

How Can I Be Saved?

Lesson 2: Hope in Jesus (Part 2)

Vocabulary:

claim	leather strip	proper	to mature
blasphemy	lead (n.)	to pierce	element
capital punishment	ribbon	spear	in a sense
to justify	splinter (adj. splintered)	to bear (past - bore)	to persevere
accusation	private parts	wound	transformation
to mock	to scrape	to do away with	victory
to spit	nerve	kernel	sting
thorn	testimony	wheat	to shake (adj. shaken)
recognizable	free will	phase	secure
to torture	to escape	dormancy	to abandon
to flog	to hang (past - hung)	to endure	realm
whip	tomb	condition	decay

Discussion

In the last few lessons, we learned what it means to place our faith in Jesus for our salvation. We understand that our own righteousness and good works cannot save us as we stand before a holy God. We understand that we are sinners who deserve justice through the punishment of our sins and that we are powerless to overcome sin by ourselves. We understand that we will always be sinners because we are human and not God. We understand that no sacrifice we make for our sins could ever take away our guilt and make us holy. For this reason, we understand that we need God's mercy and forgiveness and desperately need his sacrifice for our sins through Jesus.

We know now that God sent his Word in the form of man, Jesus Christ, to teach us how to love God and love others. Jesus was both God and man and offered himself as a perfect and holy sacrifice for our sins. We know that his sacrifice came with the power to take away our sin and shame, to cleanse us fully, and to make us a new person. With this understanding, we lay down our pride and humbly accept God's love and sacrifice by placing our faith in Jesus as full payment for our sins. When we accept this beautiful gift from God, his will for us is sealed, promising us the inheritance of eternal life. Since a will cannot be changed after a person dies, we can have full hope that God's commitment to save us has been sealed.

In this study, we will learn that Jesus didn't just die on a cross for our sins; he was buried, was raised from death, and appeared to people as evidence of his resurrection. Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection give us even greater faith and hope that we can have a new life and victory over sin.

Share any thoughts about what you have learned so far from the last few studies.

Hope in Jesus's Death [continued from Part 1]

According to Jewish law in the first century C.E., Jesus was crucified for his **claims** to be the Son of God. The Jewish leaders believed that this claim was a form of **blasphemy** that gave them a legal reason to crucify Jesus, a form of **capital punishment** during the Roman Empire. God's plan was not to **justify** the

accusation of the Jewish leaders, but to fulfill through Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection all that the Law required and all that the Prophets had spoken about the Messiah.

Even though Jesus was God, Jesus was human, and his death came with much physical pain and suffering. Even before Jesus was crucified, Roman soldiers beat him, **mocked** him, **spit** in his face, and beat into his head a crown of long **thorns**. They beat his face so badly that he was hardly **recognizable** as human (Isaiah 52:14). Even after this **torture**, the Roman soldiers **flogged** Jesus, using a **whip** of **leather strips** with small balls of **lead**, sharp objects, and glass tied to the ends. With this whip, they beat Jesus again and again across the back, shoulders, and legs. After thirty-nine lashes, Jesus's back hung like **ribbons** of bloody skin. With his raw back, bleeding and open, the Roman soldiers nailed Jesus's wrists and ankles against a **splintered** wooden cross. Wearing only a small cloth to cover his **private parts**, Jesus hung on this cross struggling for air. To breathe, Jesus pushed his body against the nails in his ankles. With every breath, the splintered cross **scraped** his raw, torn back, while the **nerves** in his feet and wrists shot pain through his body and exploded inside his head. Up and down against the splintered cross, Jesus fought for every breath, dying for our sins.

The greatest **testimonies** that Jesus's death is our only hope for salvation are his own words. Jesus predicted his own death when he said, "²⁸You heard me say, 'I am going away, and I am coming back to you.'... ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe....³¹ But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me'" (John 14:28-31, NIV). He also declares his willing obedience to God when he said, "¹⁸No one takes [my life] away from me, but I lay it down of my own **free will**. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again..." (John 10:18, NET). Jesus did do exactly what his Father commanded him and didn't try to save his life or **escape** the pain: This is the greatest testimony that Jesus is the Messiah. While being tortured, Jesus could have said, "There's another way! You don't have to kill me!" He could have said, "I am not the Son of God! You've misunderstood!" This would have brought an end to the accusations against him and saved his life. But Jesus knew who he was and chose to obey God's plan.¹

How does Jesus's death increase your faith in him? How does his death give you hope?

Hope in Jesus's Burial

After Jesus **hung** on the cross for six hours, two Jewish leaders, Nicodemus [nih-ko-DEE-mus] and Joseph of Arimathea [ayr-ih-muh-THEE-uh] wrapped his body in linen and placed him in a **tomb** with a large stone over the entrance (John 19:38-42, Matthew 27:57-60). Why did Jesus have to be buried? Why didn't God take Jesus straight to heaven? Jesus's burial is an important part of our understanding of God's plan for our salvation.

Why do you think Jesus needed to be buried? What do you think this burial symbolizes for us?

Jesus's burial shows us that he was fully human and was treated as a human by his friends who buried him with a **proper** Jewish burial. This burial also assured his followers of his death. These witnesses touched his dead body, wrapped his body in a cloth, laid him inside a tomb. Could Jesus have been asleep? The Roman soldiers had **pierced** Jesus's body with a **spear** to make sure he was dead before

¹ For more evidence about Jesus's death, you can study "The Evidence for Jesus" found in the Explore page of connectthenations.com.

anyone removed him from the cross. Even after Jesus was buried, Nicodemus and Joseph sealed his tomb with a stone that would have been too heavy for one man to move.

Jesus also showed the world through his death and burial that our sins will be buried and forgotten by God when we place our faith in his sacrifice. Over 500 years before Jesus's death, the prophet Jeremiah [jayr-ih-MY-uh] spoke about this promise:

³¹ The time will surely come when I will make a new agreement with the people... ³² It will be different from the agreement I made with their ancestors.... Although I was their God, they broke that agreement. ³⁴ I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done. (Jeremiah 31:31-34, CEV)

How does Jesus's burial give you hope? How does this hope make you feel?

Knowing that we have received full payment and forgiveness for our sins, we might feel excited to have a new life. This is exactly what Jesus wants us to feel. In following him, he tells us to put to death our old life of sin and imitate his example on the cross: "Whoever wants to be my follower must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

What do you think Jesus means when he says that we must "deny" ourselves and take up *our* cross "daily" and follow him?

When we realize what Jesus did for us on the cross and that God is so willing and eager to forgive us, our hearts no longer desire to live the way we were living. We want to honor God with the way we live, putting to death our sins each day and living the way Jesus lived. This is not something we do once or twice, on Sundays or at Christmas. Jesus calls us to live this way every day! Peter, one of the first followers of Jesus and leader among the early Christians said it this way: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

From these studies, we understand that this is something that we cannot do by ourselves, but this too is the power of God working in our lives. Paul teaches us in Romans 6 that when we put our faith in Jesus, he frees us from the power of sin: "⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin." Jesus too declared, "If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Before knowing Jesus, how were you ruled by sin? How has Jesus's death and burial affected your desire for sin?

In John 12, Jesus explains through a parable, or story, why he must die for our sins: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (12:24). We know from science, that when a seed falls from a plant, or the wind blows it to another field,

the seed becomes extremely dry and goes into a **phase** called **dormancy** [DOR-man-see], or long period of sleep, where the seed stops growing and developing. This period of dormancy is very important to the seed and is required for the seed to grow into a plant. The seed that survives dormancy develops the ability to **endure** difficult **conditions** and to wait for the right conditions that it needs to grow. Sometimes this period lasts for months or even years and is required for the seed to **mature**. Water and light are two of the main **elements** required for the seed to grow into a plant. This process is called germination. **In a sense**, the seed dies, yet through difficult conditions, the seed matures and is finally made alive again through light and water.² Once the seed comes to life, it can produce more seeds!

Why must a kernel of wheat die (or go through dormancy) in order to live?

Jesus explains through this parable why he must die. What do you think he is saying?

What do you think the light and water represent spiritually?

Dormancy is a period of suffering that the seed must endure to be made alive again. It can't do this without light and water! Could this light be Jesus and the water be baptism or his living water? Absolutely! The seed overcomes these challenges to become a strong plant that can produce more plants! In the same way, Jesus also had to die so that he could overcome death and become even stronger, sitting in authority at the right hand of God. Through his death and resurrection, he would see even more people become his followers. In turn, if we die to our old life and endure suffering faithfully as Jesus suffered, then we too become lights to our world and help many people to know and follow Jesus as Lord!

After Jesus finishes his parable, he says to his followers, "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:25).

Consider the parable about the kernel of wheat. What is Jesus saying to us in John 12:25?

How is doing what Jesus is asking difficult for us?

Why is it important that we endure suffering faithfully and overcome sin in our lives? Imagine if we did not do this. How would this affect us and others spiritually?

Even though Jesus cleanses us through his death, becoming like Jesus and overcoming sin in our lives is very difficult for us to do. Like the seed, we may see ourselves growing and then not growing. We decide to die to our sins, but we start sinning again. Yet God uses these dark seasons away from his light to show us how much we need him. We begin to want to grow again. We may even face challenges and suffering as his followers, but these times are from God and can make us stronger. If we drink his living water and walk in his light, we continue growing. If we **persevere** through suffering, and continue to die

² Campbell, Neil A. and Jane B. Reece, Biology, 7th Ed., (San Francisco: Pearson, 2005), 779-780, 798. See also Bentsink, Leonie and Maarten Koornneef, "Seed Dormancy and Germination," The Arabidopsis Book, Dec. 30, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3243337/>.

to ourselves and our old way of life, we will overcome! We will get stronger! In the end, our **transformation** will help many others want to know Jesus and will encourage them in their faith.

Hope in Jesus's Resurrection

God buried Jesus not only to forget our sins and remove our guilt, but also to reveal his resurrection power. If Jesus were only a prophet, his body like any other prophet would still be in the tomb. But God raised Jesus from the dead as a sign to all believers that he is God's Son, and if we put our faith in him, we too would someday be raised with him. Today, Jesus's resurrection power helps us to overcome sin, transforms our lives, gives us a new purpose in life, and seals our place in heaven. The resurrection was the way God proved to us that our old life is gone and that we have a new life in Christ with a new purpose: to live eternally for Jesus and for his glory! Once this new life begins, it continues into eternal life when we die. As followers of Jesus made new through his power, we can rejoice in life, in our suffering, and even in our death. For this reason, Paul asks the questions, "Where, O death is your **victory**? Where O death is your **sting**?" (I Corinthians 15:55).

One thousand years earlier, David, both prophet and king, spoke about this hope in the resurrection of the Messiah when he said this:

"⁸I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be **shaken**.⁹ Therefore, my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest **secure**,¹⁰ because you will not **abandon** me to the **realm** of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see **decay**." (Psalm 16:8-10)

During his life, David saw suffering, death, and the power of sin destroying our world. But he knew that his Messiah's resurrection would be a sign of something better after this life. The sign of the resurrection gave David hope that his body too would be resurrected with the Messiah's one day.

How does Jesus's resurrection give you hope? What does this hope inspire you to do?

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Take time to write about how the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus gives you hope.
2. Keep reading a chapter in the Gospels every day and spend time praying in Jesus's name. Pray over your decisions and what living for Jesus means to you. Write about what following Jesus will look like in your new life. Pray over the challenges you know you will face.
3. If you have never watched the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, watch the movie this week and write about how the movie impacted you.
4. Complete the next study: *Love in Jesus (Part 1)*.