



SEVEN EASTER MEDITATIONS

created by
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Why Easter?

Seven Easter Meditations

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Background

The Greatest Day In Christianity Was The Humiliation Of Its God

How ironic. Can the hero of Christianity die and it be deemed a great day? Yet, every Easter Christians celebrate the death of Christ and call it Good Friday. Then on Easter Sunday they worship His victory over death by celebrating His resurrected life. These two days mark the two themes of Christianity: Crucifixion on Good Friday (or death) and Resurrection on Easter Sunday (or life). Christianity depends upon crucifixion and resurrection. Without crucifixion there is no forgiveness of sin's penalty and without resurrection there is no freedom from sin's power.

Without Friday's humiliation of God upon an executioner's device, sin's penalty would still exist and man would be forced to die in his sin. But Friday is doubly ironic because this day is referred to as "good." It is good because Jesus undergoes the humiliation of death on a cross for our good. But it is good only for those who trust in Jesus' death to act as a substitute of their own deserving capital punishment. For all others it is a foreshadowing of what is to come. But Easter does not end on Friday, but Sunday. The penalty of sin is nullified by death on Friday, and the power of sin is annulled by His resurrection life on Sunday. Easter is a celebration of both Friday's death and Sunday's life. It takes both Jesus' death and life to free us from sins penalty and power. And all those who trust in Jesus are yoked with Him in this death and life.

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

For Good Friday can only be good if it is followed by Easter Sunday and Easter Sunday does not make sense without a Good Friday. The Timeline of Easter Weekend is below:

Jesus eats Passovermeal with disciples

Jesus dies and is buried before sunset

Thursday night is one day, Friday night is two days, Saturday night is three days before he rose again.

Saturday night (Jewish Sabbath), Jesus



The Irony of the Cross

The irony surrounding the death of Jesus is astounding - staggering in fact. The most improbable of all events (Jesus' Crucifixion) led to the most improbable of all outcomes (His Resurrection). Who would have thought that the events and dialogue surrounding such a death, though motivated by mockery and meanness, were nonetheless true. These events were some of the most ironic in human history. Consider Jesus for a moment:

- who had no sin, yet was crucified and criticized for sin (Matthew 26:65)
- who was God, yet was asked to swear in God's name as though not God (Matthew 26:63)
- who had done nothing wrong, yet was executed as a criminal (Luke 23:40)
- who was king, yet mocked as "King of the Jews" (Luke 23:36-38, John 19:19-22)
- who could have called angels to his rescue, yet berated for not saving himself (Matthew 12:53)
- who could heal and save others, though was insulted for not saving himself (Luke 23:39)
- who was in union with God, yet was forsaken by God (Mark 15:34)
- who had all right to unleash wrath, yet prayed for His executioner's forgiveness (Luke 23:34)
- who was the Prophet, yet was beaten for failure to prophesy (Mark 14:65)
- who was worthy of all honor, yet was paid a sarcastic tribute (Mark 15:17-20)
- who was silent in answer, though accused greatly (Matthew 27:12-14)
- who trusted in God, yet was ridiculed for not trusting in Him (Matthew 27:43)
- who had all authority, yet was at the hand of Pilate's authority (John 19:10)
- who was the Son of God, yet was crucified for admitting it (John 19:7)
- who was sinned against by all, yet Pilate proclaimed His innocence (Matthew 27:24)

"Christianity is the only major religion to have as its central event the humiliation of its God. Crucifixion was a barbarous death, reserved for agitators, pirates, and slaves. Jewish law cursed "everyone who hangs on a tree" and the Roman statesman, Cicero, warned: "Let the very name of the cross be far, not only from the body of the Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears." Part of the victim's punishment was to be whipped, and then to carry the heavy cross-beam to the place of his own death. When the cross was raised, a notice was pinned to it giving the culprit's name and crime. In Jesus' case I N R I: Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Pontius Pilate, Jesus' Roman judge, apparently intended it as a final thrust of malice aimed at the Jews, but like the cross itself Jesus' followers found a special meaning

The Irony of Jesus

Irony is expressing meaning by language that typically signifies the opposite, yet is nonetheless true. The following statements are true realities about Jesus, yet appear to be contradictory. Read over the following Scriptures and explain how they illustrate the bolded statements below.

Jesus was born to die

John 1:29

John 10:17, 18

Acts 2:24

Acts 3:18

Acts 13:27

You were born to live

John 10:10

Acts 5:20

Ecclesiastes 3:11

In death, Jesus won

1 Corinthians 15:55-56

Colossians 2:14-15

Ephesians 2:13

Hebrews 2:14, 15

Hebrews 9:12

Jesus rose to come again

Acts 3:20

John 14:3

Hebrews 9:28

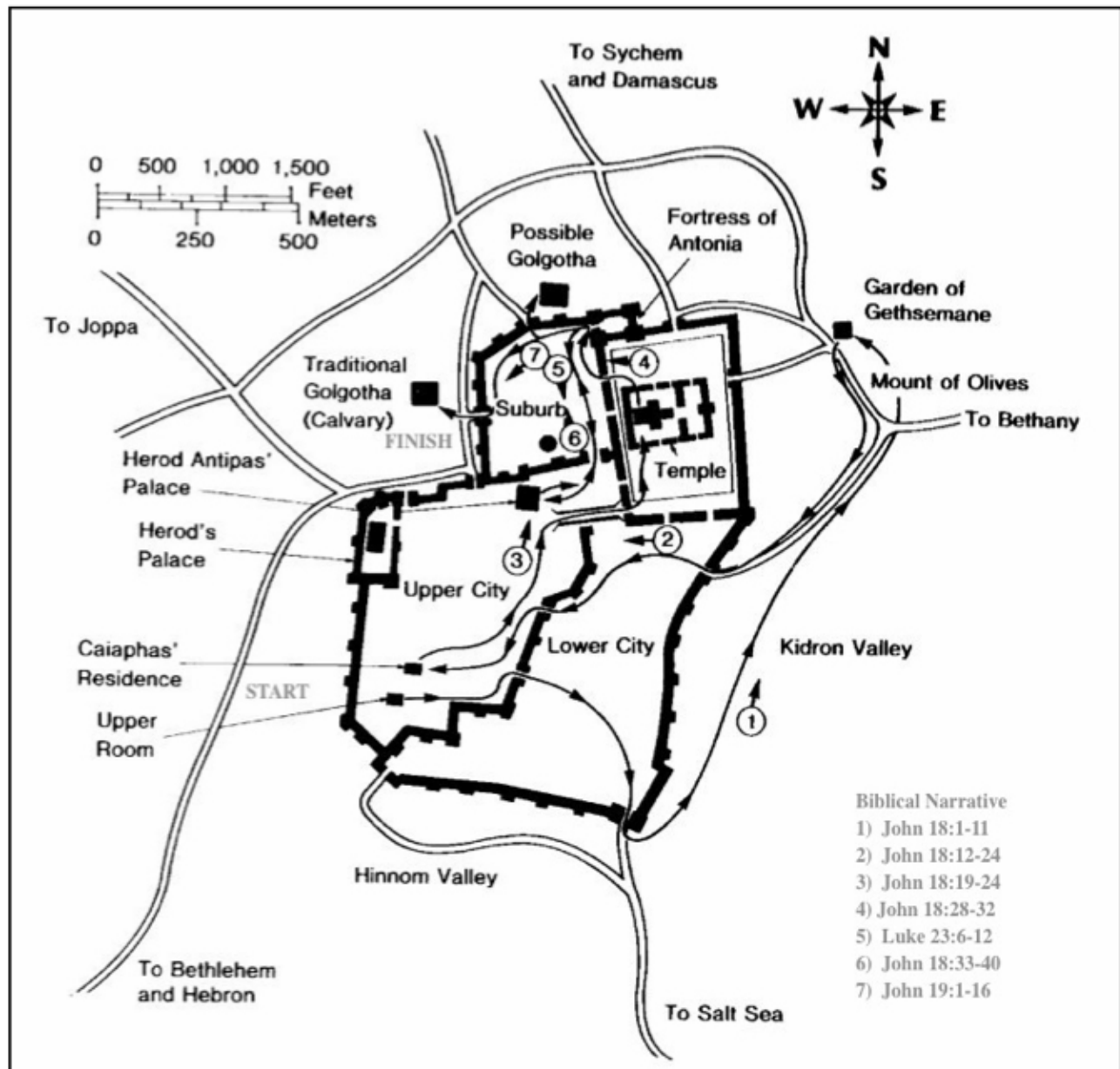
When you die, you live

Luke 9:23, 24

John 12:23-26

The Journey of Jesus to the Cross

The last 24 hours



(START) Jesus left Upper Room

1. and walked with His disciples to the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane,
2. where He was arrested and taken first to Annas and then to Caiaphas.
3. Jesus was tried before religious Sanhedrin, probably at the Temple by Caiaphas the high priest.
4. Next, He was taken to Pontius Pilate for punishment,
5. who sent Him to Herod Antipas.
6. Herod returned Jesus to Pilate who questioned Him
7. and finally handed over Jesus for scourging at Fortress of Antonia and for crucifixion at Golgotha

Intro

The Last Seven Sayings of Christ

Filled with Irony

The following Easter devotional is a study consisting of the last 7 sayings uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. They are important for two reasons. One, they are some of the last words uttered by Christ on earth. And two, they are some of the least expected words one would have ever dreamed would have come out of our Savior's mouth. Right up to the end, Jesus never ceases to amaze. As you read the following excerpts think about how deliberately contrary they are to what one would consider logical and human. The improbable statements are true testimony to the supernatural nature of Jesus Christ, especially considering the dire circumstances.

The Seven Sayings in Summary

- "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)
- "Truly I say to you, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:43)
- "Woman, behold your Son!...Behold, your mother!" (John 19:26, 27)
- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)
- "I thirst." (John 19:28)
- "It is finished," (John 19:30)
- "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46)

What it took for Jesus to speak⁴

The pain undergone by Jesus when uttering the above statements must have been excruciating. Jesus, whose lungs would have been filling up with fluid during His 6 hour crucifixion, would have had to have undergone searing pain to exhale and verbalize coherent sentences. Because a sunken and slouched posture would have been most comfortable for a person on a cross Jesus would have had to have gone through a series of steps to utter words. First, He would have had to pushed Himself upright and in good posture on the cross which would have put immense pressure on the tarsals in His feet through which a 6-9 inch spike was driven. As He stood upright His elbows would have become flexed which would have rotated His wrists around another 6-9 inch spike driven between His ulna and radius bones. And as He did this His freshly lacerated back was sure to have been rubbed harshly upon the rough and splintered wooden cross. These were not sentences uttered in quiet or were just filler. They were intentional and agonizing communications our Savior uttered before He died for our sins.

How to Use This Study?

This study will give you a week's worth of devotionals leading up to Easter Sunday. Plan to start on the Monday before Easter Sunday and you will finish the last devotional on Easter Sunday. This study will walk you through the head and heart of Jesus and will prepare you to celebrate our Savior through His last seven sayings.

Each day will include five parts:

1. Read the passage
2. Respond to the questions
3. Reflect over the summary
4. Reference verses in the Bible
5. Request God in prayer

The Study

Day #1

In Need of Forgiveness

Read

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." (Luke 23:32-38 ESV)

Respond

1. How does the context and the content of Jesus' saying reinforce the riches of God's mercy to us?
2. Do the executioners deserve the mercy of God in this moment? How is this setting a precedent for how we understand forgiveness nowadays?
3. How is forgiveness tied to Jesus' crucifixion? Why is it ironic that the crowds are mocking Jesus' ability to save others, but His inability to save Himself?

Reflect

The mercy of God is undeniable. In the most hated of all contexts Jesus pleads for God's mercy for man. Man did not even initiate it, but God did. Man did not even know he was in sin, but God did. Man did not even know forgiveness is purchased through sacrifice, but God did.

This instance is a foreshadowing of our sin and need of forgiveness. The crucified Christ bestowing mercy on unrepentant sinners shows the depth of our evil in its clearest form. The cross shows that man does not know what God knows.

- God knows He must die to forgive man.
- God knows that man is not aware of his sin.
- God knows that man will not ask for forgiveness when he does not see his transgression.
- Therefore, God dies for the unconscious sin that is unconfessed by man.

This illustrates the incredible unconditional nature of the Christian religion. We have met no conditions or standards to be rewarded mercy. God just offers it and it is made ours through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Reference

See Matthew 18:21-35. How do we know we have understood mercy?

Request

Observe the scope of God's mercy. God has mercy on us for sins we are not even conscious of. Pray and ask God to reveal any unconfessed sins in your life so that you may feel the immeasurable mercy of God in new and fresh ways. Jonathan Edwards used to pray, "Resolved, to confess frankly to myself all that which I find in myself, either infirmity or sin...Resolved, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent, what sin I have committed." See Psalm 139:23-24.

Day #2

The Precedent of Grace

Read

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43 ESV)

Respond

1. What does one of the criminals recognize about Jesus and himself that prompts Jesus to respond, “Today you will be with me in Paradise?”

2. Why is this passage one of the greatest Biblical precedents for salvation by grace alone? (as opposed to good works)

3. What does Jesus’ response conclude even about His own future?

Reflect

The narrative about Jesus and the two criminals is perhaps the greatest description in the Bible of salvation solely based upon grace alone. Think about what Jesus said and who He said it to. A convict upon the cross was not there on some petty crime or misdemeanor but commonly an outlaw, rapist, or anarchist. Crucifixion was reserved for the vilest convicts. There was

certainly nothing on his record that earned him a right to be granted Paradise or pardoned for that matter. But Jesus not only offers the convict a pardon from what he deserves (commonly referred to as mercy), but He graces him with what he does not deserve (commonly referred to as grace). Jesus, the one unjustly placed upon a cross, even for the two criminals placed on either side of Him promises the criminal eternal life. And not just eternal life, but eternal life with Him. Christianity is relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the one who makes eternity Paradise for all who believe in Him.

Reference

See Ephesians 2:1-3. Do you see yourself (like the criminal) as deserving capital punishment for an eternity?

Request

Have you come to terms with the vileness of your nature, yet the victory of Jesus upon the cross? Understanding what the criminal understood is paramount to grasping Christianity fully. The Apostle Paul summed it up beautifully, “This statement is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). Ask God to remind you often of your new heavenly home that awaits you, which claims your citizenship (Phil. 3:21) and where your Savior eagerly awaits to bring you (John 14:1-3).

Day #3

Humility Abounds

Read

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

“They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and

the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:23-27 ESV)

Respond

1. During Jesus’ last hours of earthly life where was His attention focused? Why is this staggering? Who would you have thought would have consumed His final thoughts?
2. How does Jesus’ humility add to the truth expressed in Hebrews 4:15?
3. Based upon these last sayings, what is of some of the utmost importance to Jesus? What does He value?

Reflect

Humility need not only be expressed by thinking of oneself as less, but just thinking of oneself less often. Jesus, who easily would have been justified by preoccupation with Himself and His circumstances was overcome with love and grief for those who were grieving Him. It hurt Him to see others hurt for Him. (Epaphroditus felt something similar-recorded in Philippians 2:25-30). Jesus, knowing that He would be missed and grief would ensue was looking after those He loved up until the end. He provided another son for His earthly mother and ensured His most beloved disciple would not be without family. Jesus was faithful to the end to selflessness. If there was ever a time when He might have been tempted to selfishness this was it.

Reference

See Philippians 2:3-11. See how Jesus illustrates what Paul is encouraging the Philippians towards.

Request

Jesus epitomizes a sacrificed and selfless life for others. He was born for others. Lived for others. Died for others. Rose for others. Jesus lived a life of others-absorption to free you from self-focus. He has lived for you, so that you can live for others. Look over 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and ask God to free you from a hall of mirrors type of life. Ask Him to give you in greater measure the gift of the gospel - God has saved you from self, to God, and for others.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 ESV)

Day #4

Separation for Sin

Read

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:45-54 ESV)

Respond

1. Why would Jesus say He was forsaken by God? How does this demonstrate the penalty of sin?

2. Why was separation from God perhaps the greatest pain experienced by Jesus on the cross?
How is this a foreshadowing of what hell is like?

3. Jesus was separated from God, but how does the torn curtain demonstrate the opposite for us?

Reflect

The tearing of the temple's curtain was extremely significant. The curtain symbolized the separateness between God and man because of sin. The high priest after continual cleansing could only enter the holy place (behind the curtain) once a year and bask in the presence of God. But now, with the curtain ripped, the very presence of God was open to humanity. Jesus lost God and was separated from Him so the curtain would no longer separate us from communion with God. But what did it take to accomplish this? It took love and justice. "If God were not just there would be no demand for His Son to suffer and die. And if God were not loving, there would be no willingness for His Son to suffer and die. But God is both just and loving. Therefore His love is willing to meet the demands of His justice."

Reference

See Isaiah chapter 53. Observe the fulfilled prophecy of how Jesus has borne our punishment and sin in our place.

Request

Isaiah 59:2 says,

but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Praise God for His victory over your sin through Jesus and thank Him for Jesus' isolation and loss of fellowship so that you may never have to experience divine loneliness. But ask God to grant you holiness and swifter sanctification that present sin may no longer stifle intimacy and closeness with your God.

Day #5

The Humanity and Deity of Jesus

Read

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. (John 19:28-29 ESV)

Respond

1. How does this statement prove the full humanity of Jesus and that death was taking a full and felt effect on Him?
2. What was the spiritual meaning behind, "I thirst?" If Jesus is thirsty on a soul-level what might this be communicating about His soul? (See John 7:37-38)
3. Jesus, although in misery, would have uttered no complaint but wanted to give the fullest testimony to his Messiahship by fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 69:21. Read Psalm 69:19-21 and observe the agonies of hell taken for you.

Reflect

John chapter 19 was not the first time that Jesus had been offered wine. Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23 also record that Jesus was offered wine, but did not accept it. He most likely did not accept it because bitter wine was used as an intoxicant and Jesus did not want to dull the pain of crucifixion whatsoever but take the full dose of God's unabated wrath.

Jesus does accept a second offering of wine vinegar which was non-alcoholic, but a thirst quencher. This was to fulfill the scripture that He was very aware of. Jesus knew that as Savior He was to feel the full extent of God's wrath and that as Savior He was to fulfill all prophecies. Jesus does both. The very humanity of Jesus thirsted and quenched, but it was the dogmatic divine Jesus which would not lessen the excruciating trauma of the cross. He was determined to feel the full effects of sacrifice for you and me.

Reference

Read over the Old Testament Messiah reference in Isaiah 9:2-7 and then read Matthew 28:18. What does the Old Testament promise and what does Jesus proclaim that was given to Him from His heavenly Father upon Resurrection?

Request

Consider the humanity and divinity of Jesus and celebrate God's image perfected in Jesus and be awed over who God is. But also see God's incarnation expressed as a faithful high priest who not only mediates our relationship with God but also provided the sacrifice of His body for our reconciliation. *God is and God is for us.*

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18 ESV)

Day #6

Jesus Finishes for Us

Read

When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. (John 19:30-38 ESV)

Respond

1. What was “finished,” according to Jesus? What did Jesus finish for us?

2. How are you still prone to live as though Christianity is not a finished reality? What do you believe you have to offer to God?

3. What type of life ought we now enjoy because Jesus says, “Finished?”

Reflect

The Christian life is rest, not work. By the words, “It is finished” Jesus secured our eternity, our righteousness, our value, and our sanctification. Christianity is now a perpetual vertical weekend. Our relationship with God is just a celebration of what He has done and what is now credited to us. All boasting goes vertical because all work was done and finished by God. If it is finished there is nothing left to be done. Nothing can be added that brings any more closure or completion if it is finished. It cannot be complemented or supplemented. Jesus said, “It is finished.” So sit back, kick back, and enjoy. Christianity, in terms of our salvation, is a “done” religion, not “do.” There is no more doing, but just receiving. We raise our hands to God and they are empty. That is the only way to approach our God—empty handed. So come and be filled, receive, and be made full and let Jesus finish taking all your wrath and earn all your righteousness for you. Because no one can finish this race. Only Jesus. All others will not finish.

Reference

Jesus finished our infinite debt against God. Jesus satisfied His divine wrath and drank God’s punishment down to the last drop. Jesus finished. Read Colossians 2:13-15 and list all the ways Jesus has finished the race for us.

Request

Most of us do not live a “finished” reality, but instead have a “finishing” mentality. We can talk as if things depend upon God, but still walk and live as though things really depend upon us. Confess and pray and ask God to show us our hypocrisy. Ask Him to make us satisfied in His accomplishments and achievements for us and to bemoan what we try to gain for ourselves. Ask Him to keep you from the evil of forsaking Christ’s finished work and looking to be your own finisher:

for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

(Jeremiah 2:13 ESV)

Day #7

Sovereignty in Suffering

Read

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. (Luke 23:44-49 ESV)

Respond

1. What is Jesus inferring by His last statement? What is He communicating about His death?
2. How is this statement a victorious statement? How is death not ultimate for Jesus?
3. The centurion, who had observed all the events of Jesus' death ends with, "Certainly this man was innocent!" Why does he say this?

Reflect

No death was like this one. Jesus, who did not hurl abuses and constant insults at His executioners, but prayed for them, was unlike any other crucifixion the Romans had witnessed. One who thought of others to the end and even extended eternity out to a forgiven criminal

persuaded the centurion to say upon Jesus' last breath, "Certainly this man was innocent!" Yes, innocent to the end. He was the perfect, spotless, and utterly blameless lamb of God who died upon the cross. Of all people Jesus deserved to be there the least. The one who saved and restored others to health did not save Himself and did not restore His bloodied body. Yet, the people chanted incessantly, "Crucify him, Crucify him..." (John 19:15) and even longed for a murdering anarchist to be released in their midst before Jesus (Luke 23:18). Many thought that the death of Jesus would be a deeply gratifying event, but instead it just turned sour. The crowds did not leave satisfied that day. They left in a state of increasing turmoil beating their breasts in agony over crucifying the truly innocent Son of God. Jesus, though, would not lose, but win and resolutely committed His life to the hands of His heavenly Father pledging to not die, but live on eternally.

Reference

Consider what Peter says of Golgotha in 1 Peter 2:22-23. Observe how Peter recorded Jesus' utter sinlessness and trust in His heavenly Father's sovereignty and justice during His death.

Request

He is risen. Jesus Christ is alive! Mary announced to the disciples upon encountering Jesus, "I have seen the Lord" (John 20:18). Jesus' resurrection is crucial to the historicity and the saving power of Jesus Christ. If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Worship God for his death-destroying Resurrection and ask Him to make you long for and love His coming appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

Appendix

Is the Resurrection Important?

If the bones of Jesus were somehow discovered by archaeologists would it matter to a Christian? Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-34 argues emphatically, “YES.” He says that without the resurrection Christians “are of all people most to be pitied” (v. 19) and should live carnally, preaching, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (v. 32).

Read the passage below and consider the following points:

- Apart from the Resurrection, faith is worthless.
- Apart from the Resurrection, you are still stuck in your sins.
- Apart from the Resurrection, earth is all you will ever know.

WHY? Because...

- If Jesus is dead, then your faith has no power.
- If Jesus is dead, then you have no advocate.
- If Jesus is dead, then He will never come again.

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and

power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰Why are we in danger every hour? ³¹I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” ³³Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” ³⁴Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

When Was Jesus Crucified?

God was surely not being secretive with regards to His communication concerning His Son as the events of the crucifixion unfolded. Perhaps, the clearest statement about who Christ is can be observed by when He dies. God, in His sovereign plan, had His Son’s death take place during the Passover. To have Jesus die on Passover had massive implications for what God was doing for the world.

Every Hebrew in that time knew that God had saved their nation and freed them from Egyptian slavery during an event known as the Passover (which was commanded to be celebrated by the Jewish nation every year). On that day, God commanded every Jewish household under Egyptian mastery to sacrifice a male, unblemished, choice lamb. The blood of the sacrifice was to be painted upon the doorposts of every Jewish household which served as a sign for God’s death angel to “Pass-over” that house and not kill the inhabitants inside. If there was no blood on the doorposts God exacted a just and deadly punishment upon the sins of the Egyptians.

Read the two verses below and piece together the significance behind the timing of Jesus death. What was God communicating?

- Read John 1:35-36 & Exodus 12

What are you trusting Jesus for?

- During Easter we celebrate Christ's life and death for us. We worship His life as the only life that fully demonstrated and met the standards that God demands (Matthew 5:48, Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was and is perfect and He accomplished and fully satisfied the sinless and sacrificial life that God the Father desired. Jesus met all of God's demands perfectly.
- But we not only worship His life, we herald His death. Not only did Jesus accomplish the perfection that we are so desperately in need of, but He accomplished and satisfied the just punishment we deserved. We, not He, sinned and committed wicked deeds. Yet, God in Jesus Christ will lovingly and willingly let Jesus' death upon the cross take our place. Jesus died so that you would not have to.
- At Easter, we realize that Jesus' life achieved the perfect moral record that we could not. And at Easter, we realize that Jesus' death satisfied the just punishment that we ourselves deserved. This transaction is the gospel. Jesus' life in place of ours. And Jesus' death in place of ours. We give Him our just punishment (Romans 3:23) and He gives us, in place of our wickedness, His hard earned righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). There is no better deal in the universe than this one!
- Just don't trust Jesus generally or vaguely, but trust Him specifically. What are you trusting Him for? Do you just believe that He exists or are you trusting Him as a substitute? Are you trusting Him to give His life to count for yours and His death to count for yours? If you are not, then you are not trusting the gospel.
- When we trust in Jesus we are trusting Him to fulfill 2 Corinthians 5:21:
<http://www.623project.com/watch>

ENDNOTES

¹ Pfeiffer CF, Vos HF, Rea J (eds): Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia. Chicago, Moody Press, 1975 pp 149-152, 404-405, 713-723, 1173-1174, 1520-1523.

² Adapted from <http://www.frugalsites.net/jesus/images/Map1.jpg> (accessed on March 14th, 2013)

³ Referenced from <http://www.frugalsites.net/jesus/crucifixion.htm> (accessed on March 15th, 2013).

⁴The Passion of the Chirst. John PIper, pg. 20.

⁵Adapted from http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/65700/65776/65776_passover_lg.gif

www.made2multiply.com