



## THINKING ABOUT JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

### Christian's believe:

- ❖ Jesus tells his disciples that his death and resurrection are at the heart of his ministry. This is exactly what he has come to do – save us!
- ❖ Jesus taught his followers that he *must* suffer and die.
- ❖ Dying upon the cross of Calvary was something he had to do.
- ❖ Jesus explained that he was taking our place upon the cross – he is the *'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'*.
- ❖ The cross for Christians is a metaphor for life, not death!

*Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? (Luke 24.26)*

*'Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."' (Luke 24: 45-47)*

### The meaning of the cross?

God made the world and loves the world, yet the world is full of chaos and suffering. This is often a stumbling block to faith as people say God can't exist because of all that is bad. Yet God does exist despite all that is bad and God chose to come among us in love to show a better way of living even in the face of human suffering.



God calls us into a close relationship with him. But we choose to turn away from God as human beings have done throughout history (just take a look back at the Old Testament!) This is because our hearts are restless, yet God remains faithful and Jesus is the ultimate act of faithfulness.

### Sin separates but Jesus unites

We are cut off by the walls of pride and guilt and fear of change. Sin is a word that summarises all that can separate us from God's love, for it is our failings that get in the way of our relationship with God, not anything that God does. That is why God sent Jesus to save us from our sins and their effects, to end that separation (the name Jesus means 'Saviour'). One way of understanding the Cross is that Jesus died in our place so that we can enjoy a new relationship with God, free from that separation.

### Images of Salvation

The Bible speaks of the meaning of Jesus' death in the great images of salvation.

- ❖ On the cross Jesus identified with our human predicament and took our place.
- ❖ As a friend betrayed, Jesus deals with all that destroys relationships and offers restoration.
- ❖ In his death, Jesus makes a new covenant between God and his people.
- ❖ In his death, Jesus pays the penalty for sin.
- ❖ Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- ❖ In the cross, Jesus triumphs over all the powers of sin and evil.
- ❖ In the cross, Jesus identifies with all the pain and suffering in the world.
- ❖ On the cross, Jesus sets an example of perfect love.

### The evidence for the resurrection

Jesus' tomb was empty on Easter Day, despite the guard on the grave. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, where did his body go? If the authorities had taken it (and why should they?) they would have produced it when claims about the resurrection were made later. The disciples were as surprised as anyone by the resurrection. Later, many of them were put to death (martyred) because of their faith, their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. It is impossible to believe that they took the body and told lies.

More than 500 people claimed to see Jesus alive. Their encounter with the risen Jesus changed their lives and they were prepared to die for their belief. The witnesses not only saw him, they talked with him, walked with him, learned from him, ate with him and touched him.

After the cross, the disciples were demoralized and defeated. They were afraid of the Jews and denied that they had ever known Jesus. Only a few days later they were risking their lives to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. Their witness was to turn the world upside down. What event (other than the resurrection) could have so transformed the disciples?

### The testimony of Christians

For nearly 2,000 years, in every culture, men and women have claimed that we can know the risen Christ for ourselves, today.

*For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.*

(1 Corinthians 15.3-6)

### The meaning of the resurrection - What is the atonement?

Christians regard Jesus as the Messiah, God's Son, and his death as necessary for the forgiveness of sins, a doctrine generally known as atonement. Like the sacrificial lamb that would have been offered in years past, to God - the lamb would have been killed and the smell of the cooked meat was said to rise to heaven and be pleasing to God and 'atone' for the sins of the people. Jesus himself took our sins (himself being without sin) upon his shoulders when he opened wide his arms upon the cross. 'Taking the blame' for our transgressions, he died.

The resurrection completes our view of Jesus, of death and of life because:

- ❖ Jesus really is God's Son.
- ❖ Jesus was crucified for our sins and rose again.
- ❖ Jesus is alive today.
- ❖ We can know him for ourselves.

The resurrection tells us more about the thing we fear most – death:

- ❖ Death is no longer something to be afraid of. Death has been conquered.
- ❖ Jesus has gone before to prepare a place for us (John 14.3).
- ❖ We shall all be raised to life with Christ.

Therefore, the Cross is not about death but life because:

- ❖ By Jesus conquering death we have the hope of heaven – eternal life!
- ❖ Eternal life begins now with Jesus, not when we die.
- ❖ Jesus gave his life for us. We give our lives back to Jesus in love and service.
- ❖ Like the disciples, we are called to be witnesses to the power of the resurrection.

### Luke's Gospel & the Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus appears to two disciples in the country (Luke 24:13-32) on the Road to Emmaus before he is recognised in the Broken Bread, then he appears among the eleven remaining disciples (Luke 24:36-49). He proves to them that he has a body, opens their minds to understand the scripture about the Messiah, and directs them to wait in Jerusalem until they are invested with the power of the Holy Spirit.

### John's Gospel & the Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and then to ten of the disciples and later he demonstrates his physical reality to doubting Thomas. He also appears to seven disciples who are fishing, and finally talks with Peter, foretelling Peter's death and assigning him the principal role as shepherd of the new community – the Church.

### Jesus Death & Resurrection in Poetry

*Naomi Ruth O'Shea*

My Jesus Son of God,  
Was nailed to a cross.  
Blood streamed from his hands and feet,  
As his life was lost.

Above his head was written,  
"Jesus king of the Jews".  
But Peter denied three times,  
That this was the man he knew.

Jesus cried for all to see,  
"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"  
Now we know it was for our sins,  
That this man died and became our king.

My Lord was buried in a tomb,  
Wrapped in a pile of cloth.  
A stone was rolled in front,  
For us his life he lost.

On the third day he rose,  
The stone was rolled away.  
The tomb was empty,  
Where the body had once been laid.

Now Jesus is alive,  
And in heaven he waits,  
Because one day we will meet the One,  
Who is so full of mercy and grace.

