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|  | As we’ve moved through our brief study of the Bible, we’ve focused on the two major problems of mankind: our sin leads to death, and our breaking of God’s laws requires judgment. Throughout the history of the world, people have been seeking solutions for these problems through good works, right thinking, social justice, religion, etc. But when you’re trying to please the almighty, perfect God, none of these solutions are good enough. Tonight, after two months of study, I want to show you the solution to these problems. As you might suspect, the only possible solution comes from God Himself. |
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|  | Not everyone wanted to see Jesus become king. The religious leaders were jealous of Him and afraid that He would harm their political relationships with the Roman government. In a way, this is good for us, because their failed attempts to prove that He was a fraud helps to confirm that these records are true. And since His enemies could not prove Him wrong, they sought to silence Him by catching and killing Him. It is interesting to read one such attempt in **John 7:30-32; 45,46**. Notice that Jesus was completely in control of what happened. The Jewish leaders wanted to take Him, but they could not do it until Jesus decided that the time was right.    Passover was the time that all of the Jews remembered how God protected them from death, instructing them to kill a lamb and paint its blood on their doorposts. Every year during the Passover feast, the people of Israel would kill another lamb, remembering this historic event. But it was more than just history – it was a picture of the true Lamb of God, the One who would take away sin.    For this reason, Passover was the right time for Jesus to sacrifice His life. In **Mark 14:1,2**, we see that this was one time where the Jewish leaders did not want to arrest Jesus and kill Him. But remember, Jesus is in control. After eating the last supper with His disciples, they go into a garden to pray. But this is not an easy time – Jesus is faced with the unthinkable. The perfectly holy God is about to drink in all of the sin of the world. Jesus cries out to the Father (**Mark 14:34-36**). But there is no other way.    So Jesus allowed Himself to be captured by the religious leaders, falsely accused, and turned over to the Romans for execution. |
|  | Even the Roman governor, Pilate, knows that Jesus is innocent, asking the people why He should be condemned (**Mark 15:12-15**). Jesus stands before them, Immanuel, God in the flesh. This is the One who healed their sick and fed the hungry, the One who amazed people with His teaching. They are now given a choice: what will they do with Jesus? And in direct disobedience to the 1st commandment, they choose to turn from God and turn toward man (**John 19:15,16**). So they place a wooden cross on the back of Jesus (**vs. 17**) and make Him climb the hill of sacrifice.    Before His execution, the Romans whipped, tortured, and mocked Him (**Mark 15:16-20**). The Romans were experts at torture, and records from this period tell us about their flogging. The whip had many strips of leather. Pieces of metal and bone were tied onto the lashes so they would cut the back of the prisoner when he was beaten. The prisoner’s hands and legs were tied during this time so he couldn’t escape. This punishment cut the flesh, muscles, and nerves, often putting the victim into severe shock. Some prisoners died from the flogging itself.    Crucifixion was used by the Romans for the worst of criminals. This punishment was bad because usually the person did not die immediately. He would endure hours and sometimes days of intense physical pain before dying. For His crucifixion, Jesus was stripped naked and nails were driven through His hands and feet into a wooden cross. The cross was then placed in an upright position. The Holy and perfect Creator, lifted up above the crowd, hanging for hours in shame and agony (**Mark 15:25**). |
|  | Usually a sign was put above the criminal to indicate what crime he had committed. Because Jesus had committed no crime, the Romans could find nothing to charge Him with. To mock the Jews and their desire to be free from the control of the Romans, they put this title above Jesus’ head where everyone could read it (**Mark 15:26**). The words that they wrote were true, but they didn’t know it.    Some things that we must notice during this terrible event ***(Mark 15:29-32)***:  Through the words of the people, the devil was tempting Jesus to come down from the cross, halting the plan of salvation.  The chief priests admitted the truth about Jesus: “He saved others”  The priests were very clear about Jesus’ claim to be “the Christ”  They stated the critical issue: we must choose to “see and believe” |
|  | For three hours, Jesus endured the physical torture of crucifixion. But then, things got much worse – at 12:00Noon, He began to endure the spiritual torture of suffering the payment for our sins. The Light came into the world, but now, darkness… (***Mark 15:33-41)***    Why did God turn His back on Jesus, His beloved Son? Jesus had always obeyed God and had never done anything wrong. Jesus willingly accepted the complete punishment for our sins so that God could freely forgive and accept us as His children (**1 Peter 2:23,24**). Jesus was tortured on the cross because of our second problem, guilt that requires punishment. |
|  | Let’s turn to **Matthew 27:50,51** for the rest of the story. Notice that Jesus “gave up His spirit.” Even in His death, Jesus is in control (His life was not taken from Him).    Usually, when criminals were crucified, the Romans left their dead bodies on the crosses as an example to anyone else who would resist their power. But with Jesus, something very important happens in **Matthew 27:57-61.** His body was carefully placed in a very secure tomb by a well-known member of the ruling council. You can see why this was so important in **Matthew 27:62-66**. Everyone knew that Jesus said He would rise again, so his enemies did everything possible to prevent any tricks by His followers. |
|  | It is a good thing that they did this. It adds so much more credibility to what we read in **Matthew 28:1-10**. Just as He said, Jesus overcame the power of death, solving our first problem (sin leads to death). All over the world, there are many tombs of religious leaders. But there is something special about the tomb where Jesus was buried: it is empty. |
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|  | In the Garden of Eden, we saw three effects of the very first sin: fear, guilt, and shame. Tonight, you saw how Jesus took our punishment on the cross, allowing us to be declared “righteous” – not guilty. And you saw how He rose from the grave, conquering death and giving us life. |
|  | As we finish tonight, I want you to look at one more thing. Christianity is much more than a religion – it is a relationship. Look at **Galatians 4:6,7.** When a person believes in Jesus, he actually becomes a child of God. Even more than a “legally adopted son,” but a child who can say “Daddy.” And when you are a child of God, you can run into His arms without shame. He adopts you, fully aware of all your sin, all your failures, and all your weaknesses. He knows everything about you, and still, He loves you.    For many weeks, we have seen the “bad news” from the Bible. If you ever felt hopeless, lost in sin, destined for death and punishment, it was a reasonable response to the truth of the Bible. But tonight, you have heard the “good news.” Turn with me to **Romans 6:23** to see what you should do with this “good news.” Because we have all sinned, we deserve “wages” – death. But God offers something much better through Jesus – a gift of eternal life. Like all true gifts, it is not something that we earn or deserve – it is simply something that we receive. |
|  | So how do we receive it? Look at **Romans 10:9-13**.    Without Jesus, we are all lost. To receive this wonderful, gift, we must confess with our sins before God, agreeing with Him that we have broken His law and deserve punishment. We must also confess with our mouth “Jesus is Lord” – not just an important historical figure, but the One who we will trust and follow instead of continuing on our sinful way. And we must believe in our heart, not just our head, that God raised Him from the dead. We must take a “step of faith.” Not just an intellectual understanding, but deep trust (**v.11**). Everyone who calls on his name, Jewish or Roman, Chinese or American, will be saved.    The entire world stands guilty, ready for judgment. But just like in the days of Noah, God has provided a “safe place” to escape judgment. But it is the only safe place – our problems are too big for any other solution. Tonight, I would like to encourage you to think deeply about this “good news.” If you believe that it is true, take a step of faith, trusting in Jesus. He has already solved your two biggest problems and offers eternal life to you. He is waiting for you to reach out, by faith, and receive his amazing gift. |
|  | As we’ve studied the Bible together, we have covered several thousand years of history. Along the way, I hope that you have come to understand that history is not just a random series of events. History is really just that: “His Story.” (**1 Corinthians 10:1-6**). The true stories in the Bible were not just written down for our entertainment – they were written down to point us clearly to the truth of God’s saving plan through Jesus, “the rock of salvation.” In the Garden of Eden, God killed a lamb as a substitute for sinful people to covering their guilt and shame. And at the right time, God killed “The Lamb,” His only Son, as the perfect substitute for sinful people, taking away their guilt and shame. |
|  | Look at **Galatians 4:4,5**. Here is the message: at the beginning of creation, God made a plan to save you. And when the time was just right, He sent Jesus to be born, to live, and to die. He did this because we are all born “under the law,” guilty of breaking His law, separated from Him. The only way to bring you back was for Jesus to come to earth and sacrifice His life, paying the penalty for your sin, rising again to give you new life. |
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