

**GOOD FRIDAY 2021**  
**MARK 15:1-41**  
**THE CROSS BEFORE US!**

Here we are, celebrating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on this Good Friday. I know, that sounds kind of strange. How can we celebrate something as horrible as that?

We are not celebrating all the pain, all the suffering that our Lord and Savior went through, but we do rejoice in the fact that because of what He did, all our sins can be forgiven as He paid them in full.

Now, I am getting ahead of myself. You see, there are many today who deny the reality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In fact, there are many so-called Christians who deny the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Again, you may be taken back by that statement and you may even have doubts about the death, the crucifixion of Jesus. Was it real? Did it really happen?

But, without a doubt, as the Scriptures tell us, “**... without the shedding of blood there is no remission**” of sin! (Hebrews 10:22) If it didn't, we are still dead in our sins!

And yet, like I have said, there are many in the Emerging Church and other Christian groups that deny the blood atonement, they reject the fact that Jesus went to the cross of Calvary to atone for our sins.

Roger Oakland shares this with us and please listen to what he is saying because our focus this evening is going to be – ***THE CROSS BEFORE US!***

And the reason for that title is because I want you to see, without a doubt, that Jesus Christ existed, that He is Almighty God who has come in the flesh to save us from our sins and apart from Him we will die in our sins. That is a summary of what we will be looking at.

Now, for those of you who understand this, I pray it will help you defend your faith.

For those of you who have rejected Jesus and the work that He has done, I pray that you will see, without a doubt, that Jesus loves you and His death on the cross of Calvary paid in full the debt for your sins and you need to receive Him into your life by faith!

Here is what Roger Oakland wrote,

*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* (Ephesians 1:7)

*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.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

The heart and core of the Christian faith is based upon Jesus Christ's shed blood at Calvary as the only acceptable substitutionary atonement for mankind's sins. The Gospel message requires this foundation. The Bible says the wages of sin is death - thus every person alive should receive the penalty of spiritual death because none of us is without sin.

Satan hates the Gospel message. He understands what the Gospel means, and his agenda is to deceive mankind from understanding and believing so they can suffer eternally with him.

While Scripture is very clear about the necessity of Christ's death in order for us to be saved, some believe this would make God a blood-thirsty barbarian and that a loving God would never send His Son to a violent death. Embedded within the structure of the emerging church is just such a belief. . . .

an underlying theme has entered the church. It says that while Jesus' going to the Cross was an example of sacrifice and servanthood that we should follow, the idea that God would send His Son to a violent death for the sins of mankind - well, that is not who God is. A loving God would never do that! Such a violent act would make Christianity a "slaughterhouse religion."

Liberal theologian and pastor of the Riverside Church in New York City, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), believed that the doctrine of the atonement, where "Jesus suffered as a substitute for us" because of our sins, is a "precivilized barbarity."

In his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, Fosdick says that Jesus' going to the Cross should be seen as an example of a life of service and sacrifice and not compared with "old animal sacrifices" and "made 'a pious fraud' played by God upon the devil."

In Fosdick's book *Dear Mr. Brown*, he states:

*Too many theories of the atonement assume that by one single high priestly act of self-sacrifice, Christ saved the world.*

Fosdick ends that statement with a pronounced - "No!" He insists, "These legalistic theories of the atonement are in my judgment a theological disgrace."

Fosdick considered the idea that God would actually send His Son to die on a **Cross to take our place** to be the basis for a violent and bloody religion. He rejected the biblical message of an atonement and substitutionary sacrifice. . . .

In an interview, Brian McLaren questioned the idea of God sending His Son to a violent death, calling it "false advertising for God":

*[O]ne of the huge problems is the traditional understanding of hell. Because if the cross is in line with Jesus' teaching then - I won't say, the only, and I certainly won't say even the primary - but a primary meaning of the cross is that the kingdom of God doesn't come like the kingdoms of this world, by inflicting violence and coercing people. But that the kingdom of God comes through suffering and willing, voluntary sacrifice.*

*But in an ironic way, the doctrine of hell basically says, no, that's not really true. That in the end, God gets His way through coercion and violence and intimidation and domination, just like every other kingdom does. The cross isn't the center then. The cross is almost a distraction and false advertising for God.*

What an extraordinary example of faith under attack. If McLaren is right, all those who have ever lived and believed in Christ's atonement have been misled and wrong. McLaren has taken the freedom to reconstruct what faith means by distorting the Scriptures, or worse yet, saying the very opposite of what the inspired Word of God says. This is blasphemy!

McLaren also states:

And I heard one well-known Christian leader, who - I won't mention his name, just to protect his reputation. Cause some people would use this against him. But I heard him say it like this: The traditional understanding says that God asks of us something that God is incapable of Himself. God asks us to forgive people. But God is incapable of forgiving. God can't forgive unless He punishes somebody in place of the person He was going to forgive. God doesn't say things to you - Forgive your wife, and then go kick the dog to vent your anger. God asks you to actually forgive. And there's a certain sense that, a common understanding of the atonement presents a God who is incapable of forgiving. Unless He kicks somebody else.

To further elaborate on McLaren's rejection of the message of Christ's atonement through His blood, we look to Episcopal priest Alan Jones. In his book *Reimagining Christianity*, Jones carries through with this idea that God never intended Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross to be considered a payment for our sins:

*The Church's fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it.*

*The other thread of just criticism addresses the suggestion implicit in the cross that Jesus' sacrifice was to appease an angry God. Penal substitution [the Cross] was the name of this vile doctrine.*

. . . In the Old Testament, it is clear:

*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*  
(Leviticus 17:11)

But [Marcus]Borg rejects this emphasis:

*To think that the central meaning of Easter [resurrection] depends upon something spectacular happening to Jesus' corpse misses the point of the Easter message and risks trivializing the story. To link Easter primarily to our hope for an afterlife, as if our post-death existence depends upon God having transformed the corpse of Jesus, is to reduce the story to a politically-domesticated yearning for our survival beyond death.*

. . . A very popular author today, William Paul Young (author of *The Shack*) also rejects the idea that Christ's shed blood was needed to save man. He has come right out and said this openly. And yet, many Christian leaders promote both Young and *The Shack* without any qualms. . . .

If Jesus' going to the Cross and shedding blood was merely an act of service and sacrifice, an example for others to follow, and was not actually a substitutionary payment for the sins of humanity, then why celebrate the resurrection as so many churches do? It would make no sense. Churches that cling to contemplative/emergent ideologies and practices should consider this. While they cling to one (contemplative), they're on the road to denying the other (the atonement) . . . even if they don't realize it.

- <http://bit.ly/2SYwQ7l>

Why such a push to deny the atonement, the crucifixion, the shed blood of Jesus to pay in full the penalty for our sins? Because apart from that work of God, we are still dead in our trespasses and sins.

So I pray that you listen carefully to what the evidence is and then, if this is true, and it is, that you would be strengthened in the faith or you would come to saving faith in Jesus!

The first point is really important – ***DID JESUS REALLY EXIST?***

There are many who make the foolish claim that Jesus never existed, that the story of His life was just made up and there is no historical evidence for Him!

That is not true, not even close. What I do find interesting is that people will make all kinds of wild claims about Christianity, about the Bible, about Jesus and they have nothing to back it up with. And many times, they are just repeating what they have heard from someone else.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell in his essay, *Why I Am Not a Christian* makes this claim that many believe today. He wrote, ***“Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him.”***

Again, that is not true, but when you want to deny the truth because you can't handle the truth that Jesus existed in history, you believe the lies that are out there.

Let me show you what I mean.

***Cornelius Tacitus*** - the greatest Roman historian from the first century provides independent and conclusive proof that Jesus Christ lived and was formally executed during the time of the Roman emperor Tiberius under the authority of Pilate, procurator of Judea. Listen to what Tacitus wrote,

But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome.

Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite torture, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities.

Christus, the founder of the name was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also.

- Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pp. 120-121

Please understand that this Roman was not a Christian nor was he supporting Christianity. He is just reporting the facts, and this is exactly what the Bible tells us of Jesus, that He ***“was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius”*** and that He was not just put to death, but He rose from the grave, that is the superstition that they are talking about.

Then there is *Suetonius*, another Roman historian. He stated in his *Life of Claudius*, ***“As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of Christus], he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”***

That is fascinating to me because that is what Luke tell us in Acts 18:2 as the Jews were expelled from Rome!

Again, historical evidence for Jesus and it was because of the Jews worshiping Him that they were expelled from Rome!

There is *Pliny the Younger* - the Governor of Bithynia around 120 A.D. who explained to the Emperor Trajan that he was killing the Christians who would not renounce their faith in Jesus Christ and worship Trajan instead.

And lastly, and there are many more, listen to what Flavius Josephus wrote. Josephus was a Jew who became a Roman historian. And he lived from around 37/38 A. D. to just a little after 100 A. D.

And, in his Jewish Antiquities he wrote,

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles.

He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.

- Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pp. 125

Here is this non-Christian Jew clearing showing that Jesus was real, that He was crucified, and that He rose from the grave and both Jews and Gentiles were following the risen Lord!

So if you want to believe that Jesus never existed, then you have to deny the historical evidence and believe these lies. This information is not from the Bible, but outside sources.

Or you can believe that Jesus did exist in the time period that the Bible speaks of, not just because the Bible tells us so, but the historical evidence proves it!

Now, the second point is just as important – ***WHO IS JESUS?***

And when you hear that question there are volumes of opinions of who Jesus is. Everyone has their own idea; from a good teacher, to a crazy person and everything else in between.

But, as William Robinson tells us, “If one takes a historically objective approach to the question, it is found that even secular history affirms that Jesus lived on earth and that He was worshiped as God. He founded a church which has worshiped Him for 1,900 years. He changed the course of the world’s history.”

And this is so important for us to understand. Jesus was not just a man; He was the God-Man, as God became flesh and dwelt among us. You see,

The most critical issue of the Christian faith is the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity stands or falls on who Jesus Christ is. What He said, did, or taught are important, but they are not foundational. Jesus’ identity is. He is more than just the founder of Christianity; He is Christianity. If you substitute anyone else for Jesus - the greatest Christian theologian or the most beloved pastor or the wisest teacher, take your pick - Christianity would collapse.

- D. Story, *Defending your faith*. pp. 74-75

And, as Thomas Schultz wrote, “Not one recognized religious leader, not Moses, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, etc., has ever claimed to be God; that is, with the exception of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only religious leader who has ever claimed to be deity and the only individual ever who has convinced a great portion of the world that He is God.”

Let me show you that Jesus Himself taught that He was Almighty God.

In John 10:22-30 we are told, **“Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, ‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”**

Keep in mind that at this point in the earthly ministry of Jesus we are only some four months away from the cross of Calvary.

Now I don’t think that they were really interested in the truth when they asked Jesus if He was the Messiah. And the reason I say that is for some three years He has been showing them that He is the Messiah, and they did not believe, and Jesus makes that very point to them.

And the key to Jesus showing them that He is God is found here in verse 30 where Jesus said, **“I and My Father are one.”**

The word that Jesus used here for **“one”** (HEN in the Greek) does not suggest that the Father and the Son are the same identical person. It speaks of them being one in essence.

You see, the Father is God, the Son is God, but don’t make the mistake as some do and say that then the Father is the Son, and the Son is the Father as the Jesus Only people do. That is not what is being said here.

And please understand that you don't even need to understand Greek to get this point, that Jesus is claiming to be God. Look at what we are told in John 10:31-33, "**Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'**"

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts verse 33, "**The Jews replied, We are not going to stone You for a good act, but for blasphemy, because You, a mere Man, make Yourself [out to be] God.**"

The Living Bible puts verse 33 like this, "**They replied, 'Not for any good work, but for blasphemy; you, a mere man, have declared yourself to be God.'**"

The Jews knew exactly what Jesus was saying, that He was Almighty God, equal to the Father and thus, because they refused to believe, they picked up stones to stone Him because that is how a blasphemer was to be dealt with, to be stoned to death!

And in the Greek, this was not a one-time statement by Jesus. The Jews were saying that He has been constantly teaching that He is God!

Now here's the thing. Those listeners of Jesus day had only two options to what they heard regarding Jesus being God. They could either accept His deity or reject it and unfortunately, they rejected it and were prepared to stone Him!

And many do that today. But the evidence is there and if you still doubt it, then remember what Thomas said when he saw the risen Lord, "**... 'My Lord and my God!'**"

And we can spend a long time looking at the Old and New Testament references to the Messiah being God, but I think I have given you enough information to show you clearly that Jesus claimed to be God!

And He not only claimed to be God, but unless a person comes to Him, they will die in their sins!

First of all, if you deny Jesus is Almighty God, you are not saved! Listen to what Jesus said in John 8:24, “**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.**”

In other words, if you do not believe that Jesus is the Great I Am, you will die in your sins. So that is important for us to understand and believe!

Secondly, there is no other way to God the Father except through Him. Jesus said in John 14:6, “**Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**”

You can try to get to heaven, get to God the Father any way you want, but you won’t make it apart from Christ. Thus, He is the way, the only way to God the Father.

Now, you can accept that or reject it, but since He is the truth, by rejecting it, you are believing your own ideas and you won’t make it.

And Jesus is the source of abundant life and so we must come to Him to see the Father!

But why? Why can’t we just go to God the Father?

That is our next point – ***WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?***

The answer to that question is simple. Our sins have separated us from God. God is holy and He cannot look upon sin with favor and thus, our sins have separated us from Him.

It is as Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 59:1-2, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

I think we can clearly see that our sin separates us from fellowship with God.

In knowing that, in knowing that sin separates us from God it helps us to understand the cry of Jesus from the cross of Calvary as He said, **“... ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”** Matthew 27:46.

Jesus stood in our place; He became sin for us as He bore the sins of the world. It was not that Jesus became a sinner, but He took our place to pay in full the penalty for our sins taking the wrath that was do us and as He did the Father turned His face from the Son, that fellowship was broken. That is what sin does!

Sin separates us from God and Jesus, in paying in full the penalty for our sins, restores that fellowship with the Father. He is the bridgebuilder as Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:5, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”**

You see, that Mediator, that bridgebuilder, is Jesus.

And Peter makes that very clear as he wrote in I Peter 3:18, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

Jesus has come to pay in full the penalty for our sins, why? So that He might bring us to God the Father! I hope that is clear to you!

Our last point – *WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?* I would like to cover as I close, because it is very important.

But before we get to that last point, let's look at what happened that day as Jesus went to the cross of Calvary for us.

Please turn to Mark chapter 15 and we will pick up in verse 1 as we will begin the trial of Jesus before Pilate.

## **MARK 15**

### **VERSES 1-5**

Now Pilate was the sixth Roman governor in this region, and he was not doing well. He caused a riot with the Jews when He placed a picture of Caesar on the Temple Mount and of course, the Jews rioted, they only worshiped God! And many Jews were killed. And a letter to Rome was sent.

Then he took money from the Temple treasury to finance an aqueduct and again, more rioting. And once again, many Jews were killed. And another letter to Rome!

Thus, Pilate was warned by Rome that if he gets one more strike against him, he is out. Keep that in mind as you see how he is working with the Jews, trying to appease them with their case against Jesus!

Now in John we are told that Pilate was going back and forth from Jesus to the crowds, finding no fault in Jesus and yet being persuaded by the crowds to do something with this King of the Jews!

Now the crowds were foaming at the mouth wanting Jesus dead, and yet, Jesus answered them not a word. Why? Because He did nothing wrong! And Pilate marveled at this, the contrast between the crowds and Jesus.

And Pilate, wanting to do what was right so he would not get in trouble with Rome, and yet, not offend the Jews so he would not get in trouble with Rome, thinks he has a solution to this problem, he thinks he has an answer to make everyone happy regarding Jesus. Listen to what his plan was.

#### VERSES 6-15

This was a perfect plan, or so Pilate thought. You see, on the Feast Day he would release a prisoner, kind of a good-will gesture to the Jewish people to stay on their good side. Thus, Pilate, recognizing that Jesus was innocent, gives the people a choice, to release innocent Jesus or Barabbas who was a robber and murderer.

It seemed obvious who should be set free and who should be put to death. Pilate was supposed to be in control, he sat as judge, as ruler, and yet, he was going to let the people dictate his actions.

And make no mistake about it, Pilate knew the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead because they were jealous of Him.

And the religious leaders infected the crowds with their poison of envy and jealousy that lead to hatred and the calling for the death of Jesus! And it truly got ugly as they cried out louder and louder **“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”**

And notice what verse 15 says, Pilate wanted to please the people instead of doing what was right, so he released Barabbas and sent Jesus to be scourged before His crucifixion!

Scourging or flogging was a brutal torture. It was kind of the third degree to elicit a confession from a prisoner.

The Roman scourge had a wooden handle with a series of leather thongs threaded with pieces of metal, bone, brass that were sharpened to a razor's edge. The prisoner was tied by the wrists and tied to a post with his body taught.

Two men, one on each side would whip the prisoner starting out light and coming down stronger each time until he confessed his crime to them. It was so vicious that many died before they could be crucified, their back ripped open, bleeding, and going into shock.

It was a torture beyond description and for Jesus, He had nothing to confess, so at the end of 39 blows, they were coming down as hard as they could! Can you image what His back looked like when they were done? It is amazing He even survived this torture!

Of this, Dr. William Edwards tells us, "As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross."

“The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus’ physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.” (Dr. William Edwards [with others] in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 21, 1986)

And even after all of that punishment, listen to what Jesus endured!

#### VERSES 16-20

Here stood God, the King over all creation, beaten, bloodied, in a state of shock from the torture He took, and now He is mocked, made fun of, and He took it all. Why? Because of His love for us!

Can you imagine the pain as that purple robe was pulled off that bloody, raw flesh of Jesus! After all of this, they lead Him away to Golgotha to be crucified. And understand that they would not take the shortest route through the streets but would parade these criminals through the city streets for all to see, as they carried this 100-pound cross beam.

And in front of them would be a soldier carrying a sign of the charges against that person. The reason they did this was to discourage others from committing crimes against the state. This was not a retribution for the crime, they could have just thrust the person through with a sword. It was a vivid object lesson for those who might be walking down the same path and to stop before it was too late, and they ended up like these poor souls. You see, crucifixion was a very painful way to die, you could hang on a cross for two or three days before you would suffocate to death!

VERSES 21-23

It is hard for me to imagine Jesus making it out of the city gate in the condition He was in before He could no longer carry the cross any farther. When He could go no further, the Roman soldier compelled Simon, who was from North Africa, a Cyrenian, some 800 miles away, to carry His cross the rest of the way!

Simon came to celebrate the Passover and ended up meeting the Passover Lamb, Jesus, as he carried the cross for Jesus the rest of the way to Calvary!

Now Golgotha is the Arabic word; we call it Calvary which comes from the Latin word meaning skull. And that is exactly what this place looks like, you can see the face of a skull cut into the rocks!

Now the Catholic church believes Golgotha is inside the city gates at a place where they built a church called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The only problem with that is Hebrews 13:12 tells us, “**Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.**” Thus, Golgotha is located next to the Garden Tomb, outside the city in a place called Gordon’s Valley and not inside the city!

Now verse 23 tells us, “**Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.**” Prior to the soldiers hammering His hands and feet to the cross the women tried to give Him a sedative to drink to dull the pain, but He refused. He was in control at all times!

VERSES 24-26

The condemned person was stripped of all his clothes, except possibly for a loin cloth, but many times they hung there naked for all to see their shame. It is hard for me to imagine my Lord hanging there like that, but He more than likely was! Now, over 1,000 years before these events took place, David tells us in Psalm 22 that they would divide His garments, and here we see that prophecy come to pass. In fact, Psalm 22 gives to us a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross of Calvary a thousand years before this event took place and before crucifixion was even invented!

Now let me say this about prophecy because this is important for us to understand. Keep in mind that the Old Testament, written hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, contains over 300 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled through His life, death and resurrection.

Mathematically speaking, the odds of anyone fulfilling this amount of prophecy are staggering. Mathematicians put it this way.

If one person fulfilled just 8 prophecies it would be a chance happening of 1 in  $10^{17}$  power or one hundred quadrillion! That is just 8 prophecies coming to pass!

Imagine if one person were to fulfill 48 prophecies. That would be 1 chance in  $10^{157}$  power!

And as impossible as that is, Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies related to His first coming, down to the tiniest detail!

Now they placed above Him a sign that read, "**The King of the Jews.**" And the Jews wanted this sign taken down, but Pilate refused, and it was left as a testimony for all to see, He truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords. You can accept it or reject it, but it doesn't change the facts, the reality of who He is!

VERSES 27-32

Again, here is another prophecy fulfilled with these two criminals being crucified alongside of Jesus. And this prophecy is from Isaiah 53:12.

Now Luke tells us that they both mocked Jesus, these two criminals crucified with Jesus, one on each side of Jesus. But then, at one point one of them cried out for Jesus to help him and Jesus gave this man with no hope, hope as He said “**. . . ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’**” Luke 23:43. Jesus sees a man crying out for help and He responds with words of comfort. I like that! Never forget that!

So we have seen that Jesus was scourged. He was beaten. They pulled His beard out. His face was so disfigured that He did not look like a man anymore. And now, they are mocking Him, putting Him down, making fun of Him and He still loved them!

One of the things that they said was that Jesus saved others, which He did do, but then they said He can’t save Himself. Could Jesus have saved Himself and come down off the cross? You bet He could have but He didn’t, why? Because of His love for us!

It is as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “**. . . ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’**” Mark 14:36.

You see, without the cross we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins for the penalty for our sins would not have been paid! Jesus did not save Himself because He came to save us and He did by giving His life as a sacrifice for us, for our sins!

And please understand that Jesus did not just pay the penalty for our sins, He took our sins upon Himself, they have been removed from our lives, never to be remembered again! And it was not the nails that held Jesus on the cross, but His love for us.

VERSES 33-37

We are told that from noon till 3 pm darkness covered the land. And understand that it could not be an eclipse for it was the Passover, a full moon, and opposite in the sky of where it needed to be for an eclipse to occur. Can you imagine what the people were thinking? That darkness that was in their hearts now filled the land! But they closed their eyes to these things.

Phlegon, a Roman historian wrote regarding this darkness, “In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake.” (cited in Clarke)

And verse 34, the cry of Jesus is one of the saddest cries in the Bible. He cried out, “**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**”

And this is what David said in Psalm 22 and now we see that it is fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

Why would God the Father do this?

What was this separation all about?

What does He mean by this?

As Jesus bore all our filthy sins the Father could not look upon Him as He did before. He cannot look upon evil or sin with acceptance. Habakkuk 1:13 says, “**You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. . .**”

And the same is true in our lives outside of Christ. But, in Christ the Father can look upon us for Paul tells us “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**” II Corinthians 5:21.

Thus, this darkness not only shows us the darkness of man's heart, but it represents the judgment of God upon sin!

And that separation Jesus never experienced before and will never experience again. But that is how much He loved us that He went to the cross of Calvary and endured that separation from the Father for those three hours so that our sin could be paid in full!

And then, in verses 35 and 36 we see that some of the Jews thought Jesus was calling for Elijah to come and rescue Him.

Why?

Because there was a popular Jewish belief that if a righteous man was suffering Elijah would come to deliver him. But they weren't believing that Jesus was righteous and thus, they were not looking for Elijah to come.

In fact, they even refused to moisten His lips that must have been parched at this point. They just continued to harden their hearts towards God. And the thing is this, they should have known that darkness was symbolic of God's divine judgment, the Scriptures testify of this, but they were not interested in the truth!

Now, prior to Jesus giving up His Spirit, we are told in John 19:30 that He cried out, "**It is finished!**" In other words, the payment for sin was "**Paid in full**" as Jesus cried out

***TETELESTAI!***

Remember what we read in Timothy 2:5-6, "**For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.**"

Also, please understand that Jesus was in control, for the seventh and final saying of Jesus from the cross of Calvary was, **“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.”’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”** Luke 23:46.

It is as Jesus said in John 10:18, **“No one takes 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 command I have received from My Father.”**

Also, it was getting late in the day and because of the Feast Day, the soldiers, trying to hasten the death of these men, broke their legs, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. Fulfilling another prophecy that none of His bones would be broken!

#### VERSES 38-41

As Jesus gave up His spirit the veil in the Temple, some 18 inches thick, was torn from top to bottom.

Understand that this veil separated the holy place from the most holy place, where God dwelt. And only the High Priest could enter the most holy place and only once a year, on the day of Atonement.

You see, this veil separated man from God but now it is torn, why?

Because God has opened the way for man to come to God, something man could not do by his own efforts, but was done by Christ for us.

But now the way to God is opened up and it is opened up to us through Jesus Christ. I am sure the priests who were there offering the evening sacrifice were horrified by what they saw and maybe some in the end came to believe!

We do not know for sure, but we do get a hint as we are told in Acts 6:7, **“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”**

And what I want you to understand is that man did not tear this veil, God did for it was torn from top to bottom. Not only that but it was so thick that no man could tear it. Why is this important to us?

Because it is showing us that God provided the way, Jesus provided the way into the Holy of Holies or the presence of God and that way is through Him!

Jesus said in John 14:6, **“... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”** And here is the example of that truth!

You see, through Christ we can boldly come before the Father, the way to God has been opened up to us through Jesus as I have said, and thus, as Hebrews 4:16 says, **“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

We also see this Centurion who was in charge of this execution squad make an amazing statement – **“Truly this Man was the Son of God!”** You see, he was moved by what he saw.

On the other hand, we are told in Luke 23:48, **“And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.”**

They left Him fearful, confused, disturbed by what they saw and yet unchanged, and many do the same when they come to church, they leave as they have come in, unchanged!

Now, in understanding the reality of this event, that Jesus is real, we have seen that history testifies of that truth!

We have seen that Jesus is Almighty God who became flesh and dwelt among us to go to the cross of Calvary.

And Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary as He was crucified for us!

And that brings us to our last point – ***WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?***

For Pilate, we don't hear anything more of him. He avoided the issue of "***Who is Jesus and what should be done with Him?***" and He paid the penalty for his actions, and so too will all those who reject Jesus.

Pilate sought after position, popularity, and in the end his life was nothing! Don't do the same, put Jesus first in your life!

If you don't know Jesus, I pray that this Good Friday you would come to saving faith by:

***RECOGNIZING THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD!***

***REPENTING OF YOUR SINS AND ASKING JESUS TO BE LORD AND SAVIOR OF YOUR LIFE!***

For those of you here that have come to that saving faith, I pray that this Good Friday has caused you to love Jesus even more. I pray that it has strengthened your faith and you are ready to give a defense, an answer to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you!

The evidence is overwhelming and to deny it, well, that would just be foolish. And yet, many do.

C. S. Lewis put it very simply. You see, Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord!

It is really simple. Either Jesus is telling the truth, or He isn't!

Now maybe He doesn't know that He isn't telling the truth and that would make Him a lunatic.

But Jesus fully knew who He was, Almighty God and you can look at the Gospel of John and throughout that Gospel we see the deity of Jesus very clearly!

Now if Jesus was a liar, we should not listen to anything He says, but He spoke forth the truth!

A great moral teacher is not crazy or is he going to lie about who he is! Thus, Jesus is **LORD!**

C. S. Lewis wrote, *“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.*

*He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell.*

*You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.*

*You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”*

And I will close with this for you to think about. Is there enough evidence to warrant a 100% commitment to Jesus?

Clearly, there is.

Thus, you are either for Him or against Him. And if you are for Him then you need to give your life to Him, make that 100% commitment to Jesus.

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

John 3:16-17.

The choice is yours but don't say that there is no evidence for Jesus and the work He came to do, to save us from our sins! Remember - ***THE CROSS BEFORE US!***