

Spring 2023


# INTOUCH

THE

CROSS

“Behold the Lamb of  
God, who takes away  
the sin of the world”

*John 1:29*

 St John's Lindow  
[www.saint-johns.org.uk](http://www.saint-johns.org.uk)





## Crucifixion in the Ancient World

In *1 Corinthians* 1:18, Paul says that in the eyes of 'those who are perishing' the 'word of the cross' is 'folly'. This denotes, not merely a lack of wisdom. The early Christian writer, Justin, explains that the upset, caused by the Christian message in the ancient world, is really *madness*.

"They say that our *madness* consists in the fact that we put a *crucified man* in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of the world". (*Apology I*, 13.4).

It was particularly offensive to the imperial magistrate, Pliny the younger, that the one who was honoured in Christian worship 'as a god' had been nailed to a cross by the Roman authorities as a state criminal. His friend Tacitus speaks no less harshly of a 'pernicious superstition' and knows of the shameful fate of Jesus, who 'suffered the extreme penalty'. The Jewish historian,

Josephus, describes crucifixion as 'the most wretched' of deaths. From the 3rd century BC onwards, there is evidence of the word *crux* as a vulgar taunt among the lower classes, including slaves and prostitutes. It was an obscene word; we might well print: c\*\*\*\*f\*\*\*\*\*.

Crucifixion was a barbaric form of execution of the utmost cruelty. It was a punishment in which the brutality of the executioners was freely allowed. Because of its harshness crucifixion was almost always inflicted only on the lower classes. The upper classes could reckon with more 'humane' punishment. The Roman world was all agreed that crucifixion was a horrific, disgusting business. Crucifixion was widespread and frequent, but the cultured literary world wanted to have nothing to do with it and as a rule kept quiet

about it. Nevertheless, in most Roman writers, crucifixion appears as the typical punishment for slaves.

When Paul spoke about the 'crucified Christ' (*1 Corinthians* 1.23, 2:2; *Galatians* 3:1) every hearer in the Greek-speaking East knew that this 'Christ' had suffered a particularly cruel and shameful death, which as a rule was reserved for hardened criminals, rebellious slaves and rebels against the Roman state. That this crucified man, Jesus Christ, could truly be a divine being sent to earth, God's Son, the Lord of all and the coming judge of the world, must inevitably have been thought by any educated man to be utter 'madness'. Prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus, this was precisely the view of 'Saul of Tarsus' as he was known then (later Paul the apostle). As he says in *2 Corinthians* 5:16: "From now on we regard no one from a human point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer". Paul had a complete turnaround in his thinking and attitudes – what today might be called a total paradigm shift.

In *Philippians* 2: 5-11, Paul composed – or quoted – an early Christian hymn, which says the Son of God:

***"... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a slave, being made in human likeness.***

***And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself***

***And became obedient to death – even death on a cross."***

As the final section (vv 9-11) of that hymn says, the shameful cross of *humiliation* was followed by the glorious *exaltation* of Jesus; the basis of our Easter hope, so that one day:

***"At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"***.

# CHAT FROM THE CHAIRS

Marc Hollinshead talks to: May and Ken

**Marc: How long have you been living in England?**

M&K: We moved here a year ago after spending sixty years in Hong Kong. We used to live in Wilmslow, but two months ago we bought a house in Handforth and will be spending the rest of our lives here.

**Marc: That's a big move after being in Hong Kong for so long! Are you enjoying living here?**

M&K: We could only speak basic English when we moved here so that made it very difficult as we didn't know anyone. We're very happy now, though. Our daughter also lives in Wilmslow with her husband so she always comes over for dinner on Sundays.

**Marc: It's great that your daughter lives so close to you. Do you manage to keep yourself busy and meet new people as well?**

May: We're retired now but for five months I have been volunteering at Hope Central and a charity shop, both for one day a week. It's really helped me to understand British culture and speak to new people. In Hong Kong I worked in a bank for most of my life and was very happy working there.

**Marc: That sounds like a great way to get settled into your new home. Is it through this volunteering you came to St John's?**

M&K: As we didn't know how to meet new people, we actually used a social media group called UK Hong Kong. We managed to find St John's from that group and were brave enough to email Simon!

**Marc: We're very glad that you decided to send that email! How are you finding St John's and church life?**

M&K: We only sometimes went to church in Hong Kong so we are new to the gospel. Simon has been very kind and we want to learn more about Jesus. We



can sometimes find it hard to understand and listen to different accents, but it is a lot better now since we moved.

**Marc: Have you been going to the English conversation classes to help your understanding?**

M&K: We have, yes. It's been so great to see other people from Hong Kong and learn the language. We're also thankful to Alison and all of the volunteers as they have been very helpful to us.

**Marc: It's such a fantastic group and the volunteers do great work! How has this helped you both since joining the classes?**

M&K: We feel like we can now meet new people and not feel scared. Coming to St John's and the conversation classes has given us the courage to do this, so we are now very happy in our new home and learning about Jesus.

**Marc: We're happy that you're settling in so well. Thank you, May and Ken, for being willing to share some of your story with us.**



## Nigel Brooks

It's so difficult to choose a favourite but I am going to say *In Christ Alone*.

This song is written by Stuart Townend, a Christian musician who I listen to often and whose songs I love to play in church. His music often has a Celtic lilt which I find particularly up-lifting. The opening lines to this song are:

*In Christ alone my hope is found.  
He is my light, my strength, my song.  
This Corner-stone, this solid ground.  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm*

What words of encouragement that God's gift of grace and love for us, and hope for the future, can be found simply by trusting in Christ alone.



## Chris Piltz

I have chosen *When I survey the wondrous cross*.

This has always been a favourite of mine. I find it very moving. Jesus made such a great sacrifice in dying on the cross for our sins and it was such amazing love:

*See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

## John Bowler

In church we have recently been thinking about the word "grace" during Sunday mornings. So I thought it would be relevant to maybe choose one of my favourite devotional choruses, which is also relevant for Easter:

*Only by grace can we enter  
Only by grace can we stand  
Not by our human endeavour  
But by the blood of the Lamb*

I've chosen this not just because it's a beautiful chorus but because it has such meaningful words relating to Easter.



## George Perrin

*'Oh to see the Dawn'*

Unbelievably I like the tune and believe I half know it. Don't laugh!

Of course if I had been there at the time I would either have stayed in bed or been amongst the mockers. But the words, particularly of the chorus, sum up in many ways my belief of both my need for forgiveness, and that it is achieved on the cross. It pretty much contains the gospel.

*This, the power of the cross:  
Son of God – slain for us.  
What a love! What a cost!  
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

**John the Baptist was doing his job of telling people all about Jesus.**



**Read John ch 1 v29**

What animal does John say Jesus is like? Draw one here.



In Bible times, a lamb was killed and offered to God as a \_\_\_\_\_

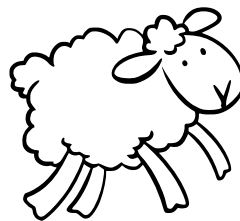
If someone had \_\_\_\_\_ against God, they would say \_\_\_\_\_ to him then offer him a gift called a \_\_\_\_\_, such as a lamb.

We have 3 words begin with the letter S. Can you fit them in the blank spaces in the box?

**Sinned  
Sorry  
Sacrifice**

Can you think how Jesus was like a lamb?

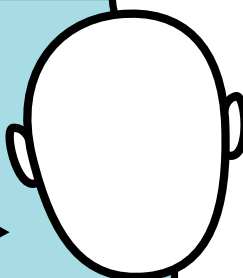
Clue: Use the longest "S" word to help you.



Can you draw the shape of the place where Jesus was killed as a sacrifice?

Think about the wrong things you have done.

How does that make you feel?  
Fill in the face. →



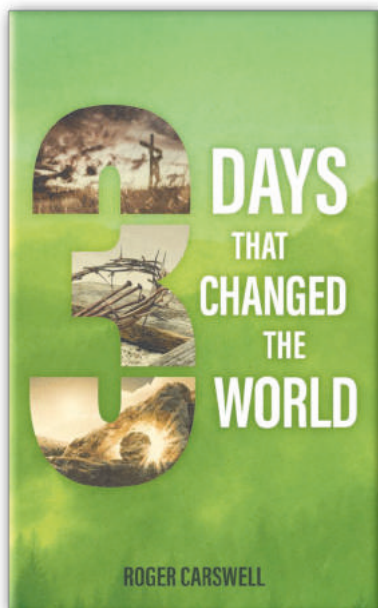
But if we trust in Jesus, he takes away all the sins we have ever done so that we can be forgiven and can be friends with God!

How does that make you feel?  
Thank God that Jesus takes away our sin!

What did Jesus' death on the cross take away?



# BOOK REVIEWS

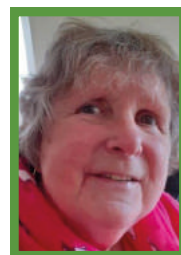


## *3 Days that Changed the World – Roger Carswell*

*Reviewed by Freddie Kennard*

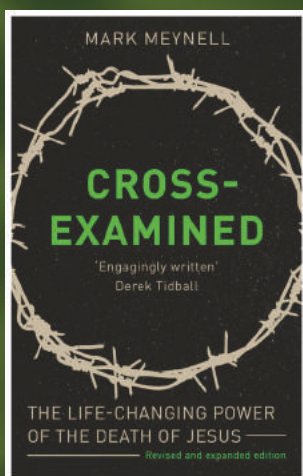
'3 Days that Changed the World' would be good for anyone to read who is unsure of the message of Christianity, or without any prior Bible knowledge, with no passages to look up.

It explains how our separation from God was put right by Jesus over 3 momentous days. That restoration had been prophesied throughout the bible and anticipated for many years. In the Garden of Eden mankind had enjoyed an intimate friendship with the Lord until Satan led them into rebelling against God, with all the brokenness that followed. But then 3 wonderful days - from the Passover meal on the Thursday evening; His death on the cross bearing our sins Friday afternoon; and His resurrection, and appearance to Mary Magdalene, on Sunday.



Now we can all have access to God through Jesus, the perfect sacrifice without the need any other mediator. And that relationship can deepen and mature as we give him access to all areas of our lives – an ongoing process. We are encouraged to read the Bible ourselves where we learn much and know his plans for us.

A concise and very readable book to pass on to family, friends, strangers!

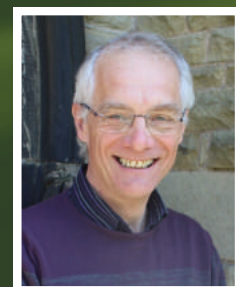


## *Cross-Examined – Mark Meynell*

*Reviewed by Phil Edgington*

What does the symbol of 'the cross' mean to you? Perhaps it's a 'logo' for Christianity. It might seem a bit mysterious or even a bit weird to have an instrument of death so central to the Christian faith. Why was Jesus' death necessary anyway and what relevance does it have to me, two thousand years later?

If these, or any other questions about the death of Jesus, have ever been on your mind you may have been reluctant to ask Simon in case you are given a big theology book. If so, this book may just be the one you've been



waiting for! Mark Meynell has a rare gift for taking excellent Biblical and theological understanding and communicating it in an engaging way. The book is quite short (only about 160 pages) with great little summaries at the end of each of the short chapters – so ideal for reading in short bursts. At the end, there is a 'study guide' that would be good to do with a friend or small group if you find that helpful.

With aid of many good illustrations, he helps us see (afresh?) why the apparent symbol of defeat is the greatest victory imaginable and why it is so amazing that a Holy God can also be a loving God. The final section ('part 4') of the book relates the impact of the cross to our everyday experience and really helps us understand the expectation of the 'normal' Christian experience.

For those of you thinking 'I already have a stack of unread books to trip over', why not borrow this one and promise to give it back by a certain date? Deadlines help I find.

*(PS I borrowed mine from Leonie so ask her not me!)*

# NEW FACES

hello

hi!

nice to meet you!



Olena, Artem & Yaroslav

We are a family from Ukraine who arrived in England on November 6. Simon is our sponsor, we are very grateful for the shelter from the war. After arriving, we started coming to St John's every Sunday, with Nicky giving us a lift from Macclesfield. It is always a great opportunity to pray to God and meet new people. All three of us are currently attending the Christianity Explored course and studying the Bible. We are happy that God is helping us.

welcome!



Hi everyone, we are Nicole and Kenneth, and we have just moved to Wilmslow from Melbourne, Australia, but we are originally from Hong Kong. We've got one boy, Aiden, who is 10 years old, and one little toddler, Alyssa, and she's twelve months old. I'm a 'stay-at-home mum' and my partner does IT telecom work from home. I heard about St John's from my neighbour, Alex, who recommended it to us. It is our pleasure to join in!

hi

nice to meet you



...and welcoming one more new face, Holly and Alex's new arrival! Timothy was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January and is the younger brother of Enoch.

new baby!

hello!

# Perfect Sacrifice

## *How The Cross fixes our righteousness problem*



I have recently been doing a weekly Bible study with some of the Iranian men who've been coming to our church and living in a nearby hotel as they seek asylum. Most of these men are Christians (because of the persecution this brings, they are fleeing the regime in Iran).

I asked them if they had any questions about the Christian faith, and one man asked me to explain what the word 'righteousness' meant. It was an excellent question. I took them, in their Farsi New Testaments, to Romans 1:16-17:

*'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes... For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed —a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

I explained that righteousness is to have a correct relationship to the will of God. To be rightly related to God who is perfect in character and nature, and how that is seen and expressed in His law. We then saw how this exposes our human problem, as Paul goes on to say in Romans 3:10-12: *"There is no one righteous, not even one... no one who seeks God. All have turned away ... there is no one who does good, not even one."*

I went on to explain that even if our actions are good, often our motives are wrong (we've been preaching through Matthew 6 and saw Jesus' exposure of the Pharisees' hypocrisy in their giving, prayers and fasting). There were lots of nods from the men in the room. Everybody understood and agreed.

So, how can we in our innate unrighteousness relate to a perfectly righteous God? We looked again at Romans and saw Paul's joy in the gospel. In the gospel we see the power of God to make our relationship with Him possible through faith. Paul shows us in Romans 3:25 [that on the cross] *'God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood —to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness...'*

Through Jesus' death of Christ on the cross, through the shedding of his blood, God's righteousness is demonstrated, our sin is atoned for, and we can rightly relate to God. Crucially, we saw that this relationship is initiated, and continued, through faith in Jesus Christ. For my Iranian friends who grew up in a culture of Islam the fact that we can relate to God through faith and not our religious effort is beautiful. It was also beautiful to the apostle Paul and hence the reason why he was not ashamed of the gospel and the cross.

There were many smiling faces and nodding heads in our little bible study. The cross of Christ brings us joy when we combine it with faith and understand just how much it means for us too.

**Steve is the vicar of St Chad's Handforth, and grew up at St John's! Many will remember his parents, Hugh and Joyce.**

# SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMME

	Mornings 10am	SUNDAYS	Evenings 6.30pm	HOME GROUPS
16 Apr	<b>Meeting the Risen Jesus Part 1</b>			<p>Meeting in various homes, on Wednesdays, Thursdays &amp; Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's Word and encourage one another.</p> <p><b>Romans : Such good news!</b></p> <p>During the summer our homegroups are linked to our Sunday morning series.</p> <p>Meeting weekly the groups begin on 4th May and finish on 20th July. Dates given are Thursdays but some groups meet at other times (full details on weekly noticesheet). One week each half term will be a Prayer Evening (see below).</p> <p>In addition a men's fellowship meets at 6.30am Fridays</p> <p><b>MONTHLY PRAYER EVENTS (in church rooms)</b></p> <p><b>Sat 22 April</b> Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am</p> <p><b>Thur 18 May</b> Prayer Evening 8-9.30pm</p> <p><b>Thur 15 June</b> Prayer Evening 8-9.30pm</p> <p><b>Sat 24 June</b> Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am</p>
23 Apr	<b>Annual Review</b>			
30 Apr	<b>Such Good News! 'What is the Gospel?' Romans 1:1-7</b>		<b>The Gospel Grows Postcard from Corinth Acts 18:1-17</b>	
7 May	<b>'Why preach the gospel?' Romans 1:8-18</b>		<b>On the road again Acts 18:18-28</b>	
14 May	<b>All age Parade Meeting the Risen Jesus Part 2</b>		<b>More than a name Acts 19:1-22</b>	
21 May	<b>'From what do we need to be saved'? Romans 1:18-32</b>		<b>Let's start a riot! Acts 19:23-41</b>	
28 May	<b>Pentecost Acts 2:1-41</b>	<b>The works of Jesus (continued) Acts 20:1-12</b>		
4 Jun	<b>'The problem we all face' Romans 3:9-21</b>		<b>To the leaders Acts 20:13-38</b>	
11 Jun	<b>All age Parade The power of the risen Jesus Acts 3:1-16</b>		<b>Gospel courage Acts 21:1-26</b>	
18 Jun	<b>Michael &amp; Steph Baldwin UFM mission partners</b>	<b>Romance, Race &amp; Risk Going away and coming home Ruth 1</b>		
25 Jun	<b>'God's solution!' Romans 3:21-31</b>		<b>Under the wings of God Ruth 2</b>	
2 Jul	<b>'What does having faith mean?' Romans 4:1-17</b>	<b>Encounter on the threshing floor Ruth 3</b>		
9 Jul	<b>'A leap in the dark?' Romans 4:18-25</b>		<b>The Redeemer Ruth 4:1-12</b>	
16 Jul	<b>'What does the gospel give us?' Romans 5:1-11</b>		<b>The Royal Family Ruth 4:13-22</b>	
23 Jul	<b>'How will the gospel succeed?' Romans 5:12-21</b>			

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**April 21**  
Men's Curry Night  
Coach and Four

**7.30pm**

**May 7**  
Evergreens 'Coronation' Lunch

**12.15pm**

**June 18**  
Evergreens Lunch

**12.15pm**

**April 28**  
*Loving our neighbour* – a meeting of the Christian Institute, St John's Knutsford

**7.45pm**

**May 20**  
Ladies' Breakfast, church rooms

**9am**

**July 1**  
James Doo's ordination, St Mark's New Ferry

**10.30am**