

**April 4, 2004**  
**Palm Sunday**  
**"The Passion of the Christ-True or False?"**

*"Jesus Paid for All Your Sin-True or False?"*

Last year at this time we were turning our televisions to the news to receive the latest reports on the war in Iraq. We watched with hope as our troops entered into Baghdad, and the large metal statue of Saddam Hussein was pulled to the ground. There was optimism in the spring air that the war would be finished soon and our soldiers would be coming home. Military leaders warned us about having this false hope that the war would be finished soon. They told us that it might take a long time to get the job done. How true they were!

Unfortunately some people look at their salvation in the same way. They see it as a major victory won by Jesus on the cross, but we still have to fight our own battles to contribute to what Jesus has done. The Mormons believe the death of Jesus paid for the original sin passed down from Adam, but the actual sins in daily life need to be atoned for by your personal efforts to improve yourself. Linda Hill sent me a copy of an e-mail message from a Mormon friend who had seen "The Passion of the Christ." Her friend wrote, "I took my mother to see The Passion on March 6th for her birthday. What an incredible testimony of what our savior went through for us. It was emotionally exhausting to just watch. I hope it gave me a better insight as to his sacrifice because he loves us." It is my prayer that this friend of Linda's understands that Jesus' sacrifice is for all sin and not just original sin as her church teaches.

Others see the work of Jesus as the huge down payment, similar to a large down payment on a home, but the final payments needs to come from their personal obedience that flows from faith. A man who had been a Muslim and was looking into the Christian faith said emphatically that he had a hard time accepting a religion where Jesus turns to a thief and promises him Paradise without demanding he do something to make up for his sin. And still others view the work of Christ as a power source similar to electricity. It enables them to run their religious motors and live their lives for God.

The question of the ages that we want to focus on today is this: "Did Jesus pay for all your sin?" What did he mean when he cried from the cross with his final breath, "It is finished?" Let's read the account where Jesus speaks these words "It is finished."

**JOHN 19:28-30.**

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*Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."<sup>29</sup> A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.<sup>30</sup> When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

**1) Look at what Jesus did**

First, let's look at what Jesus did to totally finish our salvation. John tells us, "Later,

knowing that all was now completed..." Everything was completed including living the perfect life that you and I could never live. In the verses previous to this Jesus looks at his mother Mary and his disciple John who was at her side. He told his mother, "Dear mother, here is your son." He told John, "Son, here is your mother." Amid all the horrible pain and suffering on the cross, Jesus made the effort to provide for his mother.

In the movie "The Passion of the Christ" there is a flash back to an imagined time when Jesus was working in the carpenter's shop and enduring some gentle teasing and kidding from his mother. It was a touching scene that portrayed the love that Jesus had for his mother, a perfect love, unlike any other human love on the face of this earth. Jesus completed and finished the work of pleasing his Father. He finished living the only perfect life ever lived on the face of this earth by someone who was fully human and also God at the same time.

What is so important about these words "knowing that all is completed?" I know that my life is never complete. There is always something I want to do to finish pleasing someone and showing love. Think of how many things are left done at the end of each day. People to call on the phone, prayers to be prayed, jobs to finish in the garage, love to show. If being accepted by God depended on how well I have done my tasks and shown love to people, then I am hopelessly lost and so are you.

When we think of how Jesus was so kind to his mother right before he died, we also reflect on the sad moments when that kindness was not present in our lives. Why did we cause our moms grief? We refused to listen to her when she asked us to stop fighting when we were little kids? Why did we cause her to cry when we came home late and failed to call her and tell her where we were? Why did we miss opportunities especially in the teen years to simply tell our mothers "Mom, I love you?" If it is true that I will be judged on judgment day on how well I have kept the commandments, then I am hopelessly lost for not showing pure love to my mother and so are you. No amount of phone calls, cards, "I love you-s" and flowers can make up for the past sin that will condemn us to eternal death and punishment.

Here is where Jesus is so important. The Father spoke from heaven and said at Jesus baptism, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." For 30 years Jesus pleased his heavenly Father perfectly by showing love to his earthly mother and it continued until the final moments of his death. Today, by God's grace that perfect life of Jesus has been declared to be yours as a free gift. Romans 5 says, "For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous."

And what else do we see when we view Jesus gasping for his final breaths? We see him finish the work of suffering for our sin. We call that his passive obedience or passion obedience. Notice how Jesus would not cut short the suffering required to make the full payment for all our past sin. Jesus said, "I am thirsty." We are told, "A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of hyssop and lifted it to Jesus' lips." Jesus allowed his body to suffer terrible thirst because this had been predicted in Psalm 22 where it said, "My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." When people are dying, their mouths become very dry as they try to breathe their last breaths of life. Jesus refused to take any liquid for his body when he hung on the cross. Only at

the end when he fulfilled the Scriptures and his mouth became so thirsty his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, only then did he ask for something to drink.

What was God's plan to accomplish our salvation? It was terrible suffering for Jesus that was carefully planned out. I am holding in my hand a recipe for corn bread. Let me read it to you. God has a recipe to save you. It involved Jesus crushing the devil's head. It also involved terrible pain and suffering for Jesus that was predicted and set down in the chapters of the Bible such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. It was pictured or prefigured by all the lambs that killed and sacrificed in the temple of Jerusalem and by Passover that Jewish people celebrated. Jesus finished the recipe and formula set down with such phrases from Isaiah 53 as, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "It was God's will to crush him." "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah even set down in prophecy the fact that the soul of Jesus would suffer. All the loneliest moments of your life compressed together in pure pain do not even come near to what Jesus experienced according to the plan when he said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."

It was finished. It was done perfectly. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures when he said, "I thirst." Nothing was left undone for your salvation. The bar of Ivory Soap in my hand is 99% pure. Jesus sacrifice was 100% pure. It was complete. It was finished. That's what we see as he drinks the vinegar wine from the sponge placed on the reed of hyssop plant. We cannot add to this pure life and pure sacrifice to improve on it. Any attempts to add something human and sinful to what Christ as done, destroys its perfection.

## **2) Listen to what Jesus said**

When have seen Jesus pay for all sin, now let's listen to what Jesus said when the work was done. "And when he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that he bowed his head and breathed his last. "It is finished!" We don't know what words Jesus used in Aramaic, but the Bible uses one word in the original Greek language, the word "Tetelestai." Archaeologists have found old bills written on fragments of papyrus that contained, "Tetelestai" written on the bill, "Paid in full." What a message Jesus was communicating to people of every generation when he said, "It is finished." It is paid in full. Tetelestai.

This announcement of Jesus is so simple. It was based on what had been accomplished. He won the victory for us, and then he announced the victory for us. Now we can be sure that our sin was included in that announcement. Some of you sitting here this morning can remember the newspaper headlines in 1945 that proclaimed that war was over, first against Germany and then against Japan. Did you know that 30 years after the war was over they were still finding Japanese soldiers hiding in the jungles of the Philippines, because they did not know the war had ended? How many people living in our neighborhoods, in our families and at our schools, do you know this one little word, "Finished?"

After the English defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, a message was sent across the English Channel with a flashing light using Morris Code. The message sent was "Wellington Defeated Napoleon." But as the message was being sent the fog obscured the name Napoleon, so the poor English people thought they had been defeated. Satan will always

try to tell you that you have not done enough, or that you are not truly sorry for your sin. The message that Jesus proclaimed from the cross, "It is finished" was a clear message that reaches across the years of time. It is a message we can still take home with us today. To back up that clear message the heavenly Father raised Jesus back to life so that there can be no doubt the work of paying for all sin was done completely. As Romans 4:25 says, "he was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification."

In my youth confirmation class I tell the kids that if I wake them up in the middle of the night and ask them what the word "justify" means, I want them to be able to say, "Declared righteous." Remember the words of Jesus, "It is finished!" Let that be your assurance of peace with God and strength to live a Christian life. Jesus has paid for all your sin! Amen.