

# Born to die, died to live

March 31, 2013

As a pastor, I get to sit on the front row of important life events of the people around me – birth and death. I get to hear the joy of the parents for their new born baby before other people; at the same time I also get to hear a midnight phone ring that notifies me a death of one of our beloved Christian brothers or sisters.

All human beings are destined to die. Baby 's biological clock starts to tick at the moment of conception in his or her mommy ' womb. But when we see our children 's and grandchildren's faces, we don't immediately think of their death. Rather we see their bright smiles, sparkling eyes, peaceful sleeping faces, and rosy cheeks. While we stroke their hair, hold their tiny, yet complete hands, whisper our love for them into their small ears, it seems that the world stops for us. You don't hear the sound of war, police siren from violent crimes, politicians' miserable bickering , or crying woes from the Wall Street. But whether we'd like to admit it or not, their death still is waiting for them in their future as our own waits for us.

Some of you are thinking, "Hey preacher, we didn't come to church to be reminded of this depressing news about our death." Yes, you are right. You came to hear the Good News. The true Good News does not come from FoxNews, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, certainly not from MSNBC, but only from Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible.

So, what kind of Good News do we get from the Bible? It is the life -changing and hope filled Good News that starts with the Son of God, Jesus Christ – His birth on earth which we celebrate on Christmas, and His death and resurrection which we celebrate on Easter.

You see, Jesus who is God Himself came to earth in form of humanity , as a helpless infant, born in a manger, raised by the poor carpenter parents from Nazareth. When He was born, He had a sole purpose in His life on earth – to die for mankind so that they may live. He took away all of our sins and rose from the dead so that we can have eternal life in Christ Jesus. That is the essence of the Good News.

## **A. MYRRH FOR A BABY SHOWER GIFT**

Some of you may wonder what was the indication in His early life that Jesus was destined to die for others. To answer your question, we must go to Matthew chapter 2.

*Matthew 2:9-11 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Here it is the official record of the first baby shower in the Bible. Now you ladies can tell your husband that you are doing what the Bible says when he asks you why you are going to another baby shower.

We can understand why these wise men brought gold and frankincense, because they are very costly gifts. But what about 'myrrh'? I am sure Joseph and Mary looked at each other with a puzzled look for this rather strange gift for a child.

Because myrrh, "smyrna" in Greek, is a bitter gum and costly perfume which exudes from a certain tree or shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia, or is obtained by incisions made in the bark: as an antiseptic it was used for embalming a dead body .

Was it a gag gift? I believe that as these wise men were divinely guided by the Lord to come to Child Jesus and worshiped Him, they were divinely told to prepare each gift for Him. Gold represents royalty and the heavenly kingdom, frankincense representing priesthood and the sweet fellowship with God, and myrrh representing His death for our sins.

## **B. JESUS AND SATAN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN**

Was this idea of Jesus' death and resurrection a spare of the moment plan by God the Father like some sorry-excused Bible teachers claim? Absolutely not. All-knowing God, in His infinite wisdom, prepared the way of salvation for mankind's fatal sin that was first shown in the Garden of Eden.

*Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

In this, God prophesies the doom of satan, showing that the real battle is between satan and the Seed of the Woman which is Jesus. There is no doubt this is a prophecy of Jesus' ultimate defeat of satan. God announced that satan would wound the Messiah – "you shall bruise His heel", but the Messiah would crush satan with a mortal wound – "He shall bruise your head".

Another interesting thing in this prophecy is that we get the first hint of the virgin birth, declaring the Messiah would be the "her Seed", but not "seed of the man".

God knew what He was doing all along . God's plan wasn't "set back" when Adam and Eve sinned against God in their disobedience, because God's plan was to bring forth something greater than man in the innocence of Eden. God wanted more than innocent man who didn't know the difference between right and wrong; rather His plan is to bring forth redeemed man. And this redeemed man is only possible because man had to be redeemed from his sin and through Jesus Christ.

## **C. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN GENESIS**

*Genesis 22:3-8 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father! And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.*

There is not the slightest hint of hesitation on Abraham's part. There is no negotiation with God. Abraham is trusting God, even though he does not understand. Sometimes we say, "I'm not going to obey or believe God until I understand it all," but that is making ourselves equal with God. Because we cannot understand God's infinite wisdom and plan with our finite mind.

Abraham is trusting, even when he does not feel like it. There is not a line in this text about how Abraham felt, not because he didn't feel, but because he was walking by faith, not feelings.

Here we start to see several incredible and fascinating similarities between this sacrifice and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

### **1) The third day**

In Abraham's mind, Isaac was as good as dead when he left home as they headed out to the Mount Moriah in their three day journey. So when Isaac returned home with his father Abraham, it was like a resurrection. As we all know, our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead on the third day, because He won victory over our sin and death.

This is the first use of the word worship in reference to God in the Bible. The Hebrew word "shachah" simply means, "to bow down." While Abraham and Isaac did not go to the Mount to have a time of joyful praise, they did go to bow down to the Lord.

Does this mean Abraham somehow knew this was only a test and God would not really require this of him? Not at all. Instead, Abraham's faith in God, if he kill Isaac, God would raise his son Isaac from the dead, because God had promised Isaac would carry on the line of blessing and the covenant through Isaac.

Please note that Abraham used the word 'worship' rather than sacrifice. He understood that 'sacrifice' is a part of 'worship'.

*Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

### **2) Wood on the son's shoulders**

Note that 'wood' was laid on Isaac his son's shoulder to carry. Yes, it was the wood that would burn him as a sacrifice as Jesus would carry His cross on His shoulder to be hung on it.

### **3) Fire and knife in the father's hand**

In the meanwhile, Abraham was carrying 'fire and knife' that would slay Isaac's life in his hand. They are the very instruments of judgement and execution. We can see this as God the Father carrying out His wrath as a judgement on Jesus for the sins of mankind.

### **4) God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering**

I love what it says in this verse – "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." No man could come up with the right sacrifice to cleanse the sin of mankind, because we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The only one who could do this was the God Man, the Mediator Jesus Christ. This phrase is very important to see that Abraham was speaking prophetically.

So where was the lamb? That question had been asked by all the faithful, from Isaac to Moses, to David, to Isaiah, all the way to the time of John the Baptist when he declares:

*John 1:29 Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

In His entire earthly life, Jesus constantly lived in the shadow of death of the cross on the Calvary.

By the way, the Mount Moriah where Abraham was supposed to be slain according to God's command, it is the same area where Solomon's temple was built; the same area where the current Temple Mount and Calvary where the Lamb of God Jesus was slain are located.

## **D. WHAT DOES JESUS' RESURRECTION MEAN TO US**

*1 Corinthians 15:20-22 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

### **1) It assures our future resurrection. Because Jesus both died and rose again, we will be raised like Him.**

The word "firstfruits" in v20 speaks of a sampling, a foretaste, a glimpse. He is the Firstfruit. Jesus has died and has risen, so we know that our resurrected bodies in some way will resemble His resurrection body. To what extent, we cannot be certain. But if they were completely like His, it would mean that we would be clearly recognizable.

### **2) The resurrection of Jesus is proof of a future judgment.**

We live in a society, and indeed a world, in which justice is often perverted and neglected. We look at things that happen and say, "How can that be? How could that happen?" The Resurrection means, among other things, that God's justice will ultimately prevail.

### **3) The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life.**

Certainly the Bible does not teach that we will be sinless in this physical body we now live in. On the other hand, we can sin less, not by our own abilities, but by the power of the Spirit. Christ can make us altogether different kinds of people. God can give you the power to live this Christian life.

I don't have to prove the fact of Jesus' resurrection to you this morning. Whether you believe it or not, it is the fact. The point of this service is about your earthly life and eternal life. Our God Jesus Christ does not push His way into your life like some bully at school, nor does He beg you to be a part of your life. He gave you a life to live and a brain to make a wise choice.

In your emptiness, in your loneliness or despair or whatever it may be, if you respond to the invitation of Jesus Christ to come into your lives, Jesus will come in, and He will begin to make changes in your life for the better. You will be a born again and have a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The circumstance may not change right away, but you will have Jesus in your heart to go through those difficulties with His strength.

## **E. THE BOTTOM LINE**

If you are like me, you want the bottom line. Here it is:

If there is no God, there is no hope for anyone.

But if there is God, He is the only hope for everyone.

Call on the name of Jesus Christ, you will be saved.

If you don't, by your own choice, you will not be saved and you will spend your eternal life in hell.

You may say, "That sounds cold and rude and narrow-minded." No matter how you want to cut the truth, the truth is truth. Nobody wants you to make that horrible choice, especially Jesus. He wants you to be saved. Jesus was born to die to take away our sins and He did die so that we may live eternal life.