

CRUCIFIED TO THE RELIGIOUS WORLD TO BE A NEW CREATION

BY RON KANGAS

The alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians are 1:4 and 6:14, both of which refer to the world as an inclusive system arranged by Satan in his opposition to God and His will. Galatians 1:4 says that the Lord Jesus "gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father." Literally, the Greek word rendered "rescue" means "pluck out" or "extricate." According to the revelation given to the apostle Paul, the Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins not only to redeem us and reconcile us to God but also to extricate us from the present evil age. An age is "a part, a section, an aspect, the present and modern appearance, of the system of Satan, which is used by him to usurp and occupy people" living at a particular time "and keep them away from God and His purpose" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Eph. 2:2, note 1). Every age has its zeitgeist—the defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as manifested by the ideas and beliefs of the time. If we study verse 4 in the context of the entire book of Galatians, we will see that "the present evil age" mentioned in this verse denotes the religious part of the age, the religious course of the world designed to oppose God's intention concerning Christ and the church. The age from which believers in Christ must be rescued is the religious age.

This thought is reinforced by Paul in 6:14: "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." The mention of circumcision in verses 12 and 13 indicates that the world that had been crucified to Paul and to which Paul had been crucified was the religious world, which was utterly opposed to Christ and the cross. As far as Paul was concerned, the religious world had been crucified, and as far as the religious world was concerned, Paul was crucified. Having seen the heavenly vision of the glorified Christ and repudiating his entire religious background, Paul learned that Christ and religion are incompatible. Christ is versus religion, and religion is versus Christ—this is the central thought in Galatians. Paul and the religious world had nothing to do with each other, because between Paul and the religious world there was the cross. Paul had been plucked out of the evil religious age through the religious world being crucified to him and he to the religious world. It is of great significance that Paul continues by saying, "For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters" (v. 15). Here Paul declares boldly that neither the religious world—circumcision—nor the secular world—uncircumcision—means anything. To the Triune God, to Christ, to the Spirit, and to the apostle Paul, the new creation is what matters. He was extricated from the present evil age of religion and crucified to it. The religious world was crucified to him and he to it; this opened the way for him to see the vision of the new creation, become part of the new creation, and proclaim the new creation. What happened to Paul must and eventually will happen to every believer in Christ Jesus—being crucified to the religious