

# Three Days That Changed The World

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church  
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Following three *years* of steadfast ministry, which followed three *decades* of faithful sonship, putting into clear focus the purpose of Jesus' coming to this earth were three *days* that changed the world. Paul puts it this way, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." I Corinthians 15:3, 4.

***The death of Jesus Christ means everything to us.*** As Jesus traversed from Gethsemane to Golgotha He bore the sins of mankind upon His shoulders. Every sin, from Adam's to ours was there that day. Not just the sins of those who would eventually accept His sacrifice, but *every* sin He carried. "And He Himself is the propitiation (or satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only but for also for the *whole world.*" I John 2:2.

The sins of the rebel Cain were there. The sins of the sons of Sodom were there. The sins of wicked Ahab were there. The sins of the unholy priests who cried for His crucifixion were there. The sins of the Roman soldiers who pierced Him with nails and sword were there. The sins of those today who curse His name, or who trample His sacrifice with the shoes of apathy or neglect, were there. My sins were there. Your sins were there. *The death of Jesus Christ means everything to us.*

The world has applied the term "Good Friday" to the day upon which Jesus died. That label has meaning only in the sense that it was *good for us*, not good for Him. It was terrible for Him. It was horrific for Him. The Friday began (on what we would call Thursday night, since the dark part of the day precedes the

daylight part, in the Bible way of calculating time) with His arrest and trial, a mockery of justice. He was hustled between Jewish high priests Annas and Caiphus, from the Roman administrator Pilate to Herod and then back to Pilate. Amid these episodes were scenes of cruelest insult, including spitting and slapping, taunting and teasing, designed and inspired by Satan to discourage and dissuade Jesus from His intention. It culminated in placing Him, the spotless Son of God, on the cross of the curse.

But we should never suppose that the suffering of God's Son was limited to, or even accurately portrayed by the physical torture He endured. The real sacrifice He experienced was the realization of His Father's presence being removed. That fellowship which He had enjoyed from eternity with His Father was being withdrawn. Beginning in Gethsemane He was beginning to feel the anguish of the lost sinner. He could endure the rejection of the callous and uncaring world. He could tolerate the rebuff of the sanctimonious priests and prelates. He could even survive the negligence of His disciples, who abandoned Him in His hour of prayer as well as His time of trial. But to sense the loss of His Father's divine presence! Oh, what a sacrifice was this!

We have such a limited sense of the guilt that sin brings. In His great mercy, God has shielded our minds, so that only a small portion of the bitter cup of guilt touches our lips, an amount sufficient to awaken our consciences to spiritual alertness, but not so much as to be lethal. The cup of guilt we drink is mixed with mercy. Not so the cup placed in Jesus' hands! He felt the horrible woe and separation that sin ultimately brings. He experienced the harsh loss, the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" that will be felt by those who reject His provision for salvation and drink the full cup on their own. The dark cloud that covered Calvary hid from His view the glory of His Father. He tasted death, what the Bible calls the "second death" for every man and woman. The mental torture of endured by Christ completely outweighed the physical aspect. *The death of Jesus means everything to us.*

***Christ's rest in the grave on Sabbath means everything to us.*** When He cried out His final triumph "It is finished" He declared that His great work of redemption was finished, echoing the phrase that brought to completion His great work of creation. In a similar way, just as He had rested on the seventh day after bringing the world into existence, so He now rested in the tomb, appropriately, in the providence of God's timing, also on the seventh day. He "ceased" (the word "Sabbath" means literally "to cease") from His work of salvation, just as He had "ceased" from His work of creation.

In this posture He portrayed the repose of those who "rest" in Him. He had declared, "Come unto Me, all you who *labor and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. The spirit of man "labors" to become acceptable to God. We "labor" to find a way to earn His favor and find a right standing with Him, to solve the sin problem on our own. But Jesus has already done that. He accepted the burden of our sins. He was the One Who "labored and was heavy laden." We are not asked to carry the cross of earning salvation, because He was laden with it. We are encouraged to come to Him and believe that His work for us was sufficient. Because of this, we can "rest" in the assurance that His work was acceptable and that in Him we are reconciled to the Father. We can "rest" in the sure knowledge that if we are in Him, the Father sees the perfect obedience of His Son, and not our sin.

This is the beautiful lesson of the Sabbath, so often misunderstood. The specific command of the Sabbath commandment is to refrain from working. "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." Hebrews 4:10. How then could the Sabbath, properly understood, be a flag of legalism? True Sabbath-keeping is not "working your way to heaven:" it is *abstaining from your attempt to earn redemption*. The Sabbath stands for grace, not legalism! It stands for resting in Him and believing that His work of salvation is ample and is applied to your credit! It emphasizes that it is Christ alone Who creates and re-creates! The one who truly understands and celebrates the Sabbath, "Shabbats" from

his or her efforts to earn a favorable standing with God. We can't do it; it is impossible. But Christ has done it for us.

Does understanding this truth about the purpose of the Sabbath remove His command to keep His day holy? Absolutely not! Does understanding the truth that baptism signifies spiritual death and resurrection nullify the command to be baptized? No way! Understanding the truth about the Sabbath means that we observe it, not from a perspective of thinking that by so doing we will gain His favor, but with the joy in knowing that in Christ we are accepted. The Sabbath becomes our "delight."

No wonder the enemy of Christ wants desperately to shadow the significance of God's Sabbath! It contains the vital principles of the Gospel! It is God Who made; it is God Who remakes us! The wonder of this lesson is the special message our Church bears to the world in these last days. We are commissioned to call God's people everywhere back to an understanding of the "everlasting Gospel," part of which includes a correct appreciation and endorsement of the Sabbath of His making, which points us to the "rest" that we gain spiritually in trusting in Him, as well as that "rest" that awaits us in Heaven. *Christ's Sabbath of rest in the tomb means everything to us!*

***Christ's resurrection from the grave means everything to us.*** As important as His sacrifice on the cross, as meaningful as His rest in the sepulcher, these would be *meaningless* without His resurrection. Paul expresses it this way, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" I Corinthians 15:17. Christ's coming from the grave in triumph is the assurance that Christ's purpose was fulfilled, that we have redemption through His blood, that our sins have been forgiven by the Father, and that He will call from the grave all those who accepted Him. To reassure His believers of this fact, "many of the bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many." Matthew 27:52, 53. Try to image the scene as "many" of these resurrected, glorified, immortalized human

beings witnessed to the truth of Jesus' successful mission. I'm not sure if I were writing the account that I would call the location of my son's murder the "holy city," but such is God's love toward even His enemies.

The gloom of His grave was shattered by the radiance of His resurrection. No stone, no Roman seal could hold Him in. The power of His Father's might erased every human and satanic effort to restrain Him. Like the mighty Samson of old, the bonds of death were snapped as singed straw. The gates of death were hoisted upon His mighty shoulders and carried away in victory.

Based upon the certainty of His triumph, we can have confidence that those whom we've lost to the enemy death will rise again. The captives will return from the land of the enemy to see sorrow no more. The stones will be rolled away. The shackles will be removed. Our loved ones will exult in the glow of immortality. Christ, as the First fruits, has certified that all who sleep in Him will come to life again. Having laid my dear mother to rest last weekend make this truth shine brightly. *The resurrection of Christ means everything to us!*