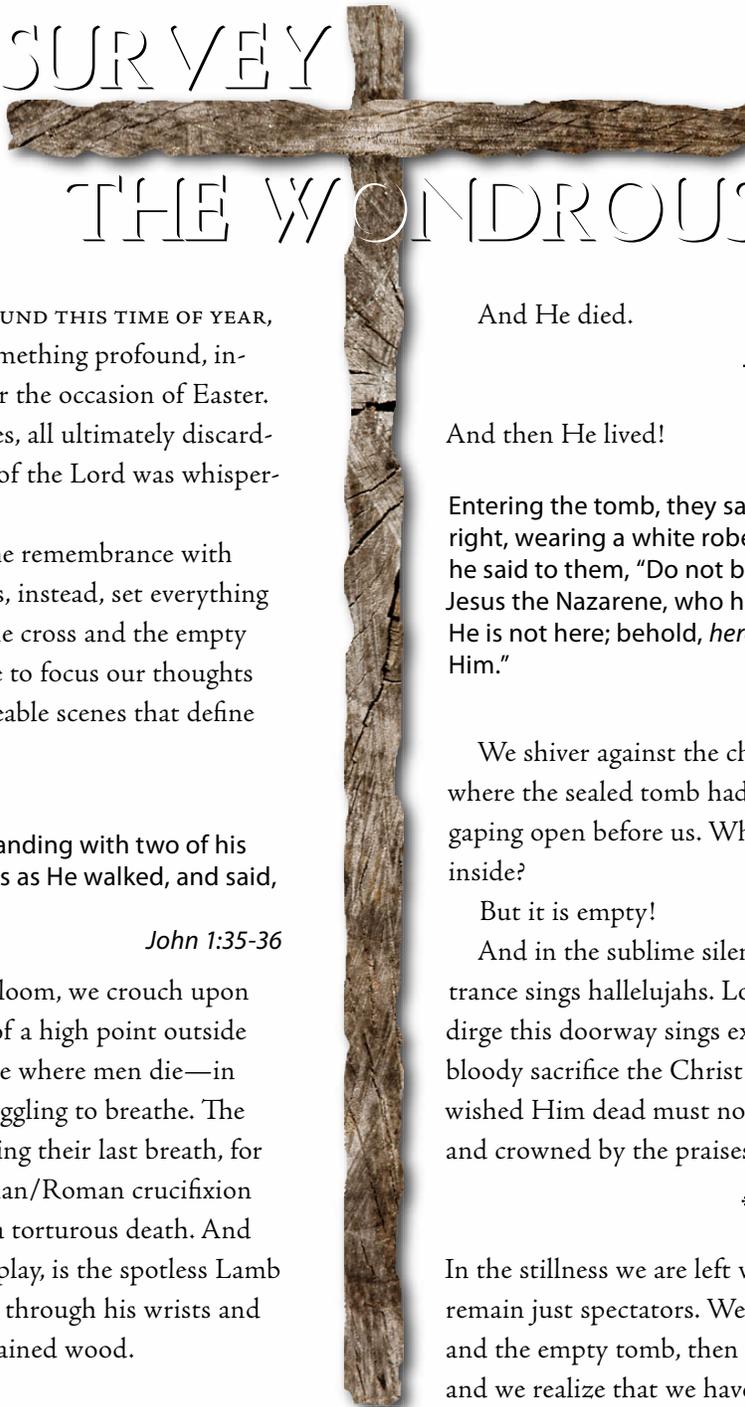


WHEN I SURVEY

THE WONDROUS CROSS



THIS WRITER, AS IS USUAL AROUND THIS TIME OF YEAR, originally set out to write something profound, inspiring, and reasonably unique for the occasion of Easter. Different angles, fresh perspectives, all ultimately discarded. Discarded because the Spirit of the Lord was whispering (a la Thoreau) "Simplicity!"

Let us, therefore, not clutter the remembrance with creativity or profundity, but let us, instead, set everything else aside and just come before the cross and the empty tomb. Let us reduce out the noise to focus our thoughts and devotion on the two irreplaceable scenes that define our faith.



Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

John 1:35-36

Huddled beneath the weight of gloom, we crouch upon the rough, weathered sandstone of a high point outside the Jerusalem walls. This is a place where men die—in prolonged agony, desperately struggling to breathe. The strong may take days before gasping their last breath, for you see, the point of the Phoenician/Roman crucifixion is not just to kill, but to prolong a torturous death. And here before us, in humiliating display, is the spotless Lamb of God, rusted iron spikes driven through his wrists and ankles to pin him to the blood-stained wood.

*See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

Here before us is the singular, breathtaking demonstration of God's sacrificial love: God the Son, beaten and bloody, nailed to the tree and withering under the weight of the world's sin; and God the Father struck through His generous heart by the sight of His precious Son, sacrificed upon the altar of man's rebellion.

And He died.



And then He lived!

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is the place where they laid Him.*"

Mark 16:5-6

We shiver against the chill of the early morning, and where the sealed tomb had been expected, we discover it gaping open before us. What horrors must we look upon inside?

But it is empty!

And in the sublime silence of the dawn this yawning entrance sings hallelujahs. Louder than any human chorus or dirge this doorway sings exultations and praise, for in His bloody sacrifice the Christ has been magnified. Those who wished Him dead must now see Him exalted, enthroned, and crowned by the praises of those who love Him.



In the stillness we are left within our thoughts. We cannot remain just spectators. We cannot just look upon the cross and the empty tomb, then walk away. Our spirit churns, and we realize that we have just witnessed, in the most graphic way imaginable, the purchase price of our souls. We have just been bought.



*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Isaac Watts

