



# REPENT AUSTRALIA

*"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

*2 Chronicles 7:14*

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An Easter Message

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## BEYOND THE CROSS

Charles Dickens commences his immortal story, 'A Christmas Carol', in this way: "Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon any (ex)change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door nail." People wrote a similar obituary to Jesus in their minds. "Jesus was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt about that." They saw Him die on the cross; they saw Him buried and they saw the tomb fastened with the imperial seal of Pilate. Pontius Pilate signed the register and Pilate's name was good for anything he chose to put his hand to. Jesus of Nazareth was as dead as a door nail.

### **The Power of Darkness**

Death did its worst at Calvary. It triumphed on that first Good Friday. As Jesus hung in agony upon the cross, death ever so close, the crowd mocking and jeering Him, it appeared that evil had won the day. Jesus Himself had even said when He was arrested, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Evil, immorality, violence, rebellion, corruption and dishonesty have their hour and it seems that goodness will never come out on top. But an hour lasts only sixty minutes and the hour of darkness soon passed and three days later everything had changed. Death had held the Son of God in its vice-like grip on that dark Friday but on the Sunday He burst the bonds of death and rose triumphant from the grave. "God raised Him up," Peter cried, "having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it." It would have been impossible for death to hold a principle of life like the Spirit of that Man of Nazareth. Indeed, it would have been a miracle had Jesus not risen from the dead. It would have been a miracle without reason, a miracle against God, the living God, had not Christ in whom "dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily" not conquered death.

### **The Law of Life**

However, what was miraculous about Jesus' resurrection was not that God raised Him from the dead, but that He was raised before the last great day when all who have the Spirit of Life will also be raised. Jesus' resurrection was not contrary to the law of life. The miracle of the resurrection was not a violation of the course of nature but a quickening of it. Life is the essence of God's creation, not death, and the resurrection of Jesus is an example of the general law that life is lord over death. As the Apostle Paul stated, the resurrection of Jesus was no more contrary to the law of nature than that the first fruits of summer are exceptions to the natural law. In other words, by His resurrection, Jesus only preceded the natural order. He did not break it. When a farmer plucks the first ears of grain from his crop he has evidence of the coming harvest. Months before, he had planted his seed in the soil when there were no visible signs that nature possessed any power to change that seed into a field of waving wheat. But in due season the rain fell and the sun warmed the soil. Soon there was a blade, then an ear, after that the full grain in the ear and then the first ripe sheaf heralding a harvest at hand. So it was with Jesus, the first fruit of a great future harvest.

### **"The Lord Is Risen"**

Not long after the 1917 revolution in Russia when the communists seized power the local communist leader was sent to a Russian village to impress the virtues of communism on the people and to take their thoughts away from the Christian faith. After he had harangued them for a long time he said

contemptuously to the local pastor, "I will give you five minutes to reply." To which the pastor replied, "I do not need five minutes, only five seconds." He rose to the platform and gave the traditional Easter greeting of his country, "The Lord is risen!" And as one man the villagers thundered back, "He is risen indeed!" Many today, however, do not have that assurance. Many do not believe in life after death. So we find authors such as Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, Eugene O'Neill and others filling their books with pessimism, darkness and tragedy. How different from Jesus Christ who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, though he die yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

### **A Silver Lining**

Though many deny it, there *is* something worse than having to suffer (as Jesus did), and that is the inability to see beyond our suffering, and still worse, the refusal to believe that anything lies beyond our suffering. Hence, we see growing pressure to accept euthanasia and abortion as means of the great escape, not realising that "he who loves death hates God." People commit suicide in the darkness of despair. But if they could look beyond the grey skies of suffering to the hope of a silver lining in the clouds they can go on struggling in their pain. Jesus knew beforehand He was going to suffer beyond human endurance on the cross, yet He let them crucify Him. Even then He must have seen that silver lining when He said to the repentant thief crucified alongside Him, "This day you will be with me in paradise."

### **A Path to Glory**

The darkness of night *will* fade into the light of a new day. The darkness of Good Friday becomes the light of Easter Day. Moreover the Scriptures throb with the idea of suffering being a path to glory. The apostle Paul reckoned "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us"; and the Book of Revelation presents a vision of martyrs standing before the throne of God... "a great multitude... clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands." This is the promised reward that enables Christians to suffer because they can see beyond the cross to that eternal victory which was Christ's when the Spirit of God raised Him from the dead. There is possibly no sweeter sound to God's ears than to have it said of one of His subjects that "he endured." The writer of the Book of James makes this clear when he wrote, "Blessed is the one who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him."

### **The First Ripe Sheaf**

We are all familiar with sowing. From age to age the earth has been sown thick with graves, but there has been no harvest. Earth has swallowed up an enormous quantity of seed without showing any sign of a harvest--except Christ the Lord. But, like the first ripe sheaf, He is the firstfruit of those countless millions who have died, the infallible proof that we too shall have a resurrection from the gloomy winter of death. And when the Scriptures tell us that the Lord will raise our mortal bodies so they can be fashioned after His own, we can envisage something of the glorified humanity that God has planned for His future Kingdom. Beyond the cross of suffering there lies a new day--an eternity--of glory and honour for all who put their trust in Him. That is the wonderful Easter message.

### **Prayer**

Lord God Almighty, the Great I AM, Eternal Father, whom we love with all our hearts and minds as we rest in Your wonderful grace through faith in Christ Jesus who paid the penalty for our sins on Calvary's cross, so we might have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the richness of that grace. Sovereign Lord, as covenant children in Your Royal Family we worship You in Spirit and in truth and pray for both leaders and citizens of your land to humbly respond in faith to the crucified, risen and glorified Lord--their only hope on earth of eternal salvation. For He indeed is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one can come to the Father except by Him. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You are now seated at the Father's right hand interceding for those who love You, renewing their minds to preach the Good News to those who are lost. Thank You, too, for Your Spirit of wisdom, power and might so we may go beyond the cross and grow in the fruits of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Blessed Lord, send Your Refining Fire, we pray, to burn out all our immorality, deception, apathy, rebellion and false gods and release Your River of Life to flow across this Great Southland of the Holy Spirit, sweeping millions into Your Kingdom of Righteousness, all eagerly awaiting the coming King of Glory, JESUS CHRIST, on His promised return to earth. We earnestly and sincerely pray all this in His triumphant name. Amen and glory to God.

R.A: Led by our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to glorify God with the Brotherhood of Man and in love and faithfulness to bring glory and honour to His holy name. Amen.

**REJOICE AS YOU SHARE THIS MESSAGE WITH OTHERS AND BE BLESSED TO BE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.**