



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 66”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 66

Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24

When they brought Jesus to the place called the Skull (“Golgotha” in the Jewish language, “Calvary” in Latin), they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but when He tasted it, He wouldn’t drink.

There, at nine o’clock, they crucified Him.

“Father, forgive them,” Jesus said, “because they do not know what they are doing.”

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In an earlier lesson, we learned the motivation of the Jewish leaders to have Jesus crucified. **Mark 15:10** tells us:

10 For [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed [Jesus] over because of envy.

Just think of God as our Father and us as adolescent children that want to grow up too fast. Our father owns everything that we have; he drives the car to take us everywhere we need to go, and makes all the decisions with which we should comply. But as soon as we think that we are old enough, we want to disregard Dad and make our own decisions, because we are sure that we know at least as much as Dad, if not more. Ask your children, and they can tell you all the things about which they understand about their life that you don’t.

But I have come to realize that God, as both our Creator and Father, designed the universe, and in His design He has put in certain outcomes for failing to following His instructions. When we fail to follow His instructions, we generally run into some kind of trouble, as **Galatians 6:7** tells us:

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Paul goes on to tell us, in **Galatians 6:8**:

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

The interesting thing about God is that He has set up the universe such that we can more accurately anticipate the outcome of our sowing when we sow in accordance with His will, but when we sow seeds that He has instructed us not to sow, we generally find that the crop that comes up is not that which we anticipated.



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No one would have predicted that a man being crucified unjustly would show compassion for those that are responsible for his plight, but that is exactly what the lection for today, in **Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24** tells us is happening. The Bible says:

Jesus went out, carrying His own cross. As they were going, they found a passerby from Cyrene coming in from the country. He was named Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They grabbed him, laid the cross on him, and forced him to carry it behind Jesus.

A large crowd followed Him, including women who were weeping and mourning for Him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for Me but for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the childless, and the wombs that never bore children, and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

It is important to understand that that which Jesus told Pilate during the end of Jesus’ Roman trial is literally true. In **John 19:10-11**:

10 Then Pilate said to [Jesus], “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”

11 Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

Jesus, although being tormented beyond reason by the Jews and the Romans, is submitting to their torture voluntarily. In **John 10:17-18**, Jesus says:

17 “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

Jesus tells that women of Jerusalem to weep for themselves rather than Him because His suffering is both voluntary and is of short duration, and theirs may not be. In six hours, all of Jesus’ pain will be over and He will resume His capacity as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But the Jews, in crucifying Jesus, are sowing the seeds of their own destruction. When Jesus dies, His life is not ended. He becomes the Head of the Church, an organization that is going to do more for God than Judaism ever did. And Jesus, knowing all things, knows what the future holds for those Jews that hated Him without a cause.

On the Tuesday before He was crucified, Jesus assembled the disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple. The disciples saw Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple and overturning the tables of the moneychangers, which in effect, stopped the sacrifices and greatly irritated the Jewish leaders. After



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publicly denouncing the Pharisees and their stewardship of the Temple in His holy anger, Jesus predicted the soon-coming destruction of that magnificent building. **Matthew 24:1-8** records:

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

3 Now as [Jesus] sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the mad Roman Emperor Caligula decided to desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem. Subjugated peoples elsewhere in the Roman Empire had been forced to conform to the cult of Rome, acknowledge Caesar as Lord and adopt the Roman pantheon of gods. The Jews had been left alone and Caligula decided that it was time that the Jews began to conform. Caligula sent his general Petronius with an army to Jerusalem to place his statues in the Jewish Temple that he might be worshiped as a god. Caligula ordered that any Jew that actively opposed the placement of the statues be killed, and any that spoke against the statues be arrested and imprisoned.

The Jews pleaded with Petronius not to do this, as the Jews were willing to sacrifice their whole nation before they would allow the Temple to be defiled. Petronius marveled at their courage and stopped and the confrontation was temporarily averted, but an enraged Caligula commanded that Petronius be put to death. Caligula himself died soon thereafter and due to bad weather at sea, the letter ordering Petronius' death arrived three weeks after the news arrived of Caligula's death. Petronius was not executed and the Temple was spared this particular abomination.

But the Roman leaders that succeed Caligula decided to crack down on the Jews. As the Romans began bringing force to bear, one Jewish group, the Zealots, in existence since the turn of the century, gained enough strength by 50 AD that they were able to use urban warfare to resist the Roman soldiers in



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Jerusalem. The Zealots were led by “messiahs”, which they called anyone leading the effort to reestablish Israel as a sovereign nation.

Herod Agrippa II (grandson of Herod the Great) intervened militarily and gained control of the Upper part of Jerusalem, while the Zealot priest Eliezer took over the Lower City. A war between the Zealots and the forces of Herod began. The Zealots set fire to the palaces of King Herod, his sister Bernice, and the house of the high priest. As the war in Jerusalem between the forces of Agrippa and the Jews intensified, Cestius Gallius, the Roman procurator of Syria, besieged Jerusalem in 66 AD. The Zealots abandoned their strongholds in Jerusalem, and the Romans invaded the city, destroying the food stocks of the Zealots. A Jewish group led by Simon Bar-Giora attacked the Romans from the rear and defeated them, capturing all of their arms. But since the Zealots’ food supply was gone, they decided to feed themselves by taking food from the local Jewish population. War broke out between the various Jewish groups within Jerusalem over the distribution of food.

The Romans realized that the civil war between the Jews caused by the food shortages gave them an advantage in their effort to overcome the Jews. With four Legions, the Roman General Titus began another siege of Jerusalem in April, A.D. 70. He posted his 10th legion on the Mount of Olives, directly east of and overlooking the Temple Mount. The 12th and 15th legions were stationed on Mount Scopus, further to the east and commanding all ways to Jerusalem from east to north. The 5th legion was held in reserve. In **Luke 21:20-24**, Jesus prophesied:

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

When Titus began his siege, Jerusalem was divided among warring factions of Jews who were so consumed by their fight to control the food that they had that they paid no attention to the approach of the Romans. As the Romans besieged the city, a terrible famine raged in the city and the starved bodies of the dead inhabitants were literally stacked like cordwood in the streets.



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Mothers ate their children to preserve their own strength, in a replay of **2Kings 6:26-30**, which records:

26 Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!”

28 Then the king said to her, “What is troubling you?” And she answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’

29 So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him’; but she has hidden her son.”

30 Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body.

The toll of Jewish suffering was horrible but the Jews would not surrender the city. When the Romans finally breached the walls, Titus tried to preserve the Temple by giving orders to his soldiers not to destroy or burn it. But the anger of the soldiers against the Jews was so intense that, maddened by the resistance they encountered, they disobeyed the order of their general and set fire to the Temple. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records:

These Romans put the Jews to flight, and proceeded as far as the holy house itself. At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched some materials that were on fire, and set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward, the Jews made a great clamor and ran together to prevent it; and now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered anything to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, thus it was the holy house burnt down. Nor can one imagine any thing greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman Legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the Jews trying to save the temple, who were now surrounded with fire and sword...the starving people made sad moans at the calamity they were under...Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the Temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it.

On the 10th of August, in A.D. 70 – the 9th of the Jewish month of Av – the very day when the King of Babylon burned the Temple originally built by Solomon in 586 B.C., the Romans burned the Temple originally built by Herod the Great. Great quantities of gold and silver there had been placed in the Temple for safekeeping. The gold and silver melted in the fire and ran down



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between the rocks and into the cracks of the stones. In their greed to obtain the melted gold and silver, the Roman soldiers took long bars and pried apart the massive stones. Thus, quite literally, not one stone was left standing upon another, as Jesus prophesied in **Matthew 24:2**.

2 And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

The event that set these wars in motion was the crucifixion of Jesus at the urging of the Jews, who said, as Pilate was seeking to free Jesus, in **John 19:15: 15 But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”**

You may remember that Judas probably bought his own burial plot with the thirty pieces of silver that he was paid to betray Jesus. It is ironic that the Caesar that the Jews embraced as their only king in order to get Jesus crucified was the same Caesar that destroyed them and their city to make himself their king. Of course, I’m sure that had the Jewish leaders been privy to the future, they would not have made such a statement. On the other hand, maybe they would still have made this statement to achieve their objective of getting rid of Jesus. Once the devil has his hooks into a person, that person has an extremely difficult time understanding even the most obvious thing from the Kingdom of God. **John 12:39-40** tells us:

39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”

In the thirty five years that elapsed between the death of Jesus Christ and the fall of Jerusalem, most of the Christians have been driven out of the city by the persecution of the Jews. The Roman wars against Jerusalem were a judgment by God on the Jews for pledging their allegiance to Caesar as their king. But just as Jesus prayed in the Garden for the cup to pass from Him, Jesus also prayed that this bitter cup might pass from the Jews, because of their ignorance. **Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24** continues:

When they brought Jesus to the place called the Skull (“Golgotha” in the Jewish language, “Calvary” in Latin), they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but when He tasted it, He wouldn’t drink.

There, at nine o’clock, they crucified Him.

“Father, forgive them,” Jesus said, “because they do not know what they are doing.”



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The Jews may not have known that which they were doing, but Pilate certainly did. The lection, **Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24**, continues:

Pilate also wrote an inscription which they placed on the cross above [Jesus'] head. The accusation said,

THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS

Many Jews read this inscription (it was written in the Jewish language, in Latin, and in Greek), since the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'He said, "I am King of the Jews." ' ' "

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Pilate refused to back down to the pressure of the Jewish leaders, acknowledging that Jesus was the King of the Jews. The lection continues:

Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24

Along with [Jesus] they crucified the criminals, two robbers, one on either side and Jesus in the middle.

[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]

Matthew 27:39-44, Mark 15:29-32, Luke 23:35-37, 39-44, John 19:25-27 continues:

Meanwhile the people stood watching. Those who passed by kept jeering Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would 'destroy the temple and build it in three days,' save Yourself! If You're the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders mocked Him.

"He 'saved' others," they said, "yet He can't save Himself."

"Let Him save Himself, if He's the Christ, the chosen One of God!"

"If He's the King of Israel, let the Messiah come down now from the cross so we may see and believe!"

"He trusted in God; let God deliver Him now if He wants Him—since He said, 'I'm the Son of God.' "

The soldiers also kept mocking Him. They came to Him offering sour wine and said to Him, "If You're the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

It would have been satisfying for Jesus to come down from the Cross. For Him to do so would have been a miracle far more notable than any He had done previously. The mouths of His tormentors would be closed once and for all, and His status as the Messiah with the Jews would have been solidified. But Jesus' prophecies indicated that the Nation of Israel had been judged, and their fate was sealed. It was just a matter of time before the Romans came to destroy them, and, during that time, the Gospel would be preached among them and those



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individuals that God called to become Christians would be saved. God's plan was not to save Israel from judgment; God's plan was to save the world from condemnation, as **John 3:16-17** tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Among the mocking, screaming crowd was at least one person that was worthy of salvation. As the lection, **Matthew 27:32-38, Mark 15:21-28, Luke 23:26-34, 38, John 19:17-24**, continues:

The robbers who had been crucified with Him started to reproach Him in the same manner. One of the criminals continued to bitterly scorn Him. "Aren't You the Messiah?" he said. "Then save Yourself and us!"

But the other rebuked him and said, "Don't you even fear God since you're under the same punishment this Man is? We've been punished justly—we're receiving only what our actions deserve. But this Man did nothing wrong!"

"Jesus," he said, "remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The focus of Judaism was on buildings and on cities, on monuments and on temples, on the external trappings and on the ceremonial practices of the worship of God rather than on any fundamental change in the thinking of individuals. The focus of Jesus Christ and of Christianity is on bringing individuals to the personal recognition that Jesus is the Christ, and that He has come to reconcile all those who are eligible to be saved to God and His Word. **2Peter 3:9** tells us:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Salvation is not just an abstract, intellectual concept. As historical events show those of us that choose to study that which God has done among us, God is real. God is in charge of history, and God is navigating our circumstances to bring us to the outcome to which His Word and our thoughts lead us.

Through the life of Jesus Christ, God is fulfilling the prophecy that He gave in the Old Testament. God has a sovereign plan for life, and He has revealed it to us in His Word, the Bible. When Jesus was here physically, the Jewish leaders that had the opportunity to see the miraculous works that Jesus did chose to ignore the reality of His power. As a result, the prophecy that Jesus spoke of them in **Matthew 24** came to pass in the gruesome detail that we have discussed earlier.



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Of course, the prophecy in **Matthew 24** was not Jesus' only prophecy. **Luke 18:31-33** records:

31 Then [Jesus] took the twelve [disciples] aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.

33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Jesus did not describe His death and Resurrection to His men so that they could do something to prevent it. Jesus did not need defending, nor did He need assistance. When Jesus was taken by the Jews, He made sure that the disciples were released rather than arrested. Jesus' entire Passion experience was preplanned; His suffering and His death on the Cross was not a matter of His disappointment or His destruction, but a matter of His dominion. Jesus told His men, in **John 15:13-17**:

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

17 These things I command you, that you love one another.

Jesus' prophecies were purposeful. Jesus chose His disciples and gave them the information as to that which was going to happen because He wanted them to be His friends with whom He could share the plans of God and delegate tasks so that they could participate in bringing God's plans to pass. Jesus chose His disciples to be His teammates, and then sacrificed Himself so that they could cooperate with one another as they participated in the plan of God.

In **Genesis 1:27-28**, the Bible tells us

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The original plan of God was that we would have dominion over the every living thing that moves on the earth so that we could collaborate cooperatively with God. In Christ, we can return to the original plan. Jesus gives His disciples dominion over the things of the world, as **Mark 16:15-18** tells us:

15 And [Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel



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to every creature.

16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Jesus tells His disciples, in **Acts 1:8**:

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

But, in Genesis, the power that the man and the woman had with God was directly proportional to their adherence to the design of God. In the same way, the power that we have with God is directly proportional to our adherence to the design of God. The power that we have with God is directly proportional to our cooperation with God to do that which He wants done. Just as in the Garden, God doesn't give us power so that we can do that which we want to do; God gives us power so that we can do that which He wants done. God gives us dominion over every living thing on the earth, but God maintains His dominion over us, to use us to do His will. Jesus, while He was being arrested, testified to Peter, in **Matthew 26:53**:

53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?

Jesus had the power to defeat the Jews and the Romans; Jesus had the power to come down from the Cross; Jesus had the power to do whatever He wanted to do. But Jesus did not choose to defeat the Jews and the Romans at this juncture, as the next verse, **Matthew 26:54** tells us:

54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”

Jesus choice was to fulfill the Scripture, although to do so meant that He would have to suffer as no man had suffered before. Jesus chose to fulfill the Scripture, although to do so meant that He would have to die on the Cross as His enemies mocked Him and rejoiced around Him, His disciples forsook Him and His mother grieved and cried around Him. Jesus chose to fulfill the Scripture and die on the Cross because to do so was the will of God. Jesus chose to fulfill the Scripture and die on the Cross because the prophecy in **Luke 18:33** records:

33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

And the third day, He will rise again.

The plan of God is not without trials and tribulations, not without problems and pitfalls, not without degradation and disappointments, but at the end of the plan, it says, **“And the third day, He will rise again.”** And it is not just speaking about Jesus. **1Corinthians 15:50-58** prophecies to us:



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50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, [meaning die] but we shall all be changed—

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

This is the plan and the design of God. Victory over death is ours if we just stick to the design. All things that pertain to eternal life are ours if we just stick to the design. Jesus rose on the third day because He stuck to the design. And **Romans 8:28-30** assures us:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

29 For whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son [Jesus Christ], that [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom [God] predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

God is the God of prophecy. He has predestined, called, justified and glorified those of us that decide to conform to the design. And He is watching. **Hebrews 12:1-2** tells us:

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

There is a race before us, just as there was a Cross before Jesus. Let us lay aside the encumbrances of sin and envy, take up the race of sacrifice and



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love, and run according to God's design so that we can run our race to its' successful completion. The race is not one of buildings and cities, of monuments or of temples, of the external trappings and the ceremonial practices of the worship of God, but on showing love for those with whom we come into contact, as Jesus tells us, in **John 15:13**:

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

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