

The Easter Experience

Episode Five: I Have the Promise of Eternal Life

Opening Thoughts

1. Are there people that you find difficult to forgive? Why?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus was often found in the company of those on the fringe of society? Does this surprise you? What does that imply for us today?

Read Matthew 27:32-44

³²As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). ³⁴There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁸Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

3. In Matthew 26:55 Jesus asks of the thugs who have come to arrest him, "Am I leading a *rebellion* that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me." Ironically, Jesus is crucified between two "robbers" (The original language implies "bandits," "robbers," and "rebels"). Most likely the two men crucified alongside of Jesus were not simply law-breakers but rather, like Barabbas, were "insurrectionists" who used both murder and banditry as weapons against Rome.

What message do you think the Temple leaders were sending about *who* and *what* they thought Jesus was?

4. Why do you think they hated Jesus so? Why do you think they feared Him?
5. If Jesus returned today who do you think would give him the most grief, those in authority, those in the religious movement or those in the community? To which group do you belong? What implications does this have for your life?

Continue with Luke 23:32-43

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which reads: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

6. How is the gospel message displayed through vv. 40-43? Why do you think that this passage has served as a traditional favorite for sharing the "Good News" of Jesus for centuries?
7. Read Psalm 22:18. How does something as insignificant as casting lots for clothes take on a new meaning when it happens to Jesus?
8. Why is prophesy, the foretelling of future events, such a powerful witness, even at the cross?
9. What do you think Jesus was thinking as he saw prophesy being fulfilled? (See Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22)
10. Who was Jesus dying for? Why was he on the cross? How was his reason different than those he was crucified with?

Read Ephesians 2:1-4

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

11. How does this passage explain our condition? Who is the adversary at work against us?
12. Verse 3 tells us that we were “by nature” objects of wrath. Why do you think Jesus was so willing to die for you and for me?
13. What are some practical ways you can show your appreciation to Jesus for his great sacrificial love?

Digging Deeper

It was God's pleasure to demand that the one who would accomplish atonement and save mankind would fulfill four distinct requirements. As you unpack these four requirements consider why Jesus was able to satisfy God's command. Also, consider whether someone other than Jesus could have accomplished the same act of salvation.

Requirement One

1. Genesis 3:15- God commanded that salvation would come from the "seed of a _____."
2. Hebrews 2:14 and 17- God commanded that salvation would come from one who shared in the _____ of those he meant to save.
3. Therefore God's first requirement was for the atonement sacrifice to be fully _____.

Did Jesus satisfy this requirement? How do you know? _____

Requirement Two

4. 1 Peter 1:18-19- The Old Testament sacrifice of a "lamb without _____" foreshadowed the coming messiah.
5. Isaiah 53:7-9 declared that the man who was condemned to suffer was actually _____.
6. Hebrews 7:26- God demanded absolute _____ for his high-priest.
7. Therefore God's second requirement was for the atonement sacrifice to be absolutely without _____.

Did Jesus satisfy this requirement? How do you know?

Requirement Three

- 8. Psalm 40:6-8- Here the messiah says, “Here _____” acknowledging his desire to do the will of God.
- 9. Isaiah 53:7- The messiah while being led to destruction chose not to _____.
- 10. Matthew 26:53- Jesus had at his disposal twelve _____ that he chose not to call to his defense.
- 11. Therefore God’s third requirement was for the atonement sacrifice to be totally _____ to suffer and die.

Did Jesus satisfy this requirement? How do you know? _____

Requirement Four

- 12. Isaiah 7:14- The child would bear the name “Immanuel” which means “_____ with us.”
- 13. Isaiah 9:6- The prophet Isaiah announced that the savior would be called “Mighty _____.”
- 14. Hebrews 7:14-16- God declared the messiah to have an “indestructible _____.”
- 15. Therefore God’s fourth requirement was for the atonement sacrifice to be no less than fully _____.

Did Jesus satisfy this requirement? How do you know? _____

Could anyone other than Jesus have fulfilled all four of these requirements and accomplish salvation for all mankind? Why or why not?

Digging Deeper Answers

1. "Woman"
2. "Humanity"
3. "Human"
4. "Defect/blemish"
5. "Innocent"
6. "Sinlessness"
7. "Sin"
8. "I am"
9. "Cry out"
10. "Legions of Angels"
11. "Willing"
12. "God"
13. "God"
14. "Life"
15. "Divine"