

04

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

Jesus' betrayal, trial and Crucifixion

Why did Jesus have to die?

The reason for the Resurrection

What does this mean for us?

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In the last study we looked at some of the reasons why Jesus came to earth. Now we will delve deeper into this and His death and subsequent resurrection and what it means for us.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

*What thoughts have
you had on study
#3?*

JESUS' BETRYAL, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Jesus came to earth knowing the purpose of His life. During His ministry He told His followers many times that He was going to be betrayed by one of them and that He was going to be mocked, spat on, falsely accused, beaten and killed.

But here's the rub – every time He said this, He added that He was going to rise again three days later - He said this with confidence – no if's or but's. The way He said it was with a certainty that couldn't be ignored.

How could He make this impossible to believe statement? No one else in history had ever made such bold claims. Yet He exhibited not a shadow of doubt that it would happen. We've previously observed that Jesus was fully aware of the mission He had been sent to earth for. He had complete confidence in God, His Father and it was this relationship that got Him through the ordeal of the beating and execution on the Cross.

It was His complete and utter faith in God His Father, who had declared that He would rise from the dead, which would guarantee that it would happen.

But what was it that caused the turn of events that was to lead to Jesus' death?

After all He had healed countless hundreds of people. He had demonstrated tenderness towards those whom society had rejected. Twice He had fed upwards of 12,000 – 15,000 people with just a few fish and some loaves of bread.

He was more often found with those that society had rejected. He lambasted the religious leaders who should have known better.

*Jesus said to them
(His disciples),
“The Son of Man
is going to be
delivered into the
hands of men.
They will kill him,
and after three
days He will rise.”
But they did not
understand what
He meant and
were afraid to ask
Him about it.*

MARK :31-32

The people loved Him for it because He got His hands dirty – rolled up His sleeves and pitched right in to people’s lives, and gave them hope.

Yet in the end the leaders swayed the crowds to turn against Jesus. After all He had done for them, they threw it back in His face. Yet He knew this would happen, as indeed He had told His disciples many times already. Jesus had complete faith and trust in His Father that He – Jesus – would overcome all His enemies. There are several cruel features in this part of Jesus’ life.

One of those who had been with Him over 3 years turned against Him and agreed to betray Him 30 silver coins - around £200 in today’s money.

During the trial Jesus is handed from one Governor to another. They just simply did not know what to do with Him. His answers to their questions had them baffled. He was like no other prisoner they’d had to deal with.

A kangaroo court is hastily convened and, breaking with all the strict Roman legal conventions and sense of justice of the day, Jesus is charged and convicted of blasphemy, which in those days carried the death sentence.

Jesus is then subjected to the most cruel and inhumane method of execution known at that time – Roman crucifixion.

His hands and feet were nailed to a rough Cross of wood. Then the Cross was hauled upright and placed in the ground and the prisoner was left to die an agonising, long drawn out death. Victims were left fighting for breath as their strength ebbed away and the pressure on the diaphragm meant that it became more and more difficult to breathe.

Sometimes it could take days for the convicted person to die this way.

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left.

LUKE 23:32-33

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Men and women have become separated from God through sin – that is all our thoughts, actions, words, motives and attitudes that are against God’s righteous standards.

The bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. We may disagree with this as we might feel we haven’t done anything really bad. Nevertheless, our idea of what is right and what is wrong is way off the mark when compared with God’s ideals.

We think in terms of small sins or large sins – but the truth or reality is that it takes just one instance of sin to separate us from God.

However, the great news is that Jesus came to cancel out our sin and bring us back into a relationship with God. There is a penalty for sin that has to be paid for.

Think in terms of a large debt that we were unable to pay and were being threatened with court action?

There would be the possibility that we would be sentenced to go to prison. Now what if someone stepped in and paid the debt for us and didn’t want anything from us as repayment?

We would be most grateful and want to try and do something to thank that person.

So, with our sins the payment is death and eternal punishment from God. But Jesus has stepped in and paid it for us. As He went to the Cross and died so Jesus was paying for our sin – all our sins, and He paid them in full.

There is now no longer any outstanding debt to be paid on our part. No longer do we have to fear eternal punishment and separation from God. We have been set free from this debt.

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 3:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal Life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

THE REASON FOR THE RESURRECTION

As we have just seen, Jesus told His disciples what would happen to Him and that He would die. However, He always added that He would rise from the dead in 3 days' time. Why was this?

Let's face it; it is a pretty bold statement to say that after you have been killed you will come back from being dead in 3 days' time. It has been said that Jesus was either mad, a liar or actually who He said He was.

He had in fact already raised 3 people from the dead - the daughter of Jairus - a Synagogue ruler, (Mark 5 22 - 24 & 35 - 42), the son of a widow (Luke 7:11-15) and Jesus' friend Lazarus. (John 11:1 - 44) The fact that Lazarus had been dead for 4 days didn't perturb Jesus. He just went right ahead and called Lazarus out of the tomb, who immediately appears still wrapped up in his grave clothes!

So when Jesus starts telling His disciples He would be raised from the dead 3 days later you would have thought they would have shown at least some measure of belief.

But this was not the case; they still could not comprehend what He was telling them. We have looked at Jesus' cruel treatment, His trial and subsequent execution, but why is His resurrection so important?

The resurrection for Christians is the most central aspect of their faith. Without the resurrection there would be no Christianity. It is the resurrection that sets Christianity apart from all other religions.

If Jesus had not risen again from the dead He would have just gone down in history as a good man and a brilliant teacher. But there it would have ended. Shame He had to die, but then again so have many other good people.

*If we have
hoped in
Christ in this
life only, we
are of all
people most to
be pitied.*

1 CORINTHIANS
15:19

There are many theories and excuses which people have invented as to why Jesus didn't actually rise from the dead – ranging from 'He didn't really die, only fainted from the harsh treatment' to 'the disciples stole His body and hid it' and many other theories.

The people at the crucifixion saw an experienced Roman soldier shove a spear in the side of Jesus body to check that He had died. Two of Jesus' followers, Nicodemus and Joseph took His body down from the Cross, laid it in a tomb and the entrance sealed with a large boulder which took all their combined strength to put in place. Then a guard of four Roman soldiers were stationed at the entrance to ensure the body could not be stolen.

Yet after all this had taken place, Jesus came back from the dead, appearing first to two women who went to the tomb to complete the burial rituals on the 3rd day, then to His disciples, then to many other people, including five hundred at one time.

The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is pretty compelling when it is studied in depth. The testimony of such a large group of people who saw and heard Jesus after His resurrection is the reason why Christians believe He actually did come back from the dead. The resurrection gives us a hope and a future – a future that one day we shall be united with Jesus in heaven.

Other accounts in the bible – not only in the Gospels, tell us that Jesus rose again from the dead. e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4:

For what I received (this is the apostle Paul writing) I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

It was this belief that caused men and women to go out in the region and beyond to share their faith and spread this good news - some even to martyrdom for their firm conviction. They wouldn't be willing to die for something that they knew was a lie!

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 CORINTHIANS
15:20-22

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

The resurrection proves that Jesus was the Son of God, which He had always claimed. The resurrection underpins all that Jesus said.

He spent a lot of time talking about His relationship with God, His Father. In the resurrection we see God doing what Jesus said He (God) would do. The bible speaks of the power that God exerted in Jesus body as He lay dead in a tomb: *“That great power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He (God) exerted in Christ when He raised Jesus from the dead. (Ephesians 1:19-20)*

We don't know how this happened, but what we do know is that His followers saw Him die nailed to a Cross of wood. Although there is quite a lot of historical evidence for Jesus death and resurrection at the end of the day it requires a step of faith to believe it, and that's just how God intends it to be!

A lawyer, Frank Morison in his book “Who moved the Stone?” set out to prove that the resurrection of Christ must have been fake. However, his detailed researches led him to the unavoidable conclusion that it must be true!! A fascinating read!

Nevertheless, the fact that there are many millions of people around the world who believe these things took place, shows that there must be some element of truth in them.

It is easy to dismiss these things with a wave of the hand: it takes real faith to believe them and live life in the light of them throughout one's time here on earth.

*If we believe
with our heart
that God raised
Him (that is
Jesus) you shall
be saved.*

Romans 10:9

There is hope for people in this account. Indeed, on one day 3,000 people believed the message of hope in Jesus! The church spread rapidly after Jesus death and resurrection.

NOTES :