

**Jesus will come again visibly.** *“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him”*, writes John in Revelation 1:7. When Neil A. Armstrong, as the first human being to do so, set foot on the moon on July 20th, 1969, 500 million people watched this event on television. The British Princess Diana lost her life in a traffic accident. On September 6th, 1997 her funeral in London, the then largest of all time, was watched by 2500 million people or 40 % of the world’s population. This entered the history books as the first “global funeral”.

But no camera will be necessary for the Coming of Jesus. All of mankind will experience this “live”, the greatest event of world history. Jesus will be visible for everyone. This will not only be true for the world’s population at that time, but also for all past generations as well as for all readers of this article. Then there will only be one question to be answered, “To which group do I belong, to the saved or the lost?”

**Jesus will come again suddenly.** *“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man”* (Matthew 24:27). In a single moment He will be seen simultaneously across the entire earth. At which time of day will this be? We find the answer in Luke 17:34, *“... in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left.”* So at night then!? But the very next verse goes on to say, *“There will be two women grinding together* (a daytime activity). *One*

*will be taken and the other left.”* I do not know whether Columbus, the discoverer of America, knew this passage. If he did, he could have drawn the following conclusions: if the Second Coming will take place in a single moment and the Bible describes both a day and night situation then this is only possible on a sphere. I can thereby sail to the west and still arrive in the east. It is of note that the evangelist Luke wrote these words at a time when the majority of mankind had no idea that the earth was round.

These two verses highlight a further essential point. At the Second Coming there will be a separation of mankind into two groups; those who will be saved and those who will be lost. With that the true problem of mankind is addressed. Only one question counts, “Do I belong to the saved ones or the lost ones?”

### Already decided?

God created all men as personalities equipped with a free will. This clearly distinguishes us from animals. This free will allows us to either distance ourselves from God or draw closer to Him. God has done everything in Christ to show us the way to Heaven. Nevertheless the Bible teaches clearly and warningly that not all choose the path of salvation. What could God do? Were He to take away our free will, He would rob us of our personality. We would be machines, puppets, or robots merely executing their specific programs. The will is an important part of our personality in this world as in the next. Our choice, therefore, determines our eternal destination.

Are we prepared for this coming day? In the parable of the ten virgins our Lord Jesus urges us to be ready. He asks us to consider that all ten were “truly faithful”. They firmly believed that the wedding would take place! Nevertheless, not all of them acted according to their faith. And only five reached the destination. To those who were not ready Jesus said, *“I do not know you”* (Matthew 25:12). With that they lost out on a whole eternity. It came about as Heinrich Kemner once said, “You can also sleep

yourself into Hell!” “Believers” who only accept facts, but never apply them to their personal lives, gamble with their eternal life.

### All three or none

Every year at Christmas many enjoy celebrating the baby Jesus in the manger. It often stops there. But the “3 Cs” are inseparable. The **crib** is part of Jesus becoming man, the **cross** part of His suffering followed by the victory of His ascension, and the **crown** part of His Kingdom that will be revealed to all at His Second Coming. From the beginning of time this was God’s plan of salvation from the original catastrophe of this world. The last catastrophe, which those without Jesus will experience, is Hell. Unfortunately it will cost more lives than all catastrophes in history—and this death will last forever. Yet at Christmas, but not only then, God asks us individually whether we want to accept the gift of *“Crib, Cross and Crown”*. Say “Yes”, accept the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ and confirm it with a prayer! Your prayer might resemble the following:

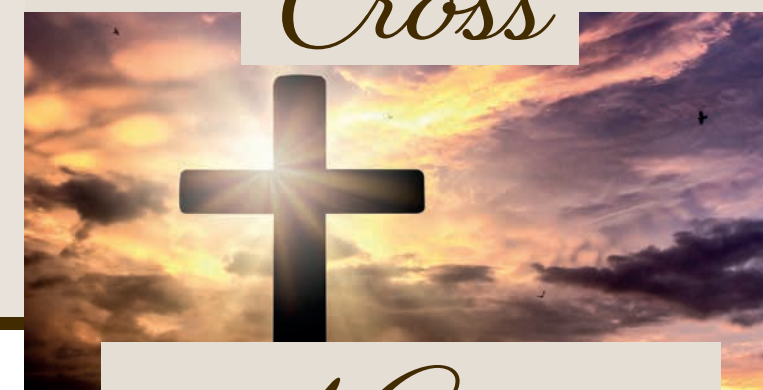
*“Lord Jesus, I have read that I can only enter Heaven through You. I want to be with You in Heaven one day. Please save me from Hell, the place I deserve to go to as a result of all my sins. Because You love me so much You died for me on the cross and took upon Yourself the punishment for my sins. You see all my wrongdoings since my childhood.*

*You know every sin I have committed, not only those which I can remember, but also those that I have long forgotten. You know every desire of my heart. In front of You I am like an open book. I beg You to forgive me my sins, which I deeply regret. Please come into my life now and make it new. Help me to give up all that is not right in Your eyes. Bestow me with new habits, which You can bless. Help me to understand Your Word, the Bible. Help me to understand what You are saying to me and give me an obedient heart so that I may do what pleases You. From now on You shall be my Lord. I want to follow You. Please show me the way I should go in all walks of my life. I thank you for hearing my prayer that I may now be a child of God who, one day, will be with You in Heaven. Amen.”*



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# Crib, Cross and Crown

Astronauts have seen our earth from space and described it as a brilliant blue pearl on a black background. The obvious assumption is that this represents a wonderful paradise. But with all of its undoubtedly beautiful things, it also conceals a world full of catastrophe. Famines, and the turmoils of war, bear eloquent testimony to this. The Second World War was one of the saddest low points in this litany of tragedy. In early 2020 the coronavirus pandemic began its worldwide rampage.

## The original catastrophe

This word's primeval catastrophe did not occur on a battlefield, but in a beautiful garden. God had told the first two humans not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:17). But they disregarded this one commandment. This was the primordial disaster known as the Fall (into sin). It is the root cause of all other catastrophes that have ever befallen this world. With the rupture of the close fellowship between God and man, humanity fell into the maelstrom of sin and ruin. If God were to allow even one sin into heaven, suffering and death would enter there as well, and God does not want that.



## God's remedy – He sent His Son

God had a plan for salvation even in the Garden of Eden and He announced it, although in a very encrypted manner, immediately after the Fall: ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”*** (Genesis 3:15). A never ending chain of prophetic statements points again and again to the coming Saviour, e.g.:

- ***“A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter (i.e. a symbol of sovereignty) shall rise out of Israel”*** (Numbers 24:17).
- ***“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days”*** (Micah 5:2).

The very last announcement of the Saviour was delivered by an angel as he revealed to Joseph the birth and the name of the Holy Child: ***“Mary as your wife ... will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”*** (Matthew 1:20-21).

In the course of history many people have walked this earth who have made a name for themselves among men, such as emperors and kings, poets and philosophers, gurus and magicians, good people, and evil people. Never before

had the world seen a god until the first Christmas. The child in the crib is not a god as the Greeks imagined on Mount Olympus or the Germanic tribes in Valhalla. He is the Only One who could say: I am the Creator through Whom everything was made (John 1:1&3); ***“I am ... the Truth”*** (John 14:6); ***“I am the good shepherd”*** (John 10:11); ***“I am the door”*** (to Heaven) (John 10:7).

Which way did He choose to come into this world? Did He arrive with drums and trumpets or roars of thunder? Did He come with the heavenly hosts? No! God chose an unmarried woman from Israel, Mary, who found favour in His eyes to bring the Son of God into the world. With this He even surprised the Jews, who knew, for example, the following prophetic words about their Messiah: ***“Behold, your King is coming to you”*** (Zechariah 9:9) or ***“It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms”*** (Daniel 2:44). For this reason they did not expect a child in a manger but a king! He was supposed to appear with power and drive the Romans from Israel, set up residence in Jerusalem and nominate the high priests and scribes as His ministers.

But Jesus did not come in this way, so the Jews rejected Him. They had overlooked those passages of Scripture, which prophesied His first coming as a child. ***“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given”*** (Isaiah 9:6). It depends on Him alone whether we spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell. This Messiah may be characterised by the “3 Cs”:

- **Crib** (This first **C** symbolises the coming of Jesus into the world.)
- **Cross** (This **C** symbolises our salvation through the death of Jesus on the cross.)
- **Crown** (This **C** symbolises the reign of Jesus on His Second Coming as King.)

No cross without the crib! No crown without the cross! Without the crib and without the cross no Heaven for us! Therefore, there had to be Christmas first!



## What is so irritating about the cross?

Critics of the Christian faith repeatedly ask, “Why this brutal death on the cross? In your faith everything revolves around an instrument of execution. Could God not have chosen a gentler way to reconcile mankind to Himself? Why was the path of reconciliation paved with death, agony, tears, and grief? Could it not have been accomplished in a nicer, more aesthetic and elegant way? Could God not have turned a blind eye to our human shortcomings?”

All the “whys” are irrelevant because they belittle sin. That seems to me to be the sickness of our times. Only the cross shows us what no philosopher nor scholar can:

- The cross shows us how deep the abyss is between God and man because of sin. This abyss is so immeasurably deep that Hell is the consequence (Matthew 25:46).
- The cross gives us a realistic view of how far God, in His love for us, was prepared to go. He went so far as to tear from His heart that which was most beloved to Him, His Son Jesus.
- The cross of Jesus is God's deepest humiliation. The Creator of the universe and of all life allows Himself, without resistance, to be executed like a criminal. What a high price for sin! But through this, Jesus can invite every sinner unto Himself. ***“... whoever comes to me I will never cast out”*** (John 6:37). It is also true, though, that whosoever does not come is lost, and lost forever!

- The cross also marks the end of all human ways of salvation. For this reason Jesus could exclusively declare, ***“No one comes to the Father except through me”*** (John 14:6). In the face of the cross all religions are only a glittering mirage in the desert of lost mankind.

The message of Christmas is, together with the message of the cross, a unique message of salvation: ***“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”*** (Luke 19:10).

## He will come again

Jesus will come into this world a second time, though no longer as a child in the manger, but as King, Judge, and World Ruler. In Matthew 24:30 He clearly promises this event. ***“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”***

What a reason for joy! The Creator of the world appears! The Saviour of the world comes! Why then is it written in Revelation 1:7 that all tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him? Why do they cry out to the mountains and rocks, ***“Fall on us and hide us from the face of him ...!”*** (Revelation 6:16)? Many have heard of the necessary decision for this Jesus during their lifetime, but have said, “No!” Now they are lost and there is no way back. It is irrevocably too late. This is the reason why they cry and mourn.

