

Let Freedom Ring!

5. The Bridge That Couldn't Be Built and the Island That Couldn't Be Escaped



I. Introduction:

This evening our subject is “The Bridge That Couldn’t be Built and the Island That Couldn’t be Escaped.” Both the bridge and the island exist in the same city: San Francisco. The bridge that couldn’t be built is the famous Golden Gate, and the island that couldn’t be escaped is Alcatraz—the location of the toughest and most notorious Federal prison America ever operated.

A madman first came up with the idea of building a bridge across the Golden Gate Strait. Joshua Abraham Norton was a 49er Gold Rush washout who once had been a millionaire. But a bad investment cost him both his wealth, then his mental balance. Norton proclaimed himself “Norton the First, Emperor of the United States”. He wandered the city streets accepting due homage for his exalted though imaginary

position in the form of handouts. In 1869 Emperor Norton the First commanded that a great bridge be built across the mile-wide gap where San Francisco Bay emptied into the Pacific Ocean.

The people of San Francisco--accustomed to Norton's public antics--simply laughed at the impossible notion. While they humored Norton as a harmless eccentric, all alike considered the madman's idea of building a mile-long bridge plainly ludicrous. In the late 1800's and early 1900's residents of the city saw the ferry system as the only way to get from one side of the straight to the other. But increasing population in the area soon overwhelmed the ferry's capabilities. Madman Emperor Norton the First's great bridge began to merit more thoughtful consideration.

Conventional wisdom of the day said a bridge of such magnitude simply could not be built. Even if it could be built, it would cost over a hundred million dollars to construct. But Ohio-born engineer, Joseph Baermann Strauss, disagreed. He claimed a bridge across Golden Gate Straight was not only possible, but could be built for only 20 to 30 million dollars. On August 15, 1929, Straus was selected as chief engineer.

The twin towers on their sea-bottom foundations eventually soared to pierce the sky, rising 746 feet above the high water mark. The total length of the suspension span is 1.2 miles. The yard-thick cables go up over the top of the towers and are anchored firmly in their concrete foundation on opposite shores of Golden Gate Straight. The force of gravity holds the whole thing down and makes it work.

Every year ten million visitors from all over the world come to see this most famous of all San Francisco tourist marvels and well over 40 million cars pass over its famous span—a total of nearly two billion vehicles to date. “The Bridge That Couldn't Be Built”, once a madman's foolish dream, is now world-renowned as one of the most spectacular and recognizable bridges in the world—perhaps the most photographed and famous bridge on the planet.

But what of the island that couldn't be escaped? Three miles east across San Francisco Bay juts Alcatraz island, the site of the most famous maximum-security prison in United States History. Alcatraz is the island that couldn't be escaped. Here the most notorious, violent and

incurrigible inmates from America's federal prisons were housed from 1934 through 1963.

Alcatraz, the Spanish word for "pelican", was first given to the island by Spanish explorer Juan Manuel de Ayala when he charted the bay in 1775. During the Civil War, Alcatraz was used by the army as a prison for deserters, insubordinates and Confederate sympathizers. By 1934 the prison was turned over to the Federal government, which updated it into a state-of-the-art maximum security prison for the most hardened and difficult civilian prisoners. Alcatraz is the most famous federal prison in US history. In the mid-20th century it housed such notorious inmates as:

- Al Capone, the brutal kingpin Chicago mobster**
- Machine Gun Kelly, bank robber and kidnapper**
- Alvin "Creepy" Karpis, a member of the infamous Ma Barker Gang**
- Roy Gardner, last of the Old West train robbers**
- "Bumpy" Johnson, the Godfather of Harlem**
- and the sociopath pimp and murderer Robert "Birdman" Stroud who once stabbed a prison guard to death in front of 1,100 inmates in a prison mess hall.**

These and similar hard-core criminals were held under the most secure and regimented conditions, in the virtually escape-proof environment on a rocky island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. Treacherous currents, 50 degree waters, the threat of shark attack, and over a mile swim to shore proved an even greater barrier to escape than the twelve-times-per-day headcount of inmates and most sophisticated prison technology of its day.

On 14 occasions escapes were attempted that involved 36 prisoners. Of those, 23 were recaptured, 7 were shot and killed as they fled, and at least 3 were confirmed drowned. A mere five inmates remain

unaccounted for and are presumed drown—probably washed out to sea beneath the Golden Gate Bridge’s famed span.

II. The Bible’s Bridge That Could Not Be Built and Its Inescapable Convict Island

The Word of God also speaks of a bridge that could not be built and an island that could not be escaped. When mankind fell into sin in Eden and our planet fell under the dominion of Satan, the greatest gap in the universe was created. That aching gulf separated a holy, sin-hating, Creator God in heaven from the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve with their bent to evil on Earth. What could span this vastness? It was more than a matter of mere distance. The separation involved rebellion of creatures against their Creator, the violation of eternal, unalterable law with its penalty of death and the estrangement and fear that sin inserted between man and his Maker.

One thing was certain: The bridge required to reconnect heaven with earth could not be built by human effort. While human choice in response to Satan’s temptation had made the separation between man and his Maker, human effort could not undo what had been done. Earth was cut off from heaven. God might have simply left humanity to its own ends entirely, under the sway of the Dark Lord we had chosen to trust and obey rather than our Creator. Instead heaven took steps to reestablish connection—to build a bridge between God’s realm and that of fallen mankind.

This evening we will see how God built the bridge that we could not build to this island from which we could never escape. In a word, Jesus Christ is God’s Bridge from heaven to convict island Earth.

**Through Jesus Christ God
connects heaven with earth
that all from among our rebel race who will
may be restored fully to God’s favor.**

Jesus is unlike any other human who has ever lived on planet Earth. This baby was half human and half divine—or more accurately, fully

human and fully divine. After all, Mary was his human mother, and God through the agency of the Holy Spirit, was his Divine Father. Jesus was entirely unique among all who have ever been born on our planet, yet his uniqueness includes within it all we are and all that we experience as humans. He is our link to God—who is in his very person the bridge between holy God and helpless man.

The angel said:

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and *you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*”

So the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ without the aid of any man.

Again 30 years later when Jesus went to John the Baptist at the Jordan river to be baptized, that prophet recognized his true identity and role. Pointing to Jesus, John said:

“Behold the lamb of God *who takes away the sins of the world.*”

It was sin that had made the great gulf between God and man, between heaven and earth. One who was both God and man was required to bridge the gulf. That Savior is Jesus. Scripture declares plainly, “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Jesus is the only bridge, the only link between God’s heaven and convict island Earth. He alone is our Savior.

This evening we turn to the Word of God for three complimentary views of Jesus work as the Great Bridge, the Savior of mankind.

- **First, we will see *the Savior in Picture.***
- **Second, we will see *the Savior in Prophecy.***
- **And finally, we will see *the Savior in Person.***

III. The Savior in Picture—Genesis 28

The story of the *Savior in Picture* is found in the 28th chapter of the book of Genesis. We pick up Joseph's story that gives us the *Savior in Picture* from the Bible's account:

“When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

“There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”

“When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.’”

What an amazing picture! In the New Testament Jesus refers to this scene the day He called Nathaniel to be His disciple. He declared Himself the bridge pictured in Jacob's dream. Jesus is the only highway to heaven, the great bridge by which God himself links heaven and earth. Jesus is the One who is there to catch us when we know we've done wrong and are past helping ourselves back into God's favor. In Jacob's dream of the ladder we see Jesus before he was born in Bethlehem's manger. Here we see *the Savior in Picture*.

When the Golden Gate bridge was under construction, chief engineer Joseph Strauss insisted that the most rigorous safety precautions in the history of bridge building be instituted. Hard hats were required for the first time ever along with glare free goggles and face cream to protect the workers against wind and sun. Workers were regularly checked to see if they were drunk before being allowed to go to work.

The most important safety precaution was a net suspended under the bridge from one end to the other. That net saved the lives of nineteen men who slipped and fell during the process of construction. These men came to be known as the *Half-Way-to-Hell Club*. Tragically, just before completion of the bridge, a section of scaffold used to spin wire into cable that was carrying 12 men fell through the safety net. Two who were falling reached out, caught hold of the safety net, and were rescued. The other ten fell to their deaths. In all, the net prevented 2/3rds of the expected human fatalities for a project so large in a day where one human death per million dollars of construction was considered the industry average.

Jesus is our bridge. He is our safety net, too. When we are past helping ourselves, he will catch us. If we reach out and lay hold of him, we may live. If we fail to do so, in the end there is nothing even God can do to prevent us from experiencing the natural results of our separation from the Creator. There is simply the long fall and the hard, hungry, hellish waters below.

Maybe at some point in the past you were right with God. But somehow you slipped away. You fell from the bridge. Tonight, Jesus is the net to catch you. Tonight you can become the most recent member of God's "Half-Way-to-Hell Club"! He wants you back. No questions asked. No need to ever again look back over your shoulder at what is now past and you cannot change. Will you reach out and lay hold on Jesus?

IV. The Savior in Promise—Messianic Prophecies

Let's turn now to the *Savior in Promise*.

When Mel Gibson's controversial 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* was released, a Christian pastor was sitting behind another viewer in

the theater to see Hollywood's portrayal of the sufferings of Jesus. As the movie was about to begin, a caption containing the words of the prophecy of the 6th century B.C. prophet, Isaiah came on the screen. It said:

**“But he was pierced through for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities.”**

And then the date of the quote:

“The prophet Isaiah, 600 B.C.”

The pastor heard the man sitting in front of him suddenly gasp aloud in utter astonishment. Perhaps the man had heard that Jesus was supposed to have died a horrible death, and that this death was in payment for the sins of the human race. But what the man had obviously been unaware of before entering the theater was that the death of Jesus Christ had been clearly foretold six centuries before it occurred. He was understandably and visibly astonished to make this discovery.

The man in the theater would have been even more astonished to learn that the single prophecy he had learned about for the first time is only one of many similar remarkably detailed prophecies that also appear in the Old Testament Scriptures.

**The remarkable and detailed fulfillment
of hundreds of ancient Messianic prophecies
identify Jesus of Nazareth
as the Savior of the world.**

The Bible has the demonstrated ability to see through time itself. This ability to accurately penetrate past and future is due to its Divine Source. It also marks the God of the Bible apart from all lesser objects of worship. Let's hear what the Bible has to say:

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.” *Isaiah 42:8*

The God of the Bible says, “I know the past. I know the future. I’ll tell you before it happens, if you’ll listen, so you can know it too. No other god can do this—much less man. This is how you will know I exist and that I am the true God.” Prophecies provide evidence as reasonable and as valid as fossils dug from the ground are in attesting to past conditions on planet earth. They are miracles in paper, ink and time—miracles that anyone can hold in their hand and examine at any later time in history.

Let’s briefly examine only ten of over 300 *Savior in Prophecy* predictions to see how they were fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the man whose life story was written out in detail before he was ever born! Sound incredible? Let’s take a look together...

1. Birthstar

Have you ever noticed the star on top of a Christmas tree, or in a shop window, or hanging over a street, or above a manger scene at Christmas time? The star that the wise men followed to Bethlehem had been foretold to shine over Messiah’s birthplace 1,500 years in advance by the prophet Baalam. He said of the Messiah:

**"I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near.
A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel."**

Numbers 24:17

When the wise men spotted the star foretold by their own countryman, Balaam 15 centuries before, they made a many weeks’ journey across the deserts of Arabia. Matthew’s gospel says:

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him...”

“...and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” *Matthew 2:1, 2, 9-11*

If that star had not shone over Jesus manger at his birth, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy and worthy of our worship.

2. Birth Place

Our second prophecy foretold a star would mark the place of Messiah’s birthplace. It identified in advance exactly where the Savior of mankind be born. In the last half of the 8th century B.C. the prophet Micah wrote:

**"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."**

Micah 5:2

At the time of Jesus’ birth there were two towns named Bethlehem in the borders of the Israelite nation. By all expectations, Jesus should not have been born in either of them. After all, his mother Mary was from Nazareth, which lay far to the north. How did she arrive at the proper Bethlehem predicted in time for Jesus’ birth?

Luke’s gospel gives the details. It says:

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” *Luke 2:4-7*

That long journey for the very pregnant Mary as she accompanied her husband to his hometown of Bethlehem must have been most uncomfortable. She either had to walk, or to ride a donkey. Every bump in the road might have induced labors that would have brought the Christ Child at a location other than predicted.

If Jesus had been born anywhere other than Bethlehem, under the prophesied star, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

3. Betrayal Price, Location, and Use

We will pass over many other prophecies of Jesus ministry at this point and key in on a third three-fold prediction given by the prophet Zechariah over 500 years before Judas betrayed Jesus to the Chief Priests. In Zechariah’s prophecy we actually listen in to the secret negotiations between Judas and the Chief Priests. It says:

“I told them, ‘If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.’ So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter-the handsome price at which they priced me!’

“So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter.” *Zechariah 11:12, 13*

Did this remarkably detailed prophecy come to pass? Indeed, it did. The gospel writer Matthew says:

“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty

silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."

"So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

"The chief priests picked up the coins and said, 'It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day." *Matthew 27:3-7*

If Jesus had not been betrayed for exactly thirty pieces of silver, which was flung into the temple and ended up in the hands of a potter, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

4. Messiah Pierced

The fourth detail prophesied long in advance concerned the fact that Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. In the 22nd Psalm, written 1,000 years before Jesus' birth King David wrote:

"Dogs have surrounded me;
a band of evil men has encircled me,
they have pierced my hands and my feet."

Psalm 22:16

When Jesus hands and feet were nailed to Barabbas' cross with square Roman spikes, this act fulfilled a thousand year old prophecy concerning the Messiah that had been given 250 years before Rome was founded!

If Jesus hadn't suffered wounds in his hands and feet as he hung on the cross for our sins, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

5. Prayer for Enemies

Isaiah's prophecy had also foretold a fifth most unusual feature concerning events connected with Messiah's death. It says:

**“...He poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and *made intercession for the transgressors.*
*Isaiah 53:12***

In what way did Jesus “make intercession”, or speak on behalf of transgressors at the time of his death? Luke's gospel gives the details. It says:

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. *Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’*” *Luke 23:34*

If Jesus had cursed those nailing him to the cross, it would have been no more than might be expected from any innocent man suffering an unjust and painful death of public humiliation. Instead, Jesus did something that no previous human in history is ever recorded as having done. He prayed God's forgiveness on those engaged in killing him!

If Jesus had cursed rather than prayed for those who were killing him, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

6. Lots Cast for Messiah's Clothing

The thousand-year-old *Psalm of the Cross* contains a sixth prophecy which details an event connected with Messiah's sufferings. It said:

**“They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.”
*Psalm 22:18***

All of Rome's victims who were crucified on a cross were stripped entirely naked as a final, brutal act of public humiliation before they were spiked to the cross. By custom, the four guards assigned to crucifixion duty were given the prisoner's clothing. The gospel of Matthew records what happened to Jesus' clothes:

“When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.”

Matthew 27:35

If Jesus' clothing hadn't been divided up with soldiers casting lots to gamble for them at the foot of the cross, we would know he was not the Savior of Prophecy.

7. Death With Criminals and Burial With the Rich

A seventh prophecy contains a highly unusual feature of Jesus' death and burial. It is found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah—which contains over two dozen specific prophecies fulfilled by Christ in all. This nearly 700 year old prophecy said of Messiah:

**“He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.”**

Isaiah 53:9

Messiah's grave was assigned with wicked men. Luke records the fact that Jesus was crucified between two criminals. They were robbers. Like these robbers and all others who were crucified, Jesus' expected final resting place would be the ever-burning, ever-maggot crawling garbage dump valley of Gehenna on the southern boundary of Jerusalem.

That the innocent should die along with the guilty has certainly occurred to others in human history. But for someone expected to wind up in the garbage dump after being unjustly executed as a criminal to unexpectedly be honored by burial in a rich man's tomb is certainly a most unusual twist. How was this part of the prophecy fulfilled?

The gospel writer John, who stood by Jesus cross, wrote:

“Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

“Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

This tomb had its own garden, and lay near the place of the crucifixion. Such a grave was a final resting place fit for a king and owned by one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem. As for Nicodemus who assisted Joseph in this sad work, according to early legend he was rich enough to have fed everyone in Jerusalem for seven years. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were the “Fortune 500 chief executives” from Jesus' day. So the prophecy was fulfilled.

If Jesus had not died between two criminals and been buried in a rich man's grave, then he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

8. No Broken Bone

An eighth ancient prophecy remarkably fulfilled at the time of Jesus' death on Calvary concerned the fact that the Great Sin Bearer's bones would not be broken.

The whole of the Jewish sacrificial system, of which the Passover Lamb was a most crucial part, pointed forward to Messiah's sufferings on behalf of sinful mankind. This yearly eating of the lamb at the time of the Passover among God's ancient chosen nation might be compared in some ways to our Thanksgiving Meal in America. When the turkey has been served, what happens with its wishbone? By American custom, two people take hold of each end of that bone and pull until it snaps in two. Whoever gets the larger piece, is supposed to have their wish come true.

Among the Jews eating the Passover Lamb another custom had been set in place that concerned the bones of that symbolic meal. The Word of God says:

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover... ‘It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. *Do not break any of the bones.*”

Exodus 12:43, 46

For fifteen centuries those who ate this symbolically sacrificed lamb that pointed to the coming Lamb of God whose death would take away the sins of the world had carefully avoided breaking any bone in each home at Passover time. When Jesus hung on the cross--the very one to whom that lamb had pointed--he was in very real and immediate danger of having his bones broken. An eyewitness of the crucifixion, the apostle John, later wrote:

“Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.”

Jesus, along with the thieves on either side of him were facing broken bones requested by the Jewish leaders and granted by the Romans in charge of the crucifixion itself. What happened? John writes what he saw with his own eyes that day. He says:

“The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.”

If Jesus bones had been broken on Calvary, like those of the men crucified on either side of him, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

9. Messiah's Death as Sin Bearer

A ninth prophecy made by Isaiah shows how all we have seen so far touches each of us directly. This was the prophecy that Messiah's death would be as the substitute Sin Bearer for others, not because of any wrong in himself. Isaiah wrote:

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But *he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and *the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*”

Isaiah 53:4-6

Jesus was born to be the Sin Bearer for all of us—and we have sins that need bearing!

Those present last evening remember we looked at the Ten Commandment Law of God, the *Mirror of the Almighty*, the self-portrait of Jesus Christ himself carved into living stone by his own finger 1,500 years before he was born beneath the prophesied star of Bethlehem. Lets make one thing very clear: When we look into the *Mirror of the Almighty*—God's holy law that is Jesus own self-portrait carved into stone long before he was born in Bethlehem's manger—we all have one thing in common. We all have dirty faces. We're all guilty. Each of us has surely turned to our own way—rather than to God's way.

Who killed Jesus? It wasn't the worst among us, but the very best: the highest spiritual leadership of the most spiritually-privileged people on the planet, the chosen people of God, whose prophecies we have been examining together this evening—the Jewish people. Did they do this great evil alone? Oh, no! Jesus death was achieved in league with—and on the authority of—the Roman Empire. The Romans were the most civic-minded, law-abiding, civilization affirming, sole-remaining-military-superpower, non-Jewish multi-national conglomerate of Jesus' day. Their remarkably advanced judicial system still influences our American court system.

It was the finest of religionists and best of citizens who killed Jesus. It was the most notable humanity had to offer who did this thing. What chance do the rest of us have?

Good news! We have every chance in the world! The cruel death Jesus freely accepted on our behalf laid the great bridge on its unshakable foundations. “His blood be on us and on our children!” the mob roared at Pilate. “Crucify him! Crucify him!” So Jesus died, and murderers were cleansed in blood of the man they murdered! Isaiah wrote:

“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, *because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*”
Isaiah 53: 12

Jesus didn’t just live the perfect human life God’s Law requires on our behalf—the life that is beyond our ability to offer to God. He also freely laid that life down in full payment for every wrong we’ve ever done, are currently engaged in, or may stumbled into in the future.

The death Jesus died was not for his own sins or crimes. If it had been, he would not be the Savior of Prophecy.

10. Resurrection on the Third Day

A tenth prophecy concerning Messiah fulfilled by Jesus concerns the fact that Messiah would be resurrected from death on the third day. Messiah’s third-day resurrection was hinted at in veiled form by the prophet Hosea 700 years before. He wrote:

**“After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will restore us,
that we may live in his presence.”**
Hosea 6:2

In Jesus the hope of all humanity lay silent and slain in the tomb. In striking him down, we had destroyed ourselves. Yet on the third day we would be restored.

Again in the story of Jonah's three days of living death in the belly of the sea monster the future rescue of Messiah was prefigured. Well before his death, Jesus said:

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” *Matthew 12:40*

It was not only the ancient Jewish prophets who made predictions concerning Jesus' death, burial and resurrection on the third day, however. In eight places the gospels recount Jesus' often repeated instruction to his disciples about his approaching sufferings, death and third day resurrection. Matthew writes:

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed *and on the third day be raised to life.*” *Matthew 16:21*

If Jesus had not been raised again to life on the third day, he would not be the Savior of prophecy.

Each fulfillment of ancient Messianic prophecy in the birth, life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is another span in the great bridge God has built to link us to himself. It is another rung on that ladder that Jacob saw that connects earth with heaven and God's own great heart of love to we quarantined felon-lepers of the universe here on planet Earth—the Alcatraz of the universe.

What does this mean for us tonight? It means everything necessary on God's part for our salvation is already in place. The highway to heaven—in the person of the God-man Jesus Christ—has already been built. The prophecies we have seen together are the blueprint still on record for our viewing. The life we could never have lived is recorded as the fulfillment of those prophecies in the New Testament record of the most remarkable life ever lived—the life of Jesus himself.

These are only ten among over 300 more prophecies that appear in the pages of the Bible which we might have as easily cited. Such evidence cannot be explained by science, matched by the occult, refuted by

philosophy, or erased by the passing of centuries. It can only be believed or rejected.

V. The Savior in Person—Luke 24

We have seen *the Savior in Picture* in the symbol of Jacob's ladder. We have seen *the Savior in Prophecy* in the ten Messianic prophecies and their fulfillments drawn from so many more that detailed Jesus' life centuries in advance. Now let's turn our attention to *the Savior in Person*.

In spite of the many times Jesus spoke plainly of his approaching arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection, when these things so clearly foretold came to pass, it caught his disciples entirely off guard. The fondest hopes of Jesus' followers had been cruelly dashed to ruins. Yet for two disappointed followers, all would be changed by an encounter with the risen Savior in person.

Let's pick up the story as it appears in Luke's account:

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

“He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’

“They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?’

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the

one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place...

“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

While the prophecies we have seen gave them these two disciples hope, it was the encounter that followed that changed their lives forever. Luke says:

“As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them.

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’”

“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.”

Luke writes:

“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

“They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’”

“When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

“He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’”

Over the course of the next forty days, Jesus walked planet Earth. He appeared repeatedly to those who knew him best—at one time to 500 people at once. Shortly before he returned alive to heaven in the sight of those who looked on, Jesus declared the bridge between heaven and earth open for traffic. Matthew writes:

”Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” *Matthew 28:19-20*

VI. Appeal

What shall we say to all these things? How may we pass over the great bridge God has provided at such care and such cost? It was pictured in Jacob’s dream of the ladder. It was foretold in the many Messianic prophecies. The disciples give eye-witness testimony that it occurred. The apostle John was one of these witnesses. He wrote:

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” *John 21:25*

And again:

”Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. *But these are*

written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John 20:30, 31

Do you believe in Jesus Christ this evening? We've looked at the great bridge to convict island tonight. Would you like to step onto it? Jesus says:

“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.” *Luke 12:8, 9*

It is time for all who wish to acknowledge Jesus before those gathered here that he may acknowledge you before God and the angels in heaven. Listen closely. We will not be taking long this evening.

- **If you are already a Christian who has placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirmed that decision publicly through baptism, please stand where you are. Or if standing is difficult, raise your hand. Once again, if you are already a baptized Christian believer, please stand.**

(Wait for people to stand who desire to do so. Then say...)

Let's give them a hand this evening for an excellent choice already made.

(Lead the applause.)

Please remain standing! There are others who still need to join you.

- **If you have been a Christian at sometime in the past, but know you've wandered from God, slipped off the bridge you once stood on gladly and firmly, God wants you back, no questions asked. Anyone here want to join God's *Half-Way-to-Hell Club* this evening?**

If you wish to renew a former commitment to Christ so that Jesus may again represent you before God and the angels of heaven, please stand with those already standing.

(Wait for those who desire to stand to do so. Then say...)

Welcome home! Let's help those angels rejoice a little bit and do some clapping to thank God ourselves!

(Lead applause.)

Please remain standing!

- **There may be someone here this evening who has never had , or taken the opportunity to publicly acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the bearer of the sins of all humanity, including your own. This evening you have seen the bridge God has built to restore us to himself. You don't wish to simply look at that bridge and turn away, but to step onto it freely and firmly. You want to know that in heaven Jesus acknowledges you before God and the angels.**

If you've not publicly acknowledged Jesus, nor been baptized in the past, but wish to start walking God's direction in Jesus' name now, please stand. If you are not already a declared Christian, but wish to become one, please stand.

(Allow opportunity to stand.)

Following our prayer this evening we would like to meet briefly with those who are making their decision for the first time, or renewing a decision you have wandered from in the past. Please come forward following our prayer for just a few minutes.

Tomorrow night our subject will be "A Tale of Two Statues and Earth's Final Superpower". Be sure to be here for this most important topic.

Let's bow our heads.

Dear Father in Heaven,

Tonight you see each person gathered here before you. Some have affirmed their past decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We thank you for these.

Others have reaffirmed a past commitment that they have turned from or fallen away from. Thank you for drawing them to your great heart again!

Still others may have stood this evening for the first time ever, acknowledging their faith in your Son Jesus as the Messiah-Christ Sin Bearer and Savior. As they have acknowledged Jesus before those gathered this evening, may he acknowledge them before you and the holy angels. Mark their names in your Book of Life along with all those who call on your name in all ages.

There are also those who may still be considering what they are hearing and need more time to decide. Please be with them as they continue to look and listen from evening to evening. We know you respect their right to decide freely, and affirm that on their behalf ourselves. Thank you they are here this evening, too, Lord—and bring them back again tomorrow evening.

We ask this in Jesus name.

Amen.

Note: Get the names and addresses of those who have come forward. Make sure they know the hand motions for “The Five C’s of Christian Faith”. Have prayer with them confirming their decision. Let them know there will be a baptism coming up that will allow opportunity for them to confirm their faith.