

## The great “X” in the sky

(Advent 2)

- I. What is this great “X” in the sky?
  1. Constantine’s vision? You may recall that the at the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 A. D. the Emperor Constantine looked up to the sun and saw a cross of light and under the cross these words: “In this sign you will conquer.” And so he did and then decreed an edict of toleration putting an end to the persecution of Christians and ordering that they should be treated benevolently. (When you can hold a sword by the shaft and raise it up in a salute, the hilt or handle is a cross.)
  2. St. Andrew’s cross? The flag of Scotland is known as St. Andrew’s cross. It’s a blue field with a white cross extending to the four corners of the flag. (Images available online.) The cross represents the apostle, St. Andrew, who, according to tradition, was crucified on a cross turned sideways like an “X.” (Recall the death of Peter in John 21:18-19: “...another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go. (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.)”
  3. Or could the great “X” in the sky be the great “unknown”? No, It’s the great known; it is Christ’s cross.
  4. The “X” in the shape of St. Andrew’s cross (the ends extend outward to the four corners of heaven and earth) signifies that God has a plan from eternity to eternity. The “X” is the cross, the crossing, the crossroads of everything.
- II. The narrowing to the cross-ing. God’s work in the world may look like fire spreading wildly, but it is directed and controlled by the wind of God’s promises:
  1. Gen 3:3: “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree...”
  2. Gen 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman...”
  3. Gen 6:5-8: “The Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth...”
  4. Noah. Gen 9:13-16: “When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.”
  5. Abraham. Gen 12:1-3: “I will bless those who bless you...and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”
  6. Jacob. Gen 28:14-15: “And your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south....”
  7. Moses. Ex 19:4-6: “...you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine....”
  8. David. 2 Sam 7:16: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your thrown shall be established forever.”
  9. Amos 9:14-15: “I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them....”
  10. Isaiah 66:22-23: “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain....”
  11. Jeremiah 31:31-34: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I

made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt....”

12. Malachi 3:17: ““They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.””

III. The cross-ing. This is the focus the turning point, the key to all, the crossroad, the crossing from which and to which all things change.

IV. The widening. Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (cp. Matt 28:6-20).

1. The twelve, then the seventy.

2. “The poor” (how Christians were named at the beginning), the slaves, the martyrs, the refugees.

3. The Mediterranean Basin, the Near East, India (Apostle Thomas), China (6<sup>th</sup> century, Nestorian), Europe, the cross follows the explorers of the Americas, Africa.

4. Today China may have the highest number of Christians next to the U.S.

5. The “X” and us. He prepared the way to us and for us and our future. Baptism, Gal. 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” I John 3:2: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” I Cor 2:9: “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.”

6. Finally, the how, when, and where all is heading.

If you go to Egypt, you may visit St. Catherine’s monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. In this monastery biblical archeologists have found some of the oldest icons of Christ painted by early Christians. These icons are striking because they portray Christ on the cross, not as suffering, but as the risen king, triumphantly ruling the world from the cross. (Images available online.)