

When Jesus Died

“Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.”¹ At that precise moment Jesus’ death became an essential and indispensable part of the gospel. Ordinarily we don’t think of death as good news, but in Jesus’ case his death provided good news for the entire human race.

When Jesus Died He Died to the Possibility of Committing Sin

The living God, the eternal Father of all things, cannot create death or sin. Therefore, Adam and Eve came into being sinless and immortal. When Adam rejected the Lord’s word his rebellion brought humanity into sin and, consequently, death.

Jesus came into the world sinless because he inherited heavenly Father’s nature, not Adam’s. However, Jesus’ sinlessness came under immediate attack from Satan and the sinful society that surrounded him.

“The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’”² Satan’s unrelenting temptations of our Lord cannot be measured, but Jesus never succumbed to Satan’s bribes.

“Save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the son of God.”³ What an offer to a man suffering beyond the pain endured by any human in all of history. Jesus responded to all the world’s offers by ignoring them and loving his heavenly Father supremely.

This sinless man died, not because of his own errors and rebellion, but because of our crimes against the Lord. But listen to this: “Anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”⁴ Consequently, Jesus’ death freed him from the possibility of yielding to sin.

During his lifetime Jesus, like Adam, could have chosen sin. Since he didn’t, he died without any taint of sin. He spent his whole life on earth unblemished by the wickedness that surrounded him. At the moment of his death he was delivered from all temptation and any possibility of ever sinning against his precious heavenly Father.

What does all this mean for us? Jesus’ death to the possibility of sin dwells in our spirits. Our union with his Spirit imparts to us his power to deny temptation. The *new birth* infuses our human spirits with the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus. Now, we can say “no” to the slightest incursion of sin in us. Truly, because of Jesus’ death to the possibility of sin, “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”⁵

When Jesus Died He Became the Only Source of Righteousness for Mankind

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.”⁶ The God who wanted so desperately to be our heavenly Father placed our sin on his flawless son who hung on a cross! Our sinfulness was attached to Jesus, the sinless one, so he could suffer the penalty we deserve.

“In him [Jesus]...we become the righteousness of God.”⁷ This righteousness isn't ours, it belongs to God. We share divine righteousness because Jesus is joined to us and we to him. But what is righteousness?

Righteousness is more than doing right. It is a union with God's Spirit that causes us to love him supremely. Keeping the first commandment is no chore for those who share God's righteousness—obedience is sheer joy. Pleasing Father, Son and Holy Spirit causes us to hold to the Lord who holds us in his hand. Instead of attracting us, sin repels us. In other words, what Jesus was we become—the righteousness of God.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 describes the inner transformation that takes place when we surrender to Jesus' righteousness. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you...And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

When Jesus Died He Became Eligible for Eternal Life as an Eternal Human

Our eternal God makes unending things. Consequently, he intended for Adam and Eve and their descendants to live forever. Sin temporarily spoiled the good things God wanted for us. Sin disqualified every human from spending eternity with our loving God. But our God, who cannot be thwarted, devised a plan to return eternal life to mankind.

The plan called for the everlasting Christ to set aside his powers and privileges to become a human being susceptible to temptation, enticement, trials, and, yes, death. Christ, who participated with Father and Spirit in creating all things,⁸ left his throne at Father's right hand and lived among us.

Jesus' humanity was real. He was in no way less human than all of us. He was “Emmanuelle” which is Hebrew for “God with us.” But being the offspring of God did not in any way negate the genuineness of his humanity. His suffering was actual, not cosmetic. But there is more good news!

Jesus' resurrection did not make him less human. He is forever “the man Christ Jesus.”⁹ He is the perfected human, the completed One whose Spirit is available to everyone who surrenders to his lordship.

We participate in the everlasting life of the man who chose to die for us.
God gives us every reason to expect better than the best and more than the most.

Footnotes:

1. Luke 23:46
2. Matthew 4:8-9
3. Matthew 27:40
4. Romans 6:7
5. Romans 8:37
6. 2 Corinthians 5:21
7. 2 Corinthians 5:21
8. Colossians 1:16
9. 1 Timothy 2:5

