

THE THREE DAYS OF EASTER

Mark 8:31

INTRODUCTION: Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection. Death by crucifixion was a horrible death. Jesus was the very Son of God. He was innocent of everything but love. Jesus spoke often of the three days related to His crucifixion and His resurrection. Those days in His life brought hope to the world.

Jesus said to His enemies, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19) Jesus spoke of His body as a temple. He was saying to them that if they killed Him, He would rise from the grave.

I. FRIDAY: DAY OF DEATH

A. CHRIST'S DESTINY TO THE CROSS.

Jesus was crucified on Friday. The death of Christ was predicted in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. In eternity past, Jesus' death on the cross was planned. He would be the Father's Lamb offered up for the sins of the world. (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18-20)

B. CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS.

The Scripture tells of Jesus' arrest and trial. He was led by the Romans soldiers to the edge of town to be crucified. Jesus suffered on the cross for six hours the most horrible death known to man. He was nailed to the cross at 9 o'clock in the morning and was dead by 3 o'clock in the afternoon. While Jesus was God in the flesh, the Bible declares that He died a physical death. (1 Tim. 3:16) He arose from the dead in a bodily form.

Christ's death is essential for our salvation. Jesus was the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away our sin. (John 1:29) The cross was the display of the Father's love and His holiness. It revealed His compassion and love for sinners, (John 3:16) and His hatred of sin. Hanging on the cross, Jesus shed His precious blood as a sacrifice for sinners (1 Pet. 2:24) and as the satisfier of the Father's righteousness in judging sin. (1 John 2:1-2, 4:9-10)

II. SATURDAY: DAY OF DESPAIR

The disciples responded to Jesus' death by despair. They felt hopeless after the death of their Master and their Teacher. They felt lost as sheep without their Shepherd. Grief filled their hearts.

A. DISCIPLES' DREAD.

The disciples were afraid because they believed they also would be killed. They expected the Roman soldiers to arrest them and put them to death.

B. DISCIPLES' DOUBTS.

Jesus had told His disciples of His coming death and resurrection. Their minds were filled with doubt concerning all Jesus had taught them. The women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They believed Jesus was dead and still in the tomb. The angels announced to the women that Jesus was alive. The disciples, on hearing the words of the women who returned from the tomb, thought the things they said were "idle tales, and they believed them not." (Luke 24:11)

Jesus appeared with the two disciples on the Emmaus road. They failed to recognize Jesus as He talked with them. They believed Jesus was dead and doubts had filled their minds. It wasn't until Jesus opened their eyes that they recognized the Lord. (Luke 24:13-32)

Jesus made His appearance to the disciples with Thomas being absent. When the other disciples told Thomas they had seen the Lord, he doubted. (John 20:24-29)

III. SUNDAY: DAY OF DECLARATION

A. RESURRECTION PROCLAIMED.

The angels first announced the resurrection of Christ to the women who came to the tomb where Jesus was buried. They were surprised to find the stone rolled from the tomb. As they entered the tomb, the angel said

to them: "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." (Mark 16:5-7)

They ran and told the disciples. The word spread quickly that Jesus was alive.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the disciples. They boldly proclaimed the gospel message. The early church was born and commissioned to carry the gospel message to the ends of the world. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) The apostles gave a powerful witness of the "resurrection of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 4:33)

B. RESURRECTION PROOF.

The resurrection of Jesus was a fact. Jesus made His appearance to the women, the disciples, and 500 brethren at one time. (1 Cor. 15:1-8) The resurrection of Christ is one of the most attested events in human history. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was proof of His deity and Lordship.

"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3)

C. RESURRECTION POWER.

- 1) The resurrection of Christ declares the power over death. (John 20:19-21; Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18)
- 2) The resurrection of Christ destroyed the power of sin. (Rom. 6:4-6, 8:2; 2 Cor. 5:21)
- 3) The resurrection of Christ defeated the power of Satan. (Luke 10:18; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8)
- 4) The resurrection of Christ displayed the power of life. (John 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 6:14; 1 Pet. 1:3)

IV. TODAY: DAY OF DISCISION

A. CALL TO DISCISION.

The gospel calls people to make a decision. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. (Rom. 1:16) The Bible is full of God's invitations for the sinner to come to Him.

In the O.T. God said: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. 1:18)

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

God's invitation to the sinner is the gift of salvation. That gift is being offered today. The Lord calls all to come to Him in repentance and faith.

". . . behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

B. CONSEQUENCES OF DECISION.

What you do with Jesus will determine where you will spend eternity. You can dismiss Him or reject Him, but you cannot hide from Him. You will be called someday to stand before the Lord. What will be the consequence of your decision, heaven or hell?

CONCLUSION: These three days in the life of Jesus changed the world forever. The resurrection of Christ is the power of the gospel message. The gospel promises us that the Son of God came to earth to die for our sins and that He rose on the third day triumphantly. Because He is risen, you and I can face both life and death with confidence. We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35-37)