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Friday - Day of Agony Matthew 27:24-50

Introduction

In just twenty verses the Gospel of John presents the greatest event in human history, the death of Jesus on the cross, John 19:17-37. Luke gives only thirty verses, while Matthew and Mark both devote twenty-nine verses to Jesus' crucifixion (Matt 27:27-56; Mark 15:16-41). The cross itself is mentioned only thirty-two times in the New Testament. There are an additional fourteen verses that speak of the death of Jesus without mention of the cross. Yet, this indeed was the most significant event in human history. Jesus' death on the cross indeed is the central message of the Gospel. We are to glory in the cross, Gal 6:14, because on it Jesus purchased our pardon and sealed our salvation.

The cross was as scandalous an idea then as it is now. The Greeks were the refined culture of the unbelieving world who considered the cross foolishness. The Jews were the elite of the religious world and to them the cross was a stumbling block. However to us, a lost world, it is the only true message, and the one and only hope of salvation 1 Cor 1:18-25. Yet, the cross seems so barbaric. A cross! Who would do such a thing? Who killed Jesus? When you get home, look in the mirror and you will have your answer. Jesus faced a cruel death on the cross for you and for me. This event contains the true message of salvation that there is no other name under heaven given among the human family whereby we not only can, but must be saved, Acts 4:12. Why was Jesus crucified? Why was the precious Son of God tortured to death in a public spectacle? The Gospels reveal at least five reasons why such a heinous act was perpetrated against God's only begotten Son.

1. The Cross Reveals the Sinful Depravity of Human Nature - Matt 27:26-31

The parable of the wicked vinedressers in Matthew 21:33-46, gives us insight into the answer to the question of why the crucifixion? The Bible clearly teaches that the human heart is desperately wicked; who can know it?

- Jeremiah 17:9-10 - The "heart" is the Hebrew לב, *lev*, refers to the seat of volitional choice, or the "will." It is deceitful and treacherous. Human self-evaluation always concludes that a person's will is naturally good. You do not have to teach a child to be disobedient. The idea that every person is innately good is a lie planted in the mind of a person as a panacea to convince human beings that they are basically good.
- Proverbs 6:16-19 - There are seven things the Lord hates of which number four is "a heart that devises wicked plans . . ."

- Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29 - There is not a just man on earth who does good. Although the statement is true, this pessimistic view of human nature was penned by Solomon when he was out of fellowship with God.
- Isaiah 64:6 - The human dilemma is that our best works are as filthy rags in God's sight.
- Matthew 15:18-19 - Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies . . .

Lesson: The cruel reality of the cross reflects real evidence of the depths of human depravity. As we witness in our culture almost daily, there are no limits to the dreadful acts one human being will inflict upon another. It is sobering to realize that the world would still crucify Jesus today!

2. The Cross Reveals God's Determination to Redeem Us from sin, Mt 26:53

The depths of human depravity are only excelled by the limitless grace of God who is willing to provide redemption for all those who will receive it. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace," Eph 1:7.

- Genesis 3:15 - God's determination was announced as the first gospel hope at the time of the fall of humanity into sin.
- Genesis 49:10; Ps 72:13; Isa 7:14; Isa 25:9; 61:1-3 - These are just a few of the passages through the Bible that demonstrate God's determination to make His redeeming grace available to all who will receive it.
- Isaiah 53:4-12 - Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, who suffered for our sins, not His own.
- John 10:17-18, Matthew 26:53 - Jesus made a conscious choice to lay down His life for lost humanity. He said, "I lay down my life . . . no man takes it from me, I lay down my life that I may take it up again."

Lesson: The cross stands as clear evidence of just how far God was willing to go in order to provide redemption, forgiveness of sins, and redeeming grace to all who will receive it. He allowed Jesus to suffer the inhumanity of the indescribable suffering on the cross that we might be saved.

3. The Cross Reveals the Depth of God's Love for Us - John 15:13; Luke 23:34

There is no greater love than for one to lay down his or her life for a friend. I always am so moved each time I visit the American Cemetery in Normandy, France. There the thousands of white crosses bare witness to men and women who laid down their lives for our freedom. Those white crosses also remind me of another cross on a hill named Golgotha, where Jesus laid down

His life for our sin in order to provide forgiveness, fellowship with God, and our eternal salvation.

- Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Ruth 4; Leviticus 25:23-25; 48-49; Numbers 35:19-27 God provided His Son to be our Kinsman Redeemer, Eph 1:7. He redeemed our inheritance, our bondage, our death because of sin, our name, and our reputation. It would be impossible to overstate the love of God expressed in Christ to provide our salvation.
- Ephesians 1:7; 2:1-10; 3:17-19 - Redemption through His blood includes God's forgiveness of sin as an act of grace.
- John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
- Rom 8:31-39 - Love of God is inseparable, and our salvation is secure. This is a fact that depends on God's keeping power, not our human ability.

Lesson: Jesus went to the cross because it was the Father's will. He provides a comprehensive redemption that covers all that the human family lost due to sin. He provides a permanent cure to the problem of sin and alienation from God. All of this was provided by the love of God.

4. The Cross Reveals the Terrible Cost of Sin - Rom 6:23

We must never take sin lightly and never act presumptuously on the grace God has provided to accomplish our salvation. The death of Jesus on the cross was a cruel punishment. It was a humiliating public punishment. Think of the God of creation sending His Son to die at the hands of those who would choose the most inhumane suffering imaginable. The cross is a glaring example of human inhumanity to other humans.

- Genesis 3:1-6 - Sin is rebellion against God. Sin occurs when a human being, the created, rebels against God, the creator. Sin results in alienation and separation from God, Gen 3:7-8, 22-24. Sin's legacy produces the works of the flesh of Galatians 5:19-21, "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, etc." Those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
- Leviticus 1:1 - 7:38 - Animal sacrifices and the sacrificial system was designed to call attention to the terrible cost of sin. They were object lessons that the wages of sin indeed is death. Animals were killed, skinned, dissected and every part examined, then placed on the sacrificial altar to be burned. A participant who brought the sacrifice was supposed to see that it was their substitute provided by the grace

of God. The shedding of blood and the death of the animal were clear signals of the cost of sin.

- Romans 1:18 - sin is the object of God's wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.
- Revelation 20:11-15 - death and hell are cast into the lake of fire; all not found in the Lamb's Book of Life; Rom 6:23 sin's wages are death.
- Romans 6:23 - there is one, and only one remedy for sin. The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is everlasting life through Jesus. The remedy is simple.
- Romans 10:9-10 - If you confess with your mouth, believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Lesson: Sin brought terrible consequences on the human family. Jesus came to die as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins that we might have salvation, forgiveness and eternal life through Him, see Heb 9:23-28 and 10:1-10. Jesus died once for all people, for all kinds of sin, for all who believe in Him, for all time and eternity.

5. The Cross Reveals God's Only Hope for the World and for YOU, Acts 4:12

How valid is the claim of Christianity to the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus Christ alone? How valid is the claim that Christianity is the only true religion? How valid is the Christian claim that all other religions are false and cannot bring anyone to the knowledge of God or to salvation? Where did the disciples get the idea of Jesus as the exclusive Savior sent from God?

- Isaiah 2:1-22 - This passage clearly presents the coming Jewish Messiah as the basis for salvation for all nations, see Isa 2:2-4, 8-12, 19; Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-2, 10; 42:1; 45:22; 49:8; 53:11-12; 61:1-3; 62:1-2; 66:1, 23. The Messianic idea flourished after the time of Isaiah and was a central focus of the Essenes at Qumran a hundred years before Jesus, see Israel Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 5-26.
- Acts 4:12 - no other way of salvation, no religion, no person; John 14:1-6.
- Acts 10:43 - "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."
- 1 Timothy 2:5-7 - "There is one God and one Mediator [of] between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."
- Romans 4:4, 5; 11:6; Titus 3:1-6 - "Not by works of righteousness which we have, but by His mercy He saved us . . ."

Lesson: Salvation through the Messiah was not invented by the Jews, nor was the idea of salvation for the Gentiles by a Jewish Savior. It is clear

that the *Messianic* hope was part of *God's* plan from the first *Gospel* hope in *Genesis 3:15*. It blossomed in the prophets and came alive in the *Gospels* under the inspiration of the *Holy Spirit*. *Acts 4:12* is the condensed but definitive statement that salvation was, is, and will always be in *Christ* alone.