

# Jesus died instead of us

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph and Salome.
- ! In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.
- I'd love for you to keep the Bible open just as we spend time dwelling on what we have read. There's a painting called Landscape with the Fall of Icarus.
- And you'd imagine that a painting with that name, the attention would be on Icarus. But in the painting there's a number of different responses to Icarus and his death.
- There's a farmer in the front of the painting ploughing the fields, just going about his daily work. There's a man with his dog looking up into the sky, seemingly lost in thought.
- [ 1 : 2 0 ]     There's another man fishing, not far from where Icarus plunges to his death. And there's a boat sailing out towards the horizon, seemingly oblivious to what has happened to Icarus.
- And it's interesting as you see the painting that their response or their lack of response shows what the death of Icarus means to them.
- As we've read about Jesus' death, we see, even in the Gospel of Mark, how different people respond in different ways.
- And you realize that their response shows what they think the death of Jesus means. And so we want to think briefly about each of their responses.
- And we want to think about what the death of Jesus means. The first response we see is that people pay no attention.
- [ 2 : 3 3 ]     In verse 24, it says, They crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. They have just crucified Jesus.
- And they are rummaging through his clothes, seeing what they can get for themselves. It's as though they're in a bargain bin in their local clothes shop, just browsing for something that they might wear.
- They don't respond really at all to the death of Jesus. They pay no attention. For them, it seems that the death of Jesus has no significance, no meaning.
- Maybe they've just come to terms with the reality of life in a world where people die, and here is simply another man dying, they seem to think.
- And we still see this response today as people hear about the death of Jesus. They may be aware that Jesus has died, but they think people die all the time. There's nothing particularly meaningful or different about Jesus' death, and so they pay no attention.
- [ 3 : 5 2 ]     Another response comes in the form of insults. In verse 29, those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, So, you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself.
- Now, these ones are a little more interested in the death of Jesus, but they're simply passing by. They insult him because, in their mind, the death of Jesus means that he is not able to keep the promises that he has made.

And so now all the great things that he promised, including the rebuilding of the temple, whatever that might mean, they think, well, his promises now ring false, ring hollow.

He won't do what he has promised, and so they mock him. And we see this response today. If Jesus has died, he simply cannot fulfill the promises that he has made.

In some people's minds, it's no different to the intern who comes along into the workplace, and he's a couple of days in the job promising everyone how he's going to be at the top of the corporate ladder within a short space of time.

[ 5 : 13 ] And while he's daydreaming about what he will do, he ends up being fired for negligence and not doing his job. And for some, this is essentially what the death of Jesus means, that he cannot do what he claimed he would do.

And so they shake their heads and they laugh. Another response similarly is the mocking of verse 31. In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves.

He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself. Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.

You see, for these men, it's not just that Jesus has made promises, but that he's making promises that he's calling people to believe in. And they're saying, well, the death of Jesus means not only are his promises ringing hollow, but it means that you can't possibly trust him.

They say, come down from the cross and then we will believe in you. They're saying, well, the death of Jesus means he can't be trusted.

[ 6 : 25 ] He can't be believed. And in each of these cases, the different responses that we see are rooted in what the people think the death of Jesus means.

But Mark wants us to realize that in each case they have misunderstood. Mark tells us what the death of Jesus means. And as we look more closely, what we see first of all is darkness.

In verse 33, at noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. Now this darkness is not a solar eclipse.

Even the best solar eclipses are mere minutes long. This is three hours of unnatural darkness in the middle of the day when the sun is at its highest.

It is clearly supernatural. It is, throughout the Bible, regularly an expression of God's judgment. It symbolizes God's judgment and just punishment of wrong being done.

[ 7 : 31 ] And as you look at the cross and you see this darkness falling over the whole land, what it means is that Jesus is experiencing God's judgment.

Not only do we see darkness, we see forsakenness. In verse 34, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why have you shut me out, God?

Why have you turned your back on me, God? It's as though Jesus is knocking on the door, pleading with God to answer. And it's not that God isn't there.

It's that God will not answer. He will not allow Jesus into his presence. Jesus is experiencing on the cross being cut off from God.

And this darkness and this forsakenness continues until the end. Verse 36, now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down.

[ 8 : 37 ] But Elijah doesn't come to take him down. Jesus stays on the cross. He remains on the cross until verse 37 with a loud cry.

Jesus breathed his last. He doesn't shy away from it. He doesn't try to escape it. But he willingly gives himself over to it.

To the darkness, to the forsakenness. And you wonder why. Why would Jesus, who never turned his back on God, experience this judgment?

Why would he experience this darkness? Why would he experience being forsaken by God? Jesus has already told us.

He said he has come to give his life as a ransom for many.

[ 9 : 41 ] He has come to give his life as a ransom for many instead of many. You know what we deserve is darkness.

What we deserve is forsakenness. You and I have turned our back on God. Walked away from him. We've turned our back on the one who is light.

Who is life. Who is love. And you can see that in the consequences of how we have lived. We can see it in the consequences of the world around us.

And having turned our back on God, there's nothing we could do to buy ourselves back. Nothing we could give to ransom our own souls. Even if we wanted to.

What could possibly be enough? Here's what's enough. Jesus.

[ 10 : 44 ] Jesus gives himself as the ransom. Jesus experiences the darkness instead of us. He experiences the forsakenness instead of us.

He experiences this until the end instead of us. Until God's just, good anger towards our sin has been dealt with.

He is the perfect sacrifice instead of us. And you can see, symbolize the significance of what Jesus has done in the fact that verse 38, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

This curtain signified the fact that we could not come into the presence of one who is light.

Who is life. Who is love. The fact that it is torn in two from top to bottom means that through the death of Jesus, we have access now into his presence.

[ 12 : 02 ] The soldier watching all this happen seems to get something of what it means. To some extent at least, because he says in verse 39, as he sees how Jesus dies, surely this man was the son of God.

And you realize this is the right response. This is the right response to the death of Jesus. What does it mean for you or for me?

Well, what it means is that though we may experience the darkness of relationships breaking down, we may experience the darkness of mental anguish, we may experience the darkness of ill health, we will never experience the darkness of God's judgment.

It means that though we may be forsaken even by family or friends, we will never be forsaken by God. It means that though we will one day face death ourselves, we will walk through it as though through a doorway into the presence of our God and Savior.

Into the presence of his light shining on us forever. into not eternal darkness, but eternal light.

[ 13 : 39 ] Not eternal death, but eternal life. Not eternal forsakenness, but eternal love. I imagine it will be a little bit like one of those moments when you're sitting, looking out over the sea, on one of those good Irish summer days where it is warm, and the sun is shining down, and you close your eyes, and you can feel the light of the sun shining on you.

And when we enter into the presence of God through what Jesus has done for us, that will be our experience for eternity.

Into his presence, into his light, into his life, into his love, experiencing his favor forever through what Christ has done.

In those moments, sitting out looking over the sea, and you think it's good to be alive. It'll be that, but it'll be multiplied by infinity.

as Jesus faced the darkness, faced the forsakenness, faced the judgment of God for us, what he has done for us, instead of us, means that we will enjoy the presence of God forever.

[ 15 : 12 ] And we praise him for that. Let's take a moment to pray in response. Heavenly Father, we see even in these readings how different people respond in different ways to the death of Jesus, and yet, Lord, there is only one appropriate way to respond, to acknowledge that surely he is the son of God, and that what he has done on the cross means, Lord, we have eternal access into your presence, that we will live with you forever, and so help us Lord, to respond appropriately, help us to respond accordingly, help us to trust him, to know that he could not save himself because he was saving us, that he could not come down from the cross because he was giving his life as a ransom for us.

We rejoice in what he has done for us. Amen. We're going to sing in response to what we've been thinking about, so let's stand and sing when I survey.

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