

03-30-18 – Good Friday

This is the day we recognize Jesus' passion for us. He died to free us from our sin. It's called the Passion, because it was out of pure love that He gave His life for ours. We are redeemed.

I love that this year the Passover and Easter fall on the same weekend. It in itself is a fulfillment of prophecy. Passover is the most important holiday on the Jewish calendar since it commemorates the deliverance of the Hebrews from their oppression from slavery in Egypt. So, God stepped in and gave them instructions on what to do. This is their salvation story.

Ex. - While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household. ...

The salvation that God gave to Israel was so important that God changed their annual calendar to reflect that the new first month of the year would be this month of deliverance. It is a symbol of being born again. They received a new birth date – a new first month. Everything would start again from here going forward.

Many hundreds of years later, God would inspire the world calendar to be re-ordered around the death of Christ. Our entire calendar today revolves around Jesus – isn't that amazing? When He died and rose again, a new calendar was born – a new starting point in history.

Here we are tonight. We heard the choir sing. Mary Kate sang The Day He Wore My Crown and the choir sang Written in Red. These songs tell the story of Jesus' love for us - that he gave Himself for us. ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever will believe will not perish but have everlasting life."*** Jn. 3:16

The Passover lamb was carefully selected. It had to be in the prime of life (one year old). It had to be perfect – no blemishes – no bad markings – no scars. It had to be sacrificed whole and none of its bones could be broken in the process. This should all be sounding pretty familiar to you by now.

Jesus lived a perfect sinless life. He had no blemishes to His character. He was sacrificed in the prime of His life (33 years old). In the process of His gruesome crucifixion, not one of His bones were broken. In fact, when the Roman soldiers came to break the legs of the victims to speed up their death, Jesus was already dead, so they didn't break His legs. This could not be contrived. This all happened according to God's plan and fulfilled prophecy after prophecy.

Before this great and terrible day, darkness was all around Him. He brought His core group of Peter, James and John, and He asked them to pray while He went off by Himself to pray. After a short time, Jesus returned to his friends needing their support and camaraderie. He found them sleeping instead of praying. I find myself in this situation too often. How about you? He did this three times, but they failed Him every time.

The Bible tells us that He was in such anguish during this time that His sweat was like drops of blood. Heb. 5:7 – ***“He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears.”*** He knew what was ahead of Him. He was in anguish, but He kept going forward in the Spirit’s power. But the darkness continued to close in on Him. The enemy (Satan) was at work in all this as well. Satan knew the two-fold mission of Jesus’ ministry including His death.

He came to save His people from their sins (Mt. 1:21) and to destroy the devil’s work (1 Jn. 3:8).

He was going to do everything he could to thwart this mission of Jesus. Jesus was acting according to the will and plan of God. Is. 53:9-10 – ***“He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer.”***

2 Cor. 5:21 – “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We are told that we were dead in our sin from the beginning. After all, who has never sinned beside Jesus? The moment we turned to our own way, we sinned against the perfection that God requires of all who might come to Him of our own righteousness. We blew it the first time we sinned. There was no recovery from that action. We were lost and stay lost on our own. Eph. 2:1-2 – ***“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live.”***

Is there any way we can fix this situation? **NO!**

So, Jesus came to our rescue by giving His life as an atonement for our sin even before we sinned. All of humanity was destined to the same fate, for ***“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23).***

Knowing this, how could God allow all of humanity to be condemned forever? There must be a remedy. And, there was. Jesus came to earth – God with us – to offer Himself as a human sacrificial Lamb. He is the ultimate Passover Lamb – offered for our sin. He came to die. That’s exactly what He did. We have freedom from oppression of sin in our lives through His death.

The realities of prophecy of Scripture were fulfilled. Jesus gave His life for all of us – once and for all. **There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**

Jews all over the world celebrate their Passover with a Seder meal commemorating God's salvation of the People of Israel from bondage. We too commemorate the salvation of our souls from the bondage of sin and death through the crucifixion of Jesus and His resurrection.

While we reflect on the torture and tragedy of the death of Jesus in such a barbaric way, we also celebrate Good Friday, for if He didn't give His life for us that day, we would still be lost in our trespasses and sins. We are free because He took on Himself our destiny as prisoners. He is our Savior, Redeemer, Rescuer, and King victorious. The story isn't over yet! There's more to come. He isn't finished with us yet. Stay tuned.