

# **A MEMORIAL FOR THE CRUCIFIED ONE**

**By Paul Penno Jr.**

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Let us pay our respects to all veterans and active duty servicemen and woman. We enjoy a free society. Ultimately it is by virtue of the cross of Christ that we have religious freedom and a brief respite from strife in order to proclaim the gospel here and across the world.

When I visited France for a Bible Conference, my host was an elderly Adventist minister who remembered the war there. I shared with him about my father's tour in Europe as a medic in the army. He was part of the "Free France" movement. He said, "Tell your father thank you for coming and helping us."

The American nation was slow to enter the war against Hitler on the side of Britain and the "Free French." Until Pearl Harbor the people weren't sure. At that time apparently nobody knew what would happen in the Holocaust. "Krystalnacht" seemed far away, almost impossible.

"Krystalnacht" means "The Night of Broken Glass." In 1938, using the pretence of revenge for the assassination of a minor German foreign minister in Paris, Nazi SA Stormtroopers were encouraged to begin street violence against Jewish shops, synagogues, and institutions. In all, 200 synagogues were burned, homes were destroyed with axes and sledgehammers, people were thrown from windows into the street, kicked to death, beaten with fists and truncheons, stabbed, and

shot. Torah scrolls, and Jewish works of history and philosophy were burned. The violence left 100 dead, and it was also at this time that nearly 1 in every ten of the Jews left in the German Reich were rounded up for detention in concentration camps such as Dachau. Krystalnacht occurred on the night of November 9th.

The horror of World War II seems murky to the minds of the generations who have lived subsequent to those days. And the Memorial Day weekend is a grand holiday. Most of us have little or no sense of reality as to what this freedom and pleasure cost others in suffering and blood. Occasionally a voice is raised pleading for sobriety and adequate gratitude.

Does the world—do any of us—sense an adequate gratitude for what our present life on this planet cost the Son of God? Do we realize what it means to say that “the wages of sin is death”? (Rom. 6:23). Not that God arbitrarily inflicts death on sinners, but that sin itself is self-destructive in nature, that life as we know it would have ceased on this planet except that there was a “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8)? The “Lamb” had to be the One whose name is “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us,” our second or “last Adam,” who truly died the real thing, the second death. Horrible as death was for the millions who died in World War II, none truly died the second death.

Let us be sober and realize at least something of what the Free World owes to those brave soldiers who suffered in World War II. My father took

shrapnel from close combat in Europe which he bears to this day. On at least a couple of occasions, incoming shells failed to explode just a few feet away from his position. He would go out and administer medical aid to his wounded fellow soldiers under enemy fire.

Let us be grateful for those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. None of us deserves this peaceful respite that we have in world history. So let us as Christians plead for God's mercy to enable us to realize honestly the constraint that *agape* imposes. It means simply that self is crucified with Christ. Being sober doesn't mean being sad or gloomy; it means being conscious, thoughtful, aware of truth. People with extremely shallow understanding are childishly, apparently happy, but it's as thin as a coat of varnish. When self is crucified with the Redeemer, the happiness is deep, "that your joy may be full" (Jn. 16:24), the idea being, "in depth." It's the awareness of what an eternal grave in hell could mean, from which we are redeemed. For all time there's a tear glistening in our smiles of joy.

At this Memorial Day, we pray that the Lord may "make wars to cease unto the end of the earth [and] break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariots in the fire" (that is, the murderous tanks and assault bombers; see Psalm 46:9). The very name of Jesus, the Son of God, is "the Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). Millions sacrificed their lives in World War I in order to fight "the war to end all wars," only to have died in vain as World War II sent many more millions into undeserved death.

The angels announced at His birth that Jesus would bring “on earth peace [and] good will among men” (see Luke 2:14). But the Prince of peace was “despised and rejected of men,” and expelled from the world He came to save. Those of us whose lives started in the 20th century have lived through the most bloody span of years the earth has ever known in its 6000 years of history. According to the Bible, the only way that the Prince of peace could bring peace to the earth without being “frustrated” and stymied would be for His people to cooperate with Him in His work. In other words, it’s useless for us to pray, “Prince of peace, please bring peace to this hate-filled, war-riven world” unless we serve as His agents in enabling Him to do so. “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,” He declares (John 20:21). He is the Vine, we are the branches that must be intimately bound with Him for His purposes to be worked out in the earth.

He spells out the formula in Revelation 7:1-4. There He promises that He will undertake to “hold the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow,” provided His people on earth proclaim “the seal of the living God.” He commands those terrible four winds that began to break loose in World Wars I and II, in the Vietnam War, and other wars, and now our Afghanistan war, “Hurt not the earth . . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” It’s an illusion for God’s people to assume that horrible wars contribute to the progress of God’s work by bringing conviction to hearts and taking away our “idols.” It’s not His plan to forcibly remove our “idols”! War terrorizes people

so they can't even contemplate the Gospel. No, war has no redeeming evangelistic value. Now let us learn what is His "sealing message" and commit ourselves to proclaim it. It's the long overdue message that is yet to "lighten the earth with glory" (Rev. 18:1-4). Lord, please awaken us!

For sure, it was never, and it is never, God's will that the world suffer another horrible world war. Christ "came not to judge the world, but to save it" (see Jn. 12:47). It was never His will that the Holocaust take place. The horrors depicted in the Book of Revelation are not presented as something HE wants to inflict on humanity, but as warnings of what Satan purposes to bring on the world. And God would prepare us and teach us how to escape the hell Satan wants. Revelation would encourage us that we are not his helpless captives; through all the "hail and fire" of the seven trumpets of chapters 8-11 there is the constant ministry of the "angel" with His "golden censor" filled with the "much incense" of Christ's righteousness, that "He should offer it with prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which [is] before the throne" (8:3, 4).

The tornado winds of human passion are represented as being restrained by "four angels" whose mission is to "hold" them that they should not devastate "the earth" until the "angel ascending from the east" can "seal the servants of our God in their foreheads" (7:1-4). But while we pray ever so piously for God to "hold" those tornadoes of human evil, shouldn't we cooperate with Him by proclaiming the Good News of the sealing message? Wherever there is trouble, there is where

the reconciling message must be proclaimed. There is nothing Satan hates worse than the pure Gospel; let's not be cowards and let him have his way again!

How could anyone distill any good news out of the cat-and-mouse game we're playing with Iran? That Iran should have the capability of nuclear weaponry is unthinkable.

Now, where's the good news? There is Good News: (1) God still "so loves" the world for which He gave His only begotten Son; (2) His gospel of grace does reach at least some people who respond to it; (3) those some are still scattered among all nations, including Iran; (4) through them, the Holy Spirit still restrains those tornado forces of evil that threaten to destroy the world itself—Revelation 7 is still true when it reminds us that God has commissioned "four angels" to hold those four winds of strife; (5) the same God who sent Jonah to preach to the heathen Ninevites sends His messengers today with a message calling for repentance; (6) His church has the privilege of leading out in accepting Christ's call to repentance, enabling the modern "Ninevehs" also to repent; (7) the Bible is still a true Book which predicts that the world is to be lighted with the glory of a closing message of Good News (Revelation 14, 18)—which means that the pure, true gospel of Christ will be given precedence over Iran's (or others') evil purposes.

Yes, there is Good News; but it imposes a responsibility on us. For if this planet possesses the means of self-destruction, the only conclusion we can come to is that our continued life on this planet

is a gift of God's grace. That requires thanksgiving, and renewed dedication to the One whose grace gives us all we have.

There was an Adventist Christian who, during the second World War, wanted to serve his country, but did not want to shoot anyone. He refused to bear arms. His own fellow soldiers in the army didn't want him by their side because they thought he was a coward.

When they failed to get him thrown out they were forced to take him with them to the Pacific War. On the invasion of Okinawa he single-handedly rescued scores of his wounded and dying fellows from an escarpment under enemy fire. They learned who the true hero was. Doss, the Adventist, stood by them in their greatest hour of need.

With whom do you want to go to war? Only those who exhibit loyalty to the true gospel are worthy of standing with the faithful in this final hour of crisis.

Do you like to fight battles? Or do you like to run away from them? I've met many wonderful Christian people, members of the church, who want peace so much that they refuse to get down in the arena where battles for the Lord must be fought. To tell the truth, they'd rather watch TV than study for themselves to know the truth about the issues in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. But Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith," and Jude says (vss. 3, 4) that we "should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," for there are "certain men crept in unawares" who seek to corrupt that faith. And Jesus tells us quite clearly, "Think not that I am

come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).

Wow! Is this what it means to follow Christ?

"But," says someone, "surely this doesn't apply to conflicts WITHIN the church!? The world is full of controversy; I go to church so I can find a place of rest and peace!" Well, I must tell the truth. Revelation 12:17 says that the dragon, the devil, in these last days, is "wroth" with the true church, and has gone to make war with the remnant church, where his most fearful strategy is to make war within the church against the pure, true gospel of Jesus. If Satan can corrupt THAT, he hopes yet to win the war against Christ. So Peter's advice is exactly what we need today: "Be sober, be vigilant." "Resist" him "steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8, 9). But please be sure that you have your wits about you; that word "sober" means to think carefully lest you end up "resisting" the true work of the Holy Spirit! If you do THAT, you've crossed that line beyond which repentance is impossible. The stakes in the great controversy are high; the only place where you can avoid the battle is the grave. And please don't choose to go there! Get on your knees; study; learn; stay awake; "watch"; and stand "for the right though the heavens fall," says one wise writer.

It seems increasingly difficult for those four angels to restrain those hurricane winds. Long ago the frightful "battle of Armageddon" spoken of in Rev



16:13-16 and in numerous OT prophecies, should have taken place. Those four angels have bought us a little time of peace. But let's not kid ourselves into assuming that it's business as usual, that we can use this present illusion of peace and prosperity for our selfish pleasure.

Christ's same sermon in Lk. 21 urges us right now to "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged" with sensual pleasures of this world, all innocent of themselves, but out of place for a time of emergency, a time of war (vs. 34). The war behind all wars is winding up, "the great controversy between Christ and Satan." Let's get close to Jesus, our great High Priest.

After describing the great signs that indicate the time of the end is near (6:12-17), Revelation 7 describes events in the last days when terrible violence is seething like a cauldron below the surface in human hearts world-wide. It is symbolized by "the four winds of the earth," a tornado of passion that is about to break loose. Four heavenly angels are commissioned to "hold" those "four winds" as one might hold a team of wild horses. Then another angel comes on the scene "from the east" crying with a loud voice to the four angels, "Hold," "Hurt not the earth . . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Thus is symbolized the proclamation of a message that prepares a people to be ready, not only for death, but for the literal second coming of Christ.

The symbolism is vivid, like a cartoon explaining in a few words the meaning of world history today. God has entrusted to His people on earth, His

“remnant” of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 the work of proclaiming the “sealing message.” If they will be faithful in proclaiming “the everlasting gospel” in a way that the message can prepare a people for translation, then the Lord says He will do His part and “hold” or restrain those terrible “four winds” of war. The “sealing” truth is not a watered down message borrowed from Babylon, but the authentic gospel that Paul says “is the power of God unto salvation,” “the message of Christ’s righteousness” (Rom 1:16).

Oh how much we all hoped that “we” could learn lessons from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Where is the “Prince of Peace”? What is Jesus doing? Is He helpless to intervene? Is He not King of kings and Lord of lords?

(1) He is NOT YET “King,” for He is still High Priest ministering His blood in the heavenly sanctuary. This is what the Book of Hebrews and Revelation say. (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; Rev. 11:15-18).

(2) He will become King when He as Intercessor He leaves that High Priestly ministry (Rev. 19:1-16; 22:10-12).

(3) Adam sold out his appointed rulership of this world to Satan; he is now “prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30). Almost all have chosen him as their “prince” (Rev. 13:8); and that is why it was “the princes of this world” who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

(4) Far from now being “the King of kings” and “Prince of princes,” Jesus Christ still remains “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). Many even of

those who take the name of “Christian” are at heart His enemies (Mt. 7:21-23; 25:11, 12; Lk. 6:46).

(5) Although Satan is “the prince of this world,” Jesus can work through those who “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth” (Rev. 14:5). He commissions them to be “the light of the world” and the preserving “salt of the earth” (Mt. 5:13-16). It is for that reason that He is able to commission “four angels” to hold “the four winds of the earth” that they should not permit total hell on earth to break out (Rev. 7:1-4). The best way to help the present and all future war-ravaged nations is repentance, revival, and reformation within the church that professes to constitute Christ’s followers.

For thousands of years, enlightened rulers have used dialogue and diplomacy to solve political problems. Then, if all else failed, they would use military force. The result: wars. Many sincere godly people have understood that the Bible supports the idea of a “just war.” For example, the war against the Canaanites in the Promised Land. God told Israel that it was a “just war” because those people had rejected 400 years of God’s continued efforts to give them repentance for their sins against humanity.

“Justice” in warfare today is elusive. (1) No personality, no race, no ethnic group, no nation, is of itself more “righteous” than another. The human race are all sinners “in Adam.” “All” of whatever religion have participated in the murder of the Son of God who was sent here precisely for the purpose of saving this planet. Rom. 3:23. This is the world’s

corporate guilt. The truth must be recognized, believed.

(2) If there is such a thing as any “rightness” or “righteousness” in any “just war,” its source is therefore the righteousness of Christ. No nation or race can claim it. It’s always a gift of God’s grace. Pride and arrogance immediately vanish.

(3) God laid that corporate guilt on Christ as the second Adam. The ultimate sin of mankind was His murder, and He forgave them for it (Lk. 23:34).

(4) Thus He calls on us to forgive our enemies, personal and . . . (did He mean it?) national (Mt. 5:43-48). Politicians will immediately say, That’s impossible to do! Very well, then there’s war, with all its attendant horrors. The ultimate result at the very end: Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16).

(5) In the meantime, any hope? Yes; proclaim Christ’s beautiful truth of justification by faith. It will get through to some of “the kings of the earth” so angels can hold the four winds until the gospel commission can be finished in a time of relative peace (Rev. 7:1-4).

The “great controversy between Christ and Satan” is the conflict that leads up to the final Battle of Armageddon. It’s more portentous than the world conflict with Al Qaeda.

On its outcome hangs the destiny of this planet. The victory of Christ over Satan in Gethsemane and on His cross exposed Satan’s true character to the unfallen universe so that “the great dragon . . . was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him,” says John. “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, . . . and

the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ” (Rev. 12:9, 10). In other words, so far as heaven is concerned, Christ has won the great war.

But as to the inhabitants of this planet, “the great controversy” goes on until “our brethren” can be described, “they overcame him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (vss. 10, 11). This is not an “insurance policy” kind of relationship with the Lamb—you pay your premium (“I accept Christ!”), and now He “covers” for you in a “vicarious substitution” way, as the insurance company “covers” your loss if your house burns down. You don’t trouble your head—they “cover” for you.

Revelation pictures “our brethren” in a far more intimate relationship with the Lamb than the popular egocentric concern, “I’m okay, I’m covered, I’m saved! I’ll sit back, relax, and ‘occupy until [He] comes.’”

The sanctuary service which illustrates this “great controversy” tells us that now is the cosmic Day of Atonement-time for total experiential one-ness with Christ “through faith.” His people become “partakers of the divine nature,” they experience “I am crucified with Christ,” they “comprehend” the grand dimensions of His love *agape*, they “overcome even as [Christ] overcame,” they “grow up into Him” “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” It’s as a bride intimately “at one-ment” with her husband. They sense the heart-burden that Jesus carries. This is more than “vicarious substitution.” It’s realizing a “shared substitution,” an intimate

one-ness with the Lamb through faith. Do you see this as “Good News”?

Is anybody tired of disasters? They come fast—several major earthquakes in short order; tornado disasters; it’s not simply better journalism, these things are increasing. Because of “the distress of nations,” “men’s hearts are failing them for fear” (Lk. 21:26). With modern journalism, we see the “distress of nations” and the fear portrayed in vivid photos that enable us to identify corporately with the millions who suffer.

But who thinks of the pain that God must feel? Do we not read that He cares when even a little bird dies (Mt. 10:29)? Jesus has promised to be with us “unto the end of the world” (Mt 28:20). When we suffer, He suffers; His love binds the human race to Himself. Does He not long for all this pain to come to an end? We know that Jesus is still alive, He is risen from the dead; and He has not forgotten the human race that He died to redeem. He wants to come the second time in fulfillment of His promise. If we say that HE has delayed His coming, we make ourselves “evil servants” (Mt. 24:48).

The truth is that His people have delayed His coming; they are too content with the pleasures of living in the “great economy” Europe, America, and Australia, now enjoy. Many are indifferent either to the suffering in the world or the suffering in the heart of God. If it is difficult for us to grasp that kind of identity with Him, that would indicate that we are immature, childish, the little flower girl at the wedding rather than the mature person the Bride is to become (see Rev. 19:6-9).

In order to learn to identify with Christ, begin identifying with Him as He hangs on His cross. Read about it in Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. To read those two chapters with even a beginning of understanding stretches your spiritual muscles. Then “graduate” to identify with Christ in His high priestly ministry today in the Most Holy Apartment; sense His concern for the multitudes of people on this planet and His yearning for His church to cooperate with Him in ministry for them. Sense His disappointment; enter in to His message in Revelation 3:14-21, not to criticize His church, but to sense how He feels. When you finish a thoughtful study of the Book of Revelation, you will cry out with John, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (22:20). Instead of praying self-centered prayers, you will begin praying prayers for Christ to receive HIS reward.