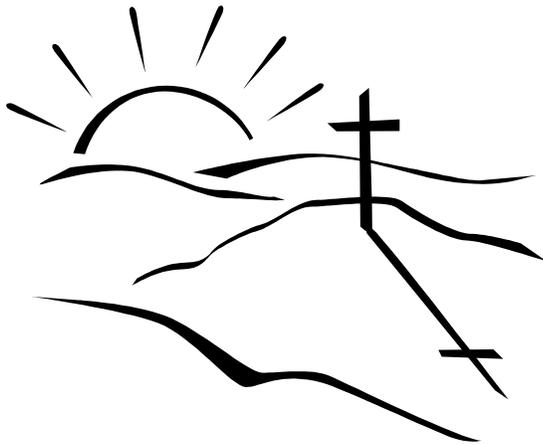




# PEACE RIVER NEW CHURCH CURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

APRIL 2012



## WHY DID JESUS DIE?

By Rev. Coleman Glenn

Why did Jesus die on the cross? It's a question that has been at the heart of Christianity from the beginning. Why was Jesus allowed to be crucified? For the last thousand years, the most dominant theory among Catholics and Protestants has been the theory called "substitutionary atonement," and specifically "penal substitution." According to this theory, God cannot abide sin, and so he cannot allow anyone who has sinned to be in His presence. The just penalty for sin is eternal death – and since no one had ever lived a sinless life, everyone was condemned. But out of His mercy (this theory says) He sent His Son, Jesus, to go into the world. Jesus would live a sinless life, and willingly take on the punishment due to all people, and so pay their debt. This theory says that those who have faith in Him "put on Christ," so that when God the Father looks at them, He sees His sinless Son rather than the sinner, and so permits the believer to be in His presence.

Many Christians today believe that this idea of what Christ accomplished on the cross is the only valid one. In fact, many say that this *is* Christianity, and that the only way to be saved is to believe that Jesus died as a substitute for us, to take on the penalty owed to us.

One problem, though, is that this view of what the Lord accomplished at His death has never been the only one in Christianity. In fact, it is not the original one. The very beginnings of this view cannot be seen until the work of Augustine – who was writing four hundred years after the Lord's birth. And the theory in its current form was not expressed until the time of Anselm, who wrote about it over a thousand years after the Lord had walked the earth. And although it is now the dominant view in Catholicism and Protestantism, this view of Christ's death has never been accepted in the Eastern Orthodox church – which at 300 million adherents is the second largest Christian denomination in the world after Catholicism.

But those facts about when the theory began and how many subscribe to it don't really matter. What matters is whether it is the theory that the Word teaches – and there are serious problems with it in this regard. The biggest problem with it is that it relies on an idea that God cannot forgive someone who has sinned even once – that sin so stains a person that they can never be accepted into heaven. But this is never taught in the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, God says that He *does* forgive people if they turn away from their sins. For example, Ezekiel 18:36 says, "Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive." And God wants everyone to live: "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:32). The problem, then, is not that God cannot abide sinners. The problem is that unrepentant sinners cannot abide God – they are the ones who need to "turn and live" – God has not turned *His* back.

And so Jesus's mission must have been to help people to "turn and live" – to enable people to repent. That same chapter in Ezekiel speaks of people being given a new heart: "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves

a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31). Jesus came because at the time of His birth, the forces of hell at become so great that people we not able to turn away from sin. He came to gain all power over hell to eternity, and to give people a new heart.

So what part does Jesus's death play in this? Why did He allow Himself to be crucified? There seem to be two primary reasons. First, while He was in the world, the Lord embodied the Word, and represented it. By allowing Himself to be crucified, He was representing what the Jewish people – His people – had done to His Word. That's why He was betrayed by a man named "Judas" – the Greek form of the name "Judah," the tribe of Israel which remained, the root of the word "Judaism" and "Jewish." His betrayal represented the way that God's own people had betrayed Him and His Word. That's what it mean that Jesus came to fulfill the law – that He was the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament, that He embodied that Word of God. He was the Word made flesh. He Himself said that He had to allow Himself to be killed "that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:56).

The other reason that Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified was that in doing so, He was enduring temptations even down to the physical level of His body. It is in this sense that He was offering Himself as a sacrifice. From His birth, the Lord's soul was Divine; but from His mother, He inherited a merely human body, and merely human lower levels of His mind. Because of this merely human part, evil spirits could attack and tempt Him. It's what made Him feel separate from the Father at times, separate from the Divinity at His soul. But because in His soul He was Divine, He could conquer in every temptation, since He fought from infinite Divine love for the salvation of the human race.

And when He conquered the evil spirits that were attacking a merely human part of Himself, two things happened. First, those evil spirit fled back into hell – the Lord gained power over them. And second, that merely human part of Himself was replaced with Divine humanity. Throughout His life the Lord was undergoing these temptations, and more and more uniting His humanity with His divinity. And the cross was the final temptation. On the cross, He underwent His worst temptations, to the point of despair, crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" But even in that temptation, He overcame. He put to death everything that was merely human, everything fleshly, everything with any sort of an inclination to sin. He allowed even His physi-

cal body to be killed – so that even at the physical level He could rise again, all *merely* human things replaced by *Divinely* human things. And in conquering that last temptation, He gained power to eternity over hell.

And because He underwent that temptation and put every selfish inclination in Himself to death, He can be with us and put *our* "old man" – our inherent selfish will – to death. We feel like if that part of us dies, we will die. But there is hope – Jesus rose again. And because He rose again, He can give us a new spirit, a new will, a heart of flesh. When we crucify the flesh with its lusts, the external man dies – but we are given a new spirit. The Lord regenerates us in the same way that He glorified Himself, defeating the forces of hell that attack us.

And the earliest Christians knew this. Read through the Epistles – over and over again they speak of dying together with Christ, and being raised with Him and by Him. They talk about crucifying the flesh, not as a one-time thing, but as an ongoing necessity of being a Christian. Jesus Himself commanded His disciples to take up their crosses *daily* – to daily put to death their inclinations to sin. It's not about Jesus dying in place of us, it's about us *participating* in His death to sin. We do that by acting as if of ourselves to put to death everything sinful in us – shunning evils as sins – with the acknowledgement that it is really only the Lord who can defeat sin in us, because He has gained all power over the forces of hell. And we acknowledge that because He is risen, He will raise us up, dead to sin, and alive in Him. Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself" (John 12:32).

## PALM SUNDAY AND EASTER SERVICES

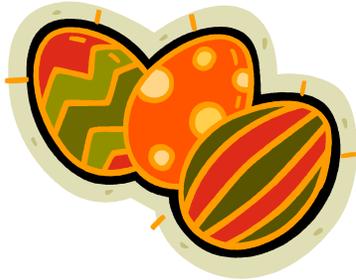
Because it falls on the first Sunday of the month (**April 1**), our **Palm Sunday service** this year will be a family service (i.e. kids stay upstairs for the whole service). The service will begin with a palm procession during the first hymn: everyone will be given a palm branch that they can bring forward and lay down in front of the altar.

We will have an **evening Holy Supper service on the evening of Friday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m.**, with lessons from the Word and a Good Friday sermon.

Our **service on Easter Sunday, April 8**, will again be a family service. All are invited to bring a flower offering to be put on the chancel at the beginning of the service to represent the new life offered by the Lord through His resurrection.

## GENERAL CHURCH IN CANADA ANNUAL MEETING

The General Church in Canada will hold its annual meeting at the Olivet New Church in Toronto on Saturday, April 14. Rev. Coleman Glenn had considered attending in person, but has decided instead to attend by phone, so there *will* be a church service on Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.



## EASTER PARTY

There will be an Easter party at the church for children up to age twelve on Saturday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We will have games, activities, snacks, and lunch, along with a talk from Rev. Coleman Glenn about the Easter story. Weather permitting, we will have an egg hunt outside, and we may also be dyeing eggs, so please have your children dress accordingly. Parents are welcome to come and stay with their kids, or to drop them off and pick them up afterwards. Please have your child bring a small (**less than \$5**) gift that could be given as a prize during the games and activities; even if you're bringing multiple kids, we only need you to bring one prize. RSVP to Jillian Crandall so she has an idea of how many to plan for (but feel free to come even if you've forgotten to RSVP).

## SIDEWALK WORK IN MAY

As mentioned in the February newsletter, we're hoping to put new sidewalks in around the church some time this spring. **We will be having a work weekend on the last weekend of May, the 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, to do this.** Please mark those dates in your calendar.

**We still need volunteers to help organize the work.** Again, this would not mean that you have to do all the work yourselves, just find out what needs to be done and arrange for the necessary supplies to be bought, and the necessary labour to be hired. **Please**

contact Rev. Coleman Glenn (250-782-0710) if you're willing to help out in organizing this work. Thank you!

## BOARD MEMBER NEEDED

With Travis Crandall's term on the board having expired, we are looking for a new board member. Would you be willing to serve in this capacity? Is there anyone you would like to nominate (with their permission)? Serving on the board is an important use in the church, and we would be grateful for anyone willing to help out in this way. Please contact Rev. Coleman Glenn or board secretary Dorothy Friesen if you're interested in serving.



## THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSAEM

9013 8<sup>th</sup> Street

Dawson Creek, BC V1G 3N3

[www.dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca](http://www.dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca)

(250) 782-8035

**Worship: Sundays at 11 a.m.**

For information on services in Grande Prairie & Debolt, please contact Mrs. Lavina Scott at (780) 957-3625.

**If you have news or other information for this publication, or if you have any pastoral concerns, please call the pastor, Coleman Glenn, at (250) 782-0710 or (cell) (250) 467-2313, or e-mail [pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca](mailto:pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca).**

Coleman's office and mailing address is  
1717 102<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Unit 5  
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 5A9

# CHURCH CALENDAR

## APRIL 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Palm Sunday <b>11 a.m.</b> Palm Sunday Family Service	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Good Friday <b>7:30 p.m.</b> Good Friday service with Holy Supper	<b>7</b> <b>11 a.m.</b> Easter Party
<b>8</b> Easter <b>11 a.m.</b> Easter Service (w/ flower offerings) <b>4:30 p.m.</b> Easter Service (Debolt)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> <b>11 a.m.</b> Traditional Service	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <b>7:30 p.m.</b> Doctrinal Class (Silver Valley)	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>7:30 p.m.</b> Doctrinal Class (Rev. Coleman Glenn's home: 1717 102 Ave., Unit 5)
<b>22</b> Earth Day <b>11 a.m.</b> Traditional Service <b>4:30 p.m.</b> Service and Class (Grande Prairie)	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> <b>11 a.m.</b> Traditional Service	<b>30</b>	<b>All events are held at the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem unless noted otherwise.</b>				