

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## WHO IS JESUS?

### LESSON 6: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

When you think of a conquering hero, what picture comes to mind? What do you think a mighty King should look like, or act like? Which character traits or actions in a Prince are particularly noble or praise worthy in your opinion? Would you use the words victorious? Valiant? Brave?

When Jesus came into Jerusalem on the day that we call "Palm Sunday," His followers were anticipating an entrance worthy of a mighty King and conqueror. They were hoping that He would come in might to overthrow the Romans, and to reign in Caesar's place. But He didn't do that. Instead, He came to die.

What most people did not understand was that in His death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled every prophecy and met every need of His people in more perfect and complete ways than they could have imagined or hoped.

For many centuries, the Israelites were expecting the arrival of the Messiah. They were hoping for a conquering King. They wanted a ruler who could provide them peace in the land. When Jesus came and suspicions began to arise that He was the Messiah, the people were hoping that Jesus would fulfill their personal expectations of a saviour.

When He came into Jerusalem and was arrested, humiliated, crucified, and buried, it looked like He had failed them. He couldn't be their King; He had died. What hope could the people have now?

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One of the primary desires of the people was that the Messiah would come and conquer the Romans. They wanted freedom from the evil rulers who were oppressing them. In His death and resurrection, Jesus conquered the greatest enemy of His people: sin. Jesus took on our sin when He died on the cross, and in doing so, broke the power of sin over His people for all time. Romans 6:5-7 explains it this way: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, *so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin*. For one who has died has been set free from sin." Because Jesus died and rose again on our behalf we are no longer slaves to sin! The Israelites were concerned about being enslaved to the Romans, but they couldn't even fathom that the Lord intended to free them from something much more deadly. By freeing them, and us, from the power of sin, Jesus gave us the gift of newness of life – life in Christ! This ensures that no matter what circumstances arise, or what political forces may rise against us, we are still free from the power of sin which means we are free indeed!

Freedom from sin's oppression was not our only need, however. Jesus' death and resurrection also brought about the peace that the Israelites were hoping for, albeit in a different form than they were expecting. Although the people were hoping for peace from war and persecution, Jesus gave them a greater, more crucial, and everlasting peace – He bought for them peace with God. Since the time of Adam, mankind has been separated from, and hostile to, God. There was no way, in our sinful state, that we could bridge

the gap between ourselves and the holy God. Jesus' death and resurrection satisfied the justice of God and thereby reconciled us to God, bringing peace between us. Righteousness "will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 4:24-5:1). Again, no matter what strife or trial we may have with others, or with our circumstances, our eternal peace with God surpasses everything and gives us hope!

There are some who may ask, 'why does this matter? Is it really a big deal to believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus? Can't I believe in God without believing in Jesus' death and resurrection?' Paul anticipates this question and delivers a powerful answer (and a series of clarifying questions).

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:12-22)

Why does it matter? Paul says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). If Jesus had come as a conquering King and saved the Israelites from the Romans only, they would have hope in this life, but would still be alienated from God and responsible for the punishment due to their sins. A pitiable state! But Jesus did above and beyond what any person could imagine and He rescued us from our sin and the penalty of our sin, and He purchased our peace with God! What a mighty King, and what a conquering hero,

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If Jesus had come as a conquering King and saved the Israelites from the Romans only, they would have hope in this life, but would still be alienated from God and responsible for the punishment due to their sins. A pitiable state! But Jesus did above and beyond what any person could imagine and He rescued us from our sin and the penalty of our sin, and He purchased our peace with God!

to come and - with His own life - to provide the solution to His people's greatest needs!

## IN REVIEW

- For many centuries, the Israelites were expecting the arrival of the Messiah. They were hoping for a conquering King. They wanted a ruler who could gain peace in the Land. Jesus met those expectations, but in ways they could not have imagined.
- In His death and resurrection, Jesus conquered the greatest enemy of His people: sin.
- Since the time of Adam, mankind has been separated from, and hostile to, God. Jesus' death and resurrection satisfied the justice of God and thereby reconciled us to God, bringing peace between us.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- Have you ever considered that your sin and the punishment that your sin deserves is your greatest enemy? Have you ever considered that the freedom you need is freedom from your own sinful nature? Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for dying on your behalf and rising from the dead so that He could give you freedom from sin.
- How have you tried to make peace with God? Have you heard of other religious rites or ceremonies that try to appease a distant god? Rejoice now that Jesus has made peace between you and God the Father! By faith, state your trust in the work of Jesus and enjoy the peace He has purchased for you.
- Is there anything that you are hoping for or expecting to receive from the Lord right now? How might this lesson change your perspective on how the Lord might answer your prayers?

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