

(1) It fulfilled the “combat” prophecy in Genesis 3:15. God pictured Satan as a snake who would lash out and strike the heel of a Coming One, “**born of woman**”. But the Coming One would “**crush his head**” under His heel.

(2) Jesus ascended (Acts 1 / Philippians 2) as the “**Lord, strong and mighty in battle**” (Psalm 24). Colossians says He “**triumphed**” over Satan. This was a term used for the city of Rome welcoming victorious Generals home in a “Triumph” procession. The captured soldiers were disarmed and their weapons and treasures filled the wagons in the parade. Jesus’ welcome back to heaven was like this (Psalm 24).

(3) When the disciples received the authority and power to cast out demons, Jesus said He saw “Satan **fall like lightning** from heaven” (Luke 10:18). He also said His power to do it, meant Satan was “**bound**” - tied up (Matthew 12:29).

(4) In Revelation 12, we have a picture of Jesus ascending to heaven. War broke out in heaven and Satan was defeated. He and all of his demonic spirits were “**thrown down**” to earth and allowed to persecute and tempt us.

(5) In Revelation 20, when Jesus sat on His throne after His ascension; Satan was “**bound**” and “**thrown**” into the bottomless pit. From this pit he still launches his attacks against us (2 Peter 2:4).

When we die and find ourselves in the presence of God, we will all have a lot of sins **in our past**. Jesus was punished in our place for these. We will also have a lot of sins **in our heart**. Satan is called the “accuser” of God’s people (Revelation 12:10). If God accepts us into heaven, Satan can point out our failures and show we have no right to go in. But Jesus can let us in on the merits of His victory. He won the right, on the field of battle, to let anyone He chooses into heaven. 2 Corinthians 5 says:

“He who knew no sin (His victory) was made to be sin so we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

But we don’t enter heaven with these sins in our hearts. God finishes His change and we become “like Jesus” (1 John 3:1-3). Revelation 22 says “nothing unclean” will be in heaven. Heaven is a perfect place of love.

THE CROSS A FACT OF HISTORY

“Father, forgive them!” (Luke 23:34)

We don’t have to understand all or any of this to be forgiven. I knew nothing about things like this when I came to Christ. But I knew and believed that Jesus was God on earth. I heard about it every Christmas. This means what Jesus said, God said; and what Jesus did, God did. And I knew He offered forgiveness to those who brutalized, shamed and killed Him.

The mocking, laughing, taunting crowd around the cross, did not deserve to be forgiven. The worst of them were the two criminals, because they mocked Him also, when they should have had some sympathy for Him. One criminal was changed. The offer of forgiveness got to him and he asked for it, received it and went to heaven with Jesus that very day (Luke 23:42).

When I was 22, I looked to heaven and said, ‘Lord, I believe if You forgave these people, You will forgive me. I gave Him my sins to forgive and my life to change, and was instantly made right with Him. The best explanation of the cross is in a tract Max Lucado wrote for “post 911” workers. He said to each person who read it, “*Jesus looked at the cross and saw hell; but He went there anyway, because He did not want to go to heaven without you*”.

“There is a fountain filled with blood / Drawn from our Savior’s veins / And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains / The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in that day / And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.