



# The broken Christ in a broken world

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## Abstract

In this broken world, the broken Christ is present in mission. The deep wounds of the broken world are evident. Terrorism from the left and the right leads to untold misery. There seems to be no answer to poverty and illnesses. Many challenges remain concerning governance and economic freedom. It is important to explain that Christ is exactly broken in this world. Paul wants to know about nothing else but Jesus as the crucified One (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Romans 3:25-26 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). In this world the crucified Christ must be proclaimed. On the cross, his solidarity with the broken world is evident. The theology of the Dutch theologian, Bram van de Beek, is helpful in this regard. He mentions that, though the resurrection is of utmost importance, in this world we see the crucified Christ. He also mentions that the Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, brings the suffering church in a relation with Christ who had suffered on the cross. I am of the opinion that mission must be the presentation of this crucified Lord, the Lamb, as if He was slain, to a world in need. The church then has the calling to be the suffering servant of God in the suffering world. Being verily God and verily man, Jesus Christ is the Mediator who can reach out to the wounded world. The church follows Him in his suffering for the world.

**Keywords:** Broken Christ, deep wounds, cross, suffering, mission.

## The broken Christ

In this broken world, the broken Christ is present in mission. If we want to understand how Christ is present in this world, then we have to understand that He was also the broken Christ. He was not only broken on the cross, but even during his lifetime. He presented Himself as broken from birth to resurrection. The cost of following Jesus means that one has to follow a person who had no place to rest his head and did not have a final abode.

Matthew 8:18-21.

<sup>18</sup>When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. <sup>19</sup>Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."<sup>20</sup>Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

The implication, according to Patte (1987:120), is that disciples of Jesus have to give up their absolute reliance on their belonging to this world, as did Jesus. Accepting Jesus means to accept that this world is not our final abode. It is clear that it also implies self-denying. Hagner



(1993:216) writes in this regard: 'Jesus means that life for him and the disciples who do follow him will be a matter of rigorous and self-denying living.'

Turner (2008:s.p.) refers to the implications of discipleship:

The two individuals who speak to Jesus about discipleship in 8:18–22 illustrate opposite problems. The first (8:18–20) is carried away with emotional enthusiasm but has not rationally considered the sacrifice demanded in an itinerant ministry. Perhaps he is impressed with Jesus's miracles and wants to participate in such glorious events. But miracles are not at the heart of kingdom ministry (7:21–23), and true disciples must be willing to be deprived of life's basic necessities.

Jesus, however, also explains that his death implies radical brokenness.

Jesus predicts his death in Matthew 20:17-19:

<sup>17</sup>Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, <sup>18</sup>"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup>and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

Jesus experienced rejection and Patte (1987:282) explains that the opposition to Jesus is clear in this regard. His suffering is complete from the beginning. The aspect of legal responsibility where Jesus is unjustly condemned in his trial also explains his suffering by the world. (Hill, 1981:287). Importantly, DeSilva (2004:283) regards the death of Jesus according to Matthew not as the will of Jesus' enemies, but the purpose of God to bestow benefits to people. His suffering therefore had deep eternal implications.

Matthew 26 and onward explains the plot against Jesus and the betrayals against Him. He struggles with his Father in Gethsemane. During his earthly life, He was rejected and despised. In many aspects He was the person of Isaiah 53, who has suffered for the sins of others and was rejected. This is also relevant for mission. Mission has a definite task in the present world. To present the broken Christ is of the utmost importance. The crucified One should be brought to the world. Christ is indeed the One crucified on the cross. Matthew also makes it very clear that, when Jesus was crucified, he was broken on the cross. Those who passed hurled insults at him.

Matthew 27:39-44.

<sup>39</sup>Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup>and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" <sup>41</sup>In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup>"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup>He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" <sup>44</sup>In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him."



DeSilva (2004:246) explains well that Jesus did not fit the Messianic expectations of the various Jewish groups: 'However, no one expected a Messiah who would come in humility to suffer and die'

Turner (2008:s.p.) explains the specific meaning of Jesus as Messiah:

The taunts emphasize the incompatibility between Jesus's purported power and his actual weakness (cf. Matt. 4:3, 6). Someone of his supposed stature could surely save his own life. The taunt to demonstrate divine sonship by coming down from the cross (27:40, 42, 44) is especially perverse, since Jesus endures the cross as the obedient Son of God (cf. 26:39, 42, 44). If Jesus comes down from the cross to save himself, he will not save his people from their sins (1:21; 10:38-39; 16:24-26; 20:28; 26:28).

### **The broken world**

The deep wounds of the broken world are evident. Terrorism from left and right leads to untold misery. Serious incidences of terrorism are shocking this world. In Christchurch, New Zealand, there was the terrible attack on the Muslim community on March 15, 2019, killing 51 people (Wright, 1996:online). In Sri Lanka, horrible attacks occurred in the Christian community with the eastern Sunday attacks of April 21, 2019, killing at least 253 people (Ethiraja, 2019:online). It is as if, globally, human beings have lost all respect for the other. The challenges posed by acts of terrorism and of desperate poverty and illness are extremely high. How can there be outreach to people from a missiological perspective in these situations? Even concerning governance and economic freedom there are many challenges. Serious economic problems exist: "These problems include global inequality and unequal economic development, global poverty, the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, depletion of the environment and global warming, and systemic problems associated with inadequate regulation of financial markets." (Economics Online 2019: online).

The World Economic Forum explains that governance and economic development goes hand in hand and that challenges in this regard remain high worldwide (Green, 2015:online). The challenges for good governance in a global world is, according to Rajagopa (online), more relevant than ever before. The question remains the same. How can one reach out with regard to the challenges of the present world? There is no easy answer, but the answers might be found in the confession of the broken Christ. It is the answer of the One who came to the world to save the people by giving Himself. It is the answer of the One for the others of 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. The One in the place of the others, that yielded Himself, though He had no sin, so that others may be saved. This salvation comes through Him being crucified on the cross. The crucifixion is central in the proclamation of mission in this world. Mission cannot be explained from any other perspective than the perspective of the cross. Any other perspective becomes a humanistic perspective of, for instance, only development.

### **The church in the world**

Mission involves the sense of bringing the crucified Christ to the world. Bringing the One that was on the cross means that the church is obedient to the great commission. The great commission can only be understood from the perspective of the crucifixion of Jesus. The great



commission therefore emphasises that He was crucified and resurrected and that He sent out his disciples to the world so that they can baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this world, however, we still see the cross. This does not mean that the resurrection did not take place. The resurrection points to the future. In this world we see the terrible situation of wants and needs and death and this can only be overcome by bringing the crucified Christ in relation to the people in the world pointing to the resurrection. But in this world the suffering with Christ is relevant. Paul wants to know nothing else but the crucified Christ—1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Romans 3 and 2 Corinthians 5.

The central place of Christ as the crucified One is without any compromise for Paul, according to Thiselton (2000:212): 'His settled resolve was that he would do only what served the gospel of Christ crucified, regardless of people's expectations or seductive shortcuts to make success, most of all the seduction of self-advertisement.' Witherington III (1998:172) shows how Jesus was the servant and that the meekness and gentleness of Jesus is clear in his role as suffering servant and that Paul as servant of Christ also replicates that aspect. Westerholm (2004:363) also regards the reference of Paul to the cross as essential for the understanding of salvation and of the person of Christ. Paul also assumes the death and resurrection of Jesus as essential and he does not argue about that (McDonald & Porter, 2000:364). Fee (1993:92) explains aptly: 'To know nothing' does not mean that he left all other knowledge aside, but rather that he had the gospel, with its crucified Messiah, as his singular focus and passion while he was among them.'

In Romans 3:25-26 Paul also explains the meaning of the cross:

<sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, <sup>¶</sup> through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—<sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Harrison (1976:s.p.) refers to the propitiatory provision of the cross:

The remainder of v. 25 deals with the necessity of the propitiatory provision in terms of God's justice (the same word in the original as "righteousness"). The character of God needs justification for his passing over "sins committed beforehand"—that is, in the ages prior to the cross. His "forbearance" is not to be thought of as sentimentality or weakness but as an indication that meeting the demands of his righteous character would be accomplished in due season. This happened at the cross. The Greek *paresis* (rendered "left ... unpunished") is close to *aphesis* ("forgiveness") in meaning, but with an appreciable difference in that *paresis* denotes a temporary remission of a debt (see Milligan and Moulton under *paresis*), which fits the situation here exactly. The full penalty for sin was not exacted, in line with God's forbearance.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 and 15, Paul links the death of Christ (on the cross).

<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And He died for all, that those who live should



no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

Martin (1986:s.p.) clearly emphasizes the basis for reconciliation: 'Though 5:18–20 brings out the rationale of reconciliation, 5:14, 15 provides the basis of reconciliation in the lives of the messengers and their audience, that is to say, Jesus' death and the love it creates in his people'

Therefore, suffering with Christ is a very important issue for the wounded world. We cannot understand the wounded world if we do not also understand the suffering of Christ in this world. Being this suffering Christ, He brings about the new situation and He calls us to suffer with Him, following Him as the crucified one. The resurrection is the culmination of the work of Jesus Christ, but it does not mean that, in this world, we still do not see the suffering of the One on the cross. Luke 4 is also relevant in this regard. Jesus was chased out of Nazareth, because the people did not accept it when He told them about the salvation being also for others and not only for the community itself. Jesus as Messiah explained that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Him

#### Luke 4 verse 18

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,  
<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Regarding this passage, Marshall (1979:128) concludes: '...Luke took up a view of Jesus which saw Him not merely as prophet but as the final prophet, the Servant and the Messiah.' However, Geldenhuys (1988:169) refers to the blind hate of the Nazarenes towards Jesus when He proclaimed the essence of his ministry. This Jesus had to suffer, but Nolland (1989:197) is of the opinion that the Lukan Jesus is no social reformer; He is not only deeply concerned with the needs of humanity in his or her physical predicament, but also with their spiritual needs.

Jesus is the true Messiah who reaches out to the most desperate people. This is the sign of his radical involvement in the lives of those in need. He was, however, also rejected, because he emphasised that the salvation He brings is also for those outside Israel. In the times of Elijah, Elijah was sent to the widow Zarephath in the region of Sidon, and Elisha, the prophet, was sent to Naaman, the Syrian. The people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this, so they rejected Jesus. Broken from the rejection of his own people, Jesus had to walk away.



The culmination is when He is crucified. He is rejected by the High Priest; He is rejected by the Jewish leaders; He is rejected by his own disciples; He is rejected by Pontius Pilate who hands Him over unjustly to be crucified. The suffering of the true son of God on the cross is clear. In the end He dies a terrible death by the hands of sinners. It was not a seeming death—it was true death, because He was also verily human. He died by giving Himself up. Verily human and verily God, he had to die on the cross. So He yielded Himself totally in this broken world for this broken world.

### **Theological interaction**

Secondly, the theology of the Dutch theologian, Bram van de Beek, is helpful in this regard. Van de Beek mentions that the crucified Christ is the essence of the Christian faith. In this world, Van de Beek says, we see the crucified Christ. The church is the body of Christ and the body of Christ is seen in the cross (Van de Beek, 2012:24). If we want to know God we cannot know God in any other way than the crucified Christ on the cross. The Son of God was rejected in two ways: by the religious leaders and by the secular leaders. The judgement of his crucifixion means that He was rejected in God's name and in the name of the politics (Van de Beek, 1998:149). He was prepared to go the full way till the end and he died as the righteous One (Van de Beek 1998:151). He died a terrible death for terrible guilt (Van de Beek, 1998:151). The initiative came from God, because He loved the world so much that his Son died the terrible death as sacrifice (Van de Beek, 1998:151). It is God who came from heaven that died on the cross (Van de Beek, 1998:153).

In Christ, God is rejected in this world, because Christ was crucified outside the city and He becomes the cursed God outside the city (Van de Beek, 1998:154). The church is always the church under the cross (Van de Beek, 2012:24). The church suffers with Christ and his suffering is also the suffering of the church (Van de Beek, 2012:25). To proclaim God in this world, is to proclaim the crucified One. Van de Beek mentions that Christ is fully God, but He is also the God that dies on the cross. On the cross He yields himself; on the cross He gives himself up for the sake of the world. There on the cross Jesus suffers for the world's sake and is one called to suffer with Him, to take up the cross, to follow Him and to die with Him if necessary (Van de Beek, 2012:25). Like Jesus, the church also suffers rejection and in this world the sign of the church is that of the cross (Van de Beek, 2019:28). Therefore, the church points to suffering. The message of the resurrection explains that there is fullness of life after death (Van de Beek 2012:25). But, in this world, we are confronted by the reality of death. The church carries the cross and suffering also of the world (Van de Beek, 2012:25-26). Even to speak about God is to speak about the God being born in the flesh, who suffered on the cross and was resurrected (Van de Beek 2017:255). The radical implication is that Christ suffered and died on the cross as the "Lord of Glory", the true Son of God (Van de Beek, 2008:134). Van de Beek also mentions that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and that we cannot understand the fullness of the Spirit, unless we understand it as the Spirit of Christ that redeems us in Christ, fills us with a new purpose and helps us to rely on the faith in Jesus Christ, always as the crucified One (Van de Beek, 2012:396ff.).

### **Mission in times of a challenging violent world**

Thirdly, mission must be the presentation of the crucified Lord, the Lamb of God, as He was slain. If we want to be involved in any aspect of mission reaching out to the world, and wanting



to proclaim the Christ in this world, we always have to do it from the perspective of the crucified Lamb of God. We always have to present the crucified Christ to the world. He is the One crucified on the cross and in mission we should understand that this is the way in which one should present Christ. Does one want to know Christ in the world? One has to see the cross. One has to see the crucified Christ. Christ also calls one out of this suffering to fellowship in Him. Mission also has to do with fellowship—fellowship with the people and fellowship with those calling them to follow Him. Fellowship means that we have to be in a very positive relation with the crucified God. Fellowship amongst ourselves means that we reach out to one another in looking up to the cross of Jesus Christ. Calling people from all over the world to look up to Jesus, the crucified One, who is the only One that can have an answer to this deep and terrible situation in the world.

### **The suffering Christ**

As the suffering servant of God in a suffering world, Jesus is the answer, but not in a sense of providing answers to all questions, but being there for others in his suffering. Being verily God and verily human, Jesus is the Mediator who can reach out to the wounded world. He is the One for others. Only because He is truly human, can He be the one that reaches out to others so that He can help them to also come into a new relation with Him. Only because He is the One for the others can He be the true One to help us understand what mission is all about. But He is also verily God, because He is the true God. He is God in this world through the cross. Through the cross, God reaches out to the world and can we see the salvation in Jesus Christ on the cross.

An aspect that also needs attention in this regard is the atonement. Atonement and the way that the crucified Christ achieved reconciliation of humans with God remains essential. The question of penal substitution remains very relevant. Anselm's question: Why did God become human? remains an essential question. Rightly understood, penal substitution opens the curtain to God's substitutionary love in Christ. Not all agree with this view. Green and Baker (2000:199ff.), in their book, *Recovering the scandal of the cross*, refer to new views of atonement challenging the Anselmian answer and call for diversity in the views on the atonement. The cross, however, remains in the centre of the discussion. In the book, *Stricken by God*, an attempt is made to clear God of violence in the atonement (Jersak & Hardin, 2007).

Taking Paul seriously, penal atonement of the One for the others, the Substitute, is appropriate for the deep wounds of the world. In this regard full cognisance should be taken of Gaffin's (2004:140ff) view in his article, *Atonement in the Pauline corpus*. Torrance (2009:148) again refers to Paul who speaks of Christ as '...himself our propitiation, or our expiation in whom we are reconciled with God...' (see also Stott, 1986:173-175). Gunton (189:165), in his overview of atonement, emphasises the word 'instead of' and explains that Christ underwent the judgment of God 'for us'. Boersma (2004:257-261) discusses the implications of violence for hospitality and is of the opinion that the cross calls for hospitality, but from the perspective of the violence of the cross that is only redeemed in the resurrection.

Christ is a King, but again we learn from Van de Beek that He is the King of another kingdom, He is not the King of this kingdom; his kingdom is not of this world. Therefore, He says that even when He is in front of Pilate, that his kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is from another world.



When He is before Pilate, He confesses in John 18:36:

<sup>36</sup> Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

<sup>37</sup> "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

<sup>38</sup> "What is truth?"

Beasley-Murray (1987:331) explains that the essence is that Jesus' kingdom should not be from this world. Lindars (1982:558) emphasises, however, that this also implies that not belonging to this world means the coming of a new age. Morris (1984:769) also refers to the fact that this kingdom is not basically concerned with this world, otherwise His followers would resort to the sword.

Theissen (2002:243) refers to the non-violent aspect of Jesus' reign:

...only God can realize a way of ruling without the use of force and coercion. This process is as nonviolent as the growth of plants. Yet Jesus and his adherents did not espouse political quietism. They do not remain passive. They participated in the realization of the kingdom of God by an explicit renunciation of force, by political symbolic actions, and by in-group exercise of humane rulership.

Horsley (2011:98-102), however, sees in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom a sign of present hope challenging the rulers of his time.

So the kingdom of God is from another place; the kingdom of God is so wonderful and so glorious, but it is from another place. It is not from this world. It does not come out of this world. It is not something from this world. It is from God and the kingdom of God and Jesus as King is from a totally different world. Jesus as King is a different king, he is not a king of power and might of this world. He is not like the kings of this world. He is like the King of the slain lamb, the King that was rejected and despised, that is the kind of King He was and his kingdom is the kingdom of love that comes into this world, but is not of this world. So we have to seek the kingdom of God, understanding that it is not of this world, but comes from another world. So we have to explain the fullness of the kingdom of God by following Jesus Christ on his way to the cross and by living from thereon. The resurrection is the culmination of what happened on the cross. The rejected One is also the resurrected One. But even in his resurrection, Jesus calls on us to follow Him in suffering.

NT Wright (1996:538) says that Jesus redefined the notion of Messiahship. He was to lead the people in a new way out of captivity. His own kingdom agenda was different from that of Hasmoneans and Herodians, or other messiahs of his time. His kingdom had brought the beginning of the end of exile for those who believe in Him as the true representative of the



people, the renewal of the covenant and the forgiveness of sin. The expectation is that He would enter Jerusalem as powerful King, but He went there to be crucified. The church follows Jesus in this suffering of the world, because this leads to a new relation with Him. And this new relation calls for the fact that we have to explain to the world how to follow the crucified one. The crucified one can only be followed when we are prepared to show the cross in this world and we will have to do that.

Ridderbos (1962:207) puts the confession of the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the poor in the covenant relationship between God and his people: '*The confirmation and renewal of this covenant receive their basis and character from Christ's word and work, especially from his expiatory death*' [lt. Ridderbos].

But the cross is not justifying the terrible situation of this world. The cross is not justifying terrorism from right and left. The cross is not justifying people's illnesses and people's wants or poverty or the terrible situations in some countries. The cross is a protest against that. The cross is a protest from God against this world and the things that happen in this world. The cross calls us out to a new relation. Banda (2010:171) explains that the 'Christ event is the assimilation of suffering in the present.' Burrige (2007:391) regards ethics always as a response to Jesus in his person and to what He has achieved through his life and death. In this regard Lindberg (2007:236) also explains how Jesus gives total new implications to ethics by emphasising not just law but love. Borg (2006:307 and 311) also emphasises that an unending conversation about Jesus should always take into account his affirmation that the well-being of the world is his passion.

Therefore, we do not say that we accept what is going on in the world and we can do nothing about it. We protest against that by the cross and through the cross. Through the cross of Jesus, we say there is a new situation possible and we want this new situation to come about by explaining the fullness in Christ. Therefore, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ emphasises that He is the true God. He is the One that is our salvation, calling us to a new relation with Him and explaining that we have to follow Him in every instance.

In this regard Barth (1961:99) writes: 'In suffering in our stead the death of the old man, and bringing in by His resurrection the life of the new, He has made room for the being of all men at peace with God.' We have to agree with Witherington III (2007:280) that the earliest Christianity had narrow banks, but that the streams flowing through them were deep, confessing the divinity of Jesus and his way of salvation and ethics.

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