

Luke 23:33-47

In the Christian calendar, today is Good Friday. This is the day when we're supposed to think particularly on the death of Christ. And on Easter Sunday, in two days time, we're supposed to think particularly on His resurrection.

The Christian calendar isn't in the Bible at all. So festivals such as Christmas and Easter are purely traditions that have been introduced later. So we aren't obliged to celebrate them. And in any case, we shouldn't just spend one day a year thinking about these things. The death and resurrection of Christ are so central to our religion that the Bible gives us instructions to think about them far more often than that.

Soon after Christ's resurrection, Christians started meeting on the first day of the week. The Bible tells us that the first day of the week began to be called the Lord's Day. So, we should be celebrating the resurrection of Christ every Sunday, not just on one day a year.

The Bible also tells us to remember the Lord's death, not just once a year, but every time we take the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, or Communion:

1 Corinthians 11:26

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

你们每逢吃这饼，喝这杯，是表明主的死，直等到他来。

Therefore, we need to understand why the death of Christ is so important to us. And I hope we can get some insight into this as we look at this passage.

First of all, we need to notice the circumstances in which Christ died. He was put to death by crucifixion, as a common criminal, at the age of about 33 years old, by the Roman authorities. But why did they put Him to death? What crime had He committed?

Normally, that would be an easy question to answer, because whenever someone was crucified, their crime was usually written on a notice above their heads. But we see here in v.38, that in Jesus Christ's case, it read: *"This is the king of the Jews."* This statement produces more questions than answers.

Actually, He was the king of the Jews. If you look at His family tree in Matthew chapter 1, we see that He was a direct descendent of Jeconiah, the second to last king of Judah. After Jeconiah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians, his uncle Zedekiah was put on the throne for eleven years, until eventually in 586BC, Jerusalem fell, and the people were taken into exile.

Seventy years later, after Babylon itself was captured by the Persians, some Jews returned to rebuild Jerusalem, under Jeconiah's grandson Zerubbabel. But he never called himself king, he was only known as governor of Judah. The monarchy was never re-established. And the royal family went into

obscurity until eleven generations later, his direct descendent Jesus would grow up in a simple carpenter's family in an obscure town called Nazareth.

But nobody knew that Christ was of royal blood at the time. In any case, that wouldn't have been a reason to put Him to death. The religious leaders wanted Him put to death because he claimed to be the King of the Jews, and they just didn't agree. In fact, the more you look into the events that took place, the more you see that He didn't actually commit any crime at all.

Here in the text, one of the thieves on the cross said (v.41), *"this man hath done nothing amiss."* And in v.47, the Roman centurion said, *"Certainly, this was a righteous man."* In fact, in both Matthew and Mark's account of the same incident, the centurion was bolder, and actually said, *"Truly this was the Son of God."* And earlier on in this chapter at Christ's trial before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Pilate himself said no less than three times, *"I find no fault in this man."* And even the disciple Judas, who betrayed Him, said afterwards, *"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."*

I think there's far more to this than these people simply believing that Christ was innocent of calling Himself the king of the Jews. The whole way He behaved as He was put to trial and accused of all sorts of things they found no evidence for, was entirely different from the way we would have behaved.

If we were accused of a crime we were innocent of, we'd try our best to fight for our rights and attempt to establish our innocence. But Christ didn't fight. Instead, He said calmly,

John 18:36

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

耶稣回答说，我的国不属这世界。我的国若属这世界，我的臣仆必要争战，使我不至于被交给犹太人。只是我的国不属这世界。

So, who was this person? This behaviour is altogether different from anything we have ever known. This person was truly different from anyone else.

And when we look at His life, we again see how differently He behaved. Far, far differently than any of us can even understand. And He calls us to such a high standard as well. Listen to this from Matthew chapter 5. This is just part of a much longer teaching:

Matthew 5:39-48

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine

enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

只是我告诉你们，不要与恶人作对。有人打你的右脸，连左脸也转过来由他打。有人想要告你，要拿你的里衣，连外衣也由他拿去。有人强逼你走一里路，你就同他走二里。有求你的，就给他。有向你借贷的，不可推辞。你们听见有话说，当爱你的邻舍，恨你的仇敌。只是我告诉你们，要爱你们的仇敌。为那逼迫你们的祷告。这样，就可以作你们天父的儿子。因为他叫日头照好人，也照歹人，降雨给义人，也给不义的人。你们若单爱那爱你们的人。有什么赏赐呢？就是税吏不也是这样行吗？你们若单请你弟兄的安，比人有什么长处呢？就是外邦人不也是这样行吗？所以你们要完全，象你们的天父完全一样。

Jesus Christ lived His life in a far different way to any of us. We're all so selfish, self-centred, self-seeking, living for our own pleasures rather than living for God. Everything we do is for our own benefit, our own desire, our own ambition. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, gave Himself for others. He lived His life for His heavenly Father, not for Himself. The Bible says of Him that He was sinless. He didn't do anything wrong in His entire life. There was no fault found in Him, not just in His trial before Pilate, but in His entire life. The centurion was right. This man was indeed the Son of God.

Hebrews 7:26

“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

无邪恶，无玷污，远离罪人，高过诸天的大祭司，原是与我们会合的。

Hebrews 4:15

He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*

他也曾凡事受过试探，与我们一样。只是他没有犯罪。

1 John 3:5

“in him is no sin.”

在他并没有罪。

1 Peter 2:22,23

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

他并没有犯罪，口里也没有诡诈。他被骂不还口。受害不说威吓的话。只将自己交托那按公义审判人的主。

The Bible is quite clear that Jesus Christ was a sinless man. The only sinless man that has ever lived. So, why did He end up being put to death? Well, there are two answers to that question.

The immediate circumstances were that the religious leaders were jealous of Him. They wanted control over the people. They wanted to be their spiritual guides. Up until this point they were. But when Christ came along, it was said:

Mark 12:37

“the common people heard him gladly.”

众人都喜欢听他。

Matthew 7:29

“he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

因为他教训他们，正像有权柄的人，不像他们的文士。

As Christ started His own public ministry, people began following Him, and the religious leaders began to lose their control over them. And particularly after Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders finally decided to take action:

John 11:47,48

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”

祭司长和法利赛人聚集公会，说，这人行好些神迹，我们怎么办呢？若这样由着他，人人都要信他。罗马人也要来夺我们的地土，和我们的百姓。

John 11:53

“Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”

从那日起，他们就商议要杀耶稣。

Now, they didn't have the authority to put someone to death, so they had to persuade the Roman authorities to do it for them. And with no evidence against Christ with regards any crime, they still managed to succeed in doing

that, using their own powers of persuasion. Even though Pilate really knew He was an innocent man, the religious leaders still managed to persuade him to crucify Him. Now, those were the immediate circumstances.

But again, something far deeper is going on here. When Peter tried to defend Christ after He had been captured, Christ said:

Matthew 26:52-54

“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

耶稣对他说，收刀入鞘吧。凡动刀的，必死在刀下。你想我不能求我父，现在为我差遣十二营多天使来吗？若是这样，经上所说，事情必须如此的话，怎么应验呢？

And again, He said elsewhere:

John 10:17,18

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

我父爱我，因我将命舍去，好再取回来。没有人夺我的命去，是我自己舍的。我有权柄舍了，也有权柄取回来。这是我从我父所受的命令。

The Bible tells us that Christ laid down His life voluntarily. He could have prevented His own death from happening, but He didn't. And this must prompt the question, Why? Why on earth would anyone want to do that? How can someone deliberately laying down his life be good, be useful in any way?

And then we remember something else He said, which we often think about in times of war:

John 15:13

“Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

人为朋友舍命，人的爱心没有比这个大的。

There was something far greater going on here than simply an innocent man dying on a cross. Christ was laying down His life for His friends.

John 15:14

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

你们若遵行我所吩咐的，就是我的朋友了。

Let's now finally go to the text we're looking at tonight.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

到了一个地方，名叫髑髅地，就在那里把耶稣钉在十字架上，又钉了两个犯人，一个在左边，一个在右边。

So the scene is that there are three people being crucified, Christ in the middle and a thief on either side.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

当下耶稣说，父阿，赦免他们。因为他们所作的，他们不晓得

An innocent man who had done no wrong was being crucified. And more than a man, the Son of God Himself. They were crucifying the Lord of Glory. So, arguably this was the worst crime in history, God being put to death on a cross by men. And here Christ is actually praying to God to forgive them. Why shouldn't God judge them for their wickedness?

And then we realise that this is what it's all about. The forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:30,31

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

你们挂在木头上杀害的耶稣，我们祖宗的神已经叫他复活。神且用右手将他高举，（或作他就是神高举在自己的右边）叫他作君王，作救主，将悔改的心，和赦罪的恩，赐给以色列人。

Just looking at things from this world's point of view, the death of Christ was unjust. But injustices happen all the time in this world. Innocent men are quite often wrongly punished and guilty men quite often get away with their crimes. So, what we see in Christ is just another miscarriage of justice. That's all we see. But we need to start seeing things as Christ saw them, not from this world's point of view, but from the point of view of eternity.

And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

兵丁就拈阄分他的衣服。

This is actually a fulfilment of prophecy.

Psalm 22:18

“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

他们分我的外衣，为我的里衣拈阄。

In fact so many of the events that surround the death of Christ are actually prophesied in the Old Testament. Look particularly at Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. If these passages don't clearly prophesy Christ, I don't know what will convince us otherwise that He's the Saviour the Scriptures said would come.

And of course, these Roman soldiers had no idea they were fulfilling prophecy. We can't accuse them of trying to fake a prophecy's fulfilment in any way.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

百姓站在那里观看。官府也嗤笑他说，他救了别人。他若是基督，神所拣选的，可以救自己吧。

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

兵丁也戏弄他，上前拿醋送给他喝，说，你若是犹太人的王，可以救自己吧。

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

那同钉的两个犯人，有一个讥诮他说，你不是基督吗？可以救自己和我们吧。

Now, three lots of people started mocking Christ, the rulers, the soldiers and one of the two criminals. All they can do is mock and sneer at Him. They laugh at His claim to be the Messiah, the Saviour. To them, He's totally powerless to save anybody, because He's stuck there, hanging on a cross. So they mock Him by challenging Him to come down from the cross and save Himself. They think that if He can't even save Himself, how can He possibly be a Saviour for anyone else? And when He doesn't come down from the cross, they assume that He's not coming down because He can't come down.

And this is typical of what every one of us is like. All we see is this world. We don't see things from the point of view of eternity. If all we see is this world, we too are going to think that Christ is powerless. He was just a good man. He was just another religious teacher, one of many. That's all we think of Him. But if we start seeing things from an eternal perspective, seeing that death is not the end and there's a judgment to come, then, and only then, can we just begin to understand that Christ dying on a cross wasn't weakness, but victory.

Remember, Christ didn't come just to save us from some temporary problem, like oppression by the Romans, or some other political end. He came to save us from our sins. That's the real problem we need to be saved from. And it is an eternal problem, not a temporary one. In fact, that's what His name means:

Matthew 1:21

“and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

你要给他起名叫耶稣。因他要将自己的百姓从罪恶里救出来。

As long as we're just looking at this world all the time, we're not going to see the importance of this at all. We're rather just going to be looking for temporal solutions to temporal problems. In fact, we're not even going to see our sins as much of a problem at all. So, how do we react when someone comes along to tell us that our real need is for our sins before God to be dealt with? We'd mock them. We'd laugh at them. And we'd put them to death if we could, because they're disturbing our enjoyment of this world. And that's exactly what these people did. And it's exactly as Christ prophesied would happen:

John 7:7

“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”

世人不能恨你们，却是恨我。因为我指证他们所作的事是恶的。

Our sins deserve the eternal punishment of God. And that's what we're going to get, unless we recognise our need of a Saviour from sin. We need a Saviour because we can't save ourselves, it's impossible, we're not good enough.

That's why Christ talked so much about forgiveness of sins. That's why Christ died on the cross. He laid down His life for His friends. He took upon Himself the sins of all those who trust in Him for salvation, so that they won't need to be punished themselves.

1 Peter 2:24

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

他被挂在木头上亲身担当了我们的罪，使我们既然在罪上死，就得以在义上活。因他受的鞭伤，你们便得了医治。

Christ knew exactly what He was doing when He went to the cross. He didn't have to save anyone. He could have just not bothered. But He did it because He loved His people. He laid down His life for his friends. It was the only way any of us could be reconciled to God. This is what we need to understand. Yet our minds are usually so closed to these things.

But look what happened to one of the thieves. He did begin to understand this. In Matthew's gospel, we read that at first both thieves mocked Him:

Matthew 27:44

"The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."

那和他同钉的强盗，也是这样的讥诮他。

But we see here that one of them suddenly changed:

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

那一个就应声责备他说，你既是一样受刑的，还不怕神吗？

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

我们是应该的。因我们所受的，与我们所作的相称。但这个人没有作过一件不好的事。 \

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

就说，耶稣阿，你得国降临的时候，求你记念我。

It's as though a light had suddenly been switched on in his understanding. He had just begun to see something of what Christ was getting at.

He rebuked the other thief for mocking Christ. He recognised he himself was a sinful man, receiving the due punishment for his sins. He also saw that Jesus had done nothing wrong, and that all He had said about His being a king of a kingdom not of this world was true. And he asked to be remembered in it.

He was no longer putting his trust in anything this world had to say. All the world's philosophies are vain and empty. He recognised his sins, realised that Jesus was right after all, and asked Him for the free forgiveness of sin that He had been teaching about, that only He could give, and which was the very reason for His coming into the world in the first place. That's the point we need to get to. Stop trusting in ourselves. Stop believing in this world and its empty ideas. Trust in Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:19

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

我们若靠基督，只在今生有指望，就算比众人更可怜。

And he got a welcoming response from Christ:

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

耶稣对他说，我实在告诉你，今日你要同我在乐园里了。

Paradise. Where's that? That's the place you want to go to after death. The place where all of Christ's people, those who truly put their trust in Him for salvation, will go. Even death can't stop us from getting there, but our sins can. Our sins will send us to eternal punishment instead. We must cry to God for Christ to take our sins away, so we may be free from the burden of them.

2 Corinthians 5:20,21

"be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

我们替基督求你们与神和好。神使那无罪的（无罪原文作不知罪），替我们成为罪。好叫我们在他里面成为神的义。

1 Peter 3:18

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

因基督也曾一次为罪受苦（受苦有古卷作受死），就是义的代替不义的，为要引我们到神面前。

Once we've been reconciled to God, we'll have true peace, even through death.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

那时约有午正，遍地都黑暗了，直到申初，

45 And the sun was darkened

日头变黑了。

This wasn't an eclipse. Eclipses don't last that long, and anyway, it was Passover, which was always at a full moon. The moon would have been on the opposite side of the sky to the sun, so it couldn't possibly have moved in front of the sun for an eclipse. The darkness could only have been the hand of God.

and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

殿里的幔子从当中裂为两半。

Only the High Priest was allowed behind the Temple curtain once a year, and then not without a sacrifice. As long as the curtain stood, it symbolised that the way into the true Holy Place of God's presence in heaven had not yet been revealed. But now, with Christ dying on the cross, He has made the true

sacrifice for sin, and the way has now been made clear for everybody who puts their trust in Him to receive the salvation for their sins that the animal sacrifices could never take away. They were only ever symbols of the true sacrifice of the coming Saviour. Now Christ's own shed blood has opened the way for reconciliation with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

我们既因信称义，就借着我们的主耶稣基督，得与神相和。

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

耶稣大声喊着说，父阿，我将我的灵魂交在你手里。说了这话，气就断了。

Then Jesus could die in peace, knowing that His work had been finished. He put His Spirit into God the Father's hands. And we need to do the same. God has now provided a way of being reconciled to Him, through the blood of Christ. Let's not just try to laugh it off, and say we don't need it. It's the one thing every one of us really does need right now, whether we realise it or not.

But we need to forsake our sin, hate it, get rid of it. Put it all onto Christ. That's why He came, to take away our sin.

Well, may all of us come to repent of our sins, put our trust in the Son of God, have a new heart given to us, and start today to live the new life that He gives to all those who ask, a life of righteousness. So we can then truly say, with the apostle Paul:

Galatians 2:20

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

我已经与基督同钉十字架。现在活着的，不再是我，乃是基督在我里面活着。并且我如今在肉身活着，是因信神的儿子而活，他是爱我，为我舍己。