

THE MASTERS

APRIL 2022



The first full week of April each year The Masters golf tournament is held in Augusta, Georgia, where a select group of golfers are there by invitation only to compete for the top monetary prize in addition to the prestigious green jacket. More than 80,000 plants of 350 varieties decorate the surroundings which make

Augusta National one of the most beautiful courses in the world, especially in the spring when the azaleas and magnolias are in full bloom. Each hole on the course is named after the particular flowers that surround it.

The golfers wear hats with names or symbols of various advertisers, including ones like *Titleist* and *Nike*. The *Titleist* is the number one ball used by professional golfers. *Nike* gets its name from the Greek goddess of victory. I first discovered the meaning of the Greek word *nike* while doing a word study of a passage in apostle John's first letter.

Everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. - 1 John 5:4-5 NIV

Nike: the noun means victory

Nikao: the verb form means to overcome, prevail or conquer

Those words were **athletic and military terms that indicated victory over a defeated foe**. The following verb forms have been left in the singular as I am not sure of the plural form.

For everyone born of God has nikao the world. This is the nike that has nikao the world, even our faith. Who is it that nikao the world. Only he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. - 1 John 5:4-5

The winner of the Masters golf tournament is the one who can drive the ball most accurately, prevail over the sand traps and water hazards, chip with precision and read the greens properly. Just as important, he must have the heart and mind of a champion, who can persevere under great pressure. These exciting four days of competition have been preceded by years of practice at the driving range and also chipping and putting around the greens.

Jesus had 30 years of preparation for the greatest contest ever, which took place up to and including the cross. In his early years he spent time in meditation and prayer as he walked the rolling hills in the Galilean countryside. However, the warfare had begun *even just after his birth, but it accelerated at the start of his 3 1/2 year public ministry, when he avoided a sand trap in the desert* which was actually *a Satan trap*. The tempter offered him the world in exchange for worship, but Jesus was not seduced. The devil also wanted him to prove he was the Son of God by turning stones into bread but Jesus knew that a miracle for his immediate personal need was not in God's plan. There were no shortcuts to God's ultimate purposes. The greatest proof of his deity would come from another event a few years later; one that would be for the benefit of all mankind.

God had promised through his prophets in the scriptures..... *Concerning His Son, who was born a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was **declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead**, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 1:3-4 NASB*

Jesus never wore a Nike cap, but he always thought victory. He never drove a golf ball, but he drove evil out of people's lives. He never read a golf green, but he was able to discern people's lives and motives. This got him into trouble throughout his ministry, especially with the Jewish religious leaders and then with the Roman rulers.

As the golfers at The Masters approach the final green, they can enjoy the dramatic view of the famous plantation mansion, the Augusta National Clubhouse. It was built in 1854 and was the first cement house built in the South. The enthusiastic crowd applauds the final top contenders as they walk towards the flag at the 18th hole.

It was not the same for Jesus as he made his final approach to his agonizing death. There was no mansion in view surrounded by beautiful flowers nor a finely manicured grassy green with a flagpole in its midst. All that awaited him was a wooden cross on a rocky hill and a hostile crowd filled with jeers, not cheers. However, his desire had never been for the applause of man but the approval of doing the will of God, which included a humiliating death on a cross. Jesus had come to bring the kingdom of God to earth but it seemed that the forces of darkness were about to prevail.

The Jewish religious leaders had their own kingdom of false piety, pride, power and position. They had conspired against Jesus for most of his ministry, and now they had him where they wanted him....condemned to death. However, the moment Jesus died on the cross, the 60ft. by 30ft. 4 inch thick temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. This curtain was so thick that it took 300 priests to move it. The temple had become an extensive religious enterprise which required thousands of priests for its

operation. The veil was there to separate sinful man from a God who was awesome in His holiness.

The death of Jesus put an end to animal sacrifices and opened the door to God's holy presence for all of mankind - Ephesians 2:11-22. He truly was 'the way, the truth and life' - John 14:6. There was no need for thousands of priests, for Jesus had become the one and only high priest needed, for God had torn the temple from top to bottom, which no human could have done. It had happened as the body of Jesus was torn at the scourging post and on the cross. Jesus was separated from God (which is hell) so that we could be united with him forever.

*Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence to enter the Most Holy Place** by the **blood of Jesus**, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...
- Hebrews 10:19-22 NIV*

The Romans ruled the world with their military might, and the cross was a symbol of their ruthless way of treating criminals and enemies. They considered themselves invincible over all others, including Jesus. They were wrong. Despite his extreme pain and weakness as he neared death, Jesus gave a loud victorious cry of: **'It is finished' and 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'** A Roman centurion in front of him was so struck by this that he exclaimed; Surely, this man was the Son of God - Mark 15:37-39. Luke 23:34, John 19:30.

Rome may have thought the cross had put an end to Jesus and his perceived threat to their kingdom. In actuality, **His death was the seed of its future destruction**, for they failed to account for the power of that seed. Jesus had shared this secret with his disciples before this all happened.

*Jesus replied, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed, but **if it dies, it produces many seeds.** - John 12:23-24 NIV*

The followers of Christ invaded the empire of Rome with his kingdom life, power, authority and teachings for several hundred years. Many became martyrs, but those seeds only spread the gospel of Jesus even further. The Roman empire finally came to an end, but the kingdom of God continues to grow and expand around the world, just like Jesus said it would....like yeast among dough.

A great golfer enjoys his win at The Masters at Augusta. Jesus will never know the thrill of victory at a golf tournament, but he experienced the greatest joy of all, when he *conquered the last enemy of all mankind.....death.*- Hebrews 2:14-15. The victory of Jesus did not take place at Augusta, but at Golgotha.

*Where O death, is your **victory? (nikos)** Where O death is your sting?
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the **victory (nikos)** through our **Lord (kurios)** Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 NIV*

Jesus is kurios which means: Supreme in authority, Lord and Master. Millions of people enjoy watching The Masters golf tournament, including me. However, the greatest joy of all is to know that in the game of life and death.....Jesus is the true Master and His nike can be ours.

Jesus did not receive the reward for his victorious life, death, burial and resurrection until he returned to heaven, and it was not a green jacket but a **golden crown**. His greatest joy however, is that through his sacrifice on earth he had purchased for the Father and Himself, a vast company of persons from every tribe, culture and generation who can know their love and enjoy them forever and forever.

His victory is ours if only we will lay down our lives and receive His life as ours.

I am so glad to be part of the family of God, a joint-heir with Jesus as I travel this sod.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the true champion and Master.

Nike to you,

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