by the old fears and sorrows. He was totally and instantaneously healed.

These things are accomplished not only because Jesus took all the evil in the world into Himself and transformed it, but also because He rose from the dead in absolute victory over all the dark

powers of this present world system. The cross and the resurrection are two sides to the same coin — they are inseparable. Because of the real fact of a real resurrection, we are certain that Jesus has now come to teach His people Himself. Christ is here among us *now*. His voice can be heard and obeyed. In Him the power of canceled sin is broken. Everywhere we go, by His living Presence, the kingdom of God is to be established and evil powers to be utterly destroyed. He is to be our Saviour, Healer, Prophet, Shepherd, Bishop, Priest, King, Counselor, Leader, and Head. ♠