

The Forsaken Messiah

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[0 : 0 0] And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

In the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lemma sabathani, which means, my God, my God, why?

Have you forsaken me? Forsaken, it is a tragic word, perhaps even a cruel word.

It means to be deserted, rejected, left behind, abandoned, perhaps even purposely forgotten.

Sadly, we read stories about children and spouses who are deserted, abandoned, forsaken all too often. Perhaps you are one such person who understands the pain that occurs in such a life event.

[1 : 1 5] If you've heard the words that Jesus, that God is a loving God, can it be that Jesus was really forsaken?

I mean, no loving parent could ever do that to their own child, right? Could a loving God truly forsake his only begotten son?

For this Good Friday, I want to speak to you about Jesus being forsaken. You've heard it from his mouth, directly from him, that he was forsaken.

So there's no need to argue the point. The question I want to answer for you this evening is why. Why? Why did Jesus need to be forsaken by the Father who loved him?

Or to put it more simpler, why was Jesus forsaken on a cross 2,000 years ago on a day we as Christians around the world call Good Friday?

[2 : 3 6] Why? The first thing to keep in mind when it comes to Jesus being forsaken is that God wasn't the only one to forsake him. The first group of people who forsook Jesus were the governing authorities.

One of the roles of a governing authority is to protect the innocent, to dispense rightful justice. One of the primary roles of government is to protect the innocent.

It's interesting that the ones who led the charge to take away the life of Christ were the ones who were supposed to recognize him for who he claimed to be, the Messiah.

They were the ones who were supposed to know the promises of God. They were the ones to know that he was the one to redeem them all. So when God finally made good on his word, they would see it for what it was.

Instead, they hated Jesus. They despised him. They plotted against him. What's interesting is that the religious civil leadership of the Jews actually lacked the authority to kill Jesus.

[4 : 0 1] Make no mistake. They didn't want simply Jesus to simply go away. It's not that they wanted him dead, but they wanted to kill him.

So they co-opted the occupying forces, the Roman soldiers, their mortal enemies, to do their bidding. It was the Roman soldiers acting on orders of the Roman governor Pilate, pressured by the Jewish leaders who tortured and punished Jesus that Good Friday.

Well, to call it punishment is actually selling the Romans short. In fact, the Romans' ability to inflict the most amount of pain possible on a victim was actually an art for them.

This cross, this torture device of their devise took over 300 years in the making. And it simply didn't kill you.

It was designed to give the maximum amount of pain that a person could handle before the point of death.

[5 : 18] There was no second, no minute of respite. It was designed for the victims to hang on the cross literally for days, dying minute by minute in a most painful way.

So cruel was this device that it was actually forbidden to be used on its own citizens. The cross, it was meant to be for the lowest of the low, the traitors, the rebels, the scum, the slaves, the foreigners.

In fact, it was considered such a vile form of punishment that those who existed in proper circles did not even use that term in conversation.

History tells us that the case against Jesus was a sham, a lie. He was no rebel. He was no traitor. Yet despite inconclusive proof, despite confused and unreliable testimony, despite a trial that actually broke every rule regarding trials in that day, despite the Roman ruler of the land, Pontius Pilate claiming there was no basis for a charge to be leveled against this man, he was still found guilty.

Jesus was counted as a traitor and a rebel, the lowest of the low. And on Good Friday, Jesus was forsaken by the civil authorities.

[7 : 08] Those who were supposed to rule with justice committed the most unjust of acts. Now, before you're too hard on the authorities, we must remember that Jesus was also forsaken by the people.

It was only a week earlier that the people, the crowd, cheered and celebrated as Jesus Christ entered into the great holy city. They waved palm trees and spread their clothes before the donkey that he rode into as a symbol reserved only for high royalty.

Yet only five days later, they reviled him, they mocked him, they insulted him, and they cheered on the Roman executioners.

The people in their hysteria rejected the eternal kingdom of God's perfect rule for an finite kingdom of death and destruction. Jesus was sent by God to rescue his people.

But they recognized him not. So on that cross, on Good Friday, 2,000 years ago, Jesus was forsaken by those he came to save.

[8 : 34] But before we're too hard on the people or the governing officials, let's remember that Jesus was also forsaken by the closest of his friends.

For three years, Jesus lived with these friends, poured out his life in the most authentic of ways, loving, teaching them.

These people were not of any great importance. They were not members of royalty. They were not known to be any wealthy tycoons or any of them with any political families or any prominence in society.

They were regular people, much like you and I in so many ways. He taught them. He lived with them. He shared his dinners with them.

And one of them would actually forsake him for 30 pieces of silver. His closest friend amongst the 12 would forsake him not once, not twice, but three times.

[9 : 43] The others, well, they didn't even have the courage to actually say to Jesus that he would never forsake him. So on that cross, on Good Friday, 2,000 years ago, Jesus was forsaken by those who were his closest friends.

How could it be? How could it be one who is known to be so good? One whose teachings are so revered in this day?

Whose actions in life we are told to follow? Whose life philosophy was, turn the other cheek? How could he be forsaken by everyone around him?

Forsaken by the human instruments of justice? Forsaken by those he came to save? And forsaken by his closest friends? What did Jesus say when he was forsaken by them all?

Well, when human justice failed him and they asked him to speak, Jesus stood silent.

[10 : 59] When the people mocked him and yelled at him and cursed him, he said nothing. When his followers left him, Jesus didn't yell out, I told you so.

He simply gazed at one of his closest companions that he's ever lived with and said nothing. However, when forsaken by his father, he cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

You see, to understand our Savior's pain, we need to understand what it means to be forsaken. What it means to be forsaken by God.

For some, the idea of being forsaken will not be foreign to them. Some can understand physical agony that Jesus experienced before he went to the cross.

Others will know the emotional pain that is related to being forsaken by someone that you love. However, as one author states, this type of forsaken is to be utterly forsaken by God, is to know the judicial stroke of eternal justice.

[12 : 29] For there is no man or woman alive who knows such pain. If you hear this more evening, you've not yet experienced this type of forsakenness.

And my prayer for you is that you never will. You see, some have tried to explain that to be forsaken by God must mean there's a loss of favor or a loss of blessing.

But that is not so. To be forsaken by God is to experience the infliction of wrath for your sin.

On the cross, some 2,000 years ago, Jesus bore the penalty for all sin. My sin. Your sin.

The sin of those that come before me. And the sin that has happened after me. The fact is, the only sin that Jesus did not die for was his own sin.

[13 : 34] For he had no sin. But the entirety of man's sin that has ever been lived out in the existence, the finite existence of this world, Jesus experienced.

The Apostle Paul tells in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, For our sake, he was made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Earlier in the book of Galatians, Paul writes, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

There, on that cross bearing our sin, Christ endured the wrath that sin so richly deserves. Now, this wrath was not God's anger, nor should it ever be confused with God's personal anger.

Jesus was, or God was not angry with Jesus. God was rightfully and justifiably angry at our sin, the sin that Jesus bore.

[15 : 05] Jesus experienced what theologians called the judicial wrath of God. My friends, do not assume that God only hates some sins.

Do not mistake that Jesus only hates other people's sins. Do not mistake that he hates your sin.

There is no such thing as a sin that is more acceptable than any other's sin. And do not assume that there's anything you can do to remove your sins.

Sin is defined as missing the mark of God's perfect holiness. Sin creates in the center a blindness, a foolishness, a brokenness, a rebelliousness towards God and the things of God.

And what this all does is it creates in us an inability to do right things. The Bible teaches that even the most smallest of sin offense cannot be in the presence of God.

[16 : 29] Now, the reason we can't fix it is that we just kind of smudge the sin all over. The hand that I have is so dirty that it cannot clean my upper arm or it cannot clean my face.

It just spreads more and more dirt on my body. And if I was able to do so or you were able to do so, the only thing that it would augment in your life is pride.

The first sin that we know was created in heaven when Satan, created as a perfect angel, was cast out because of his pride.

So the sin that makes God angry, not an anger like your anger as one whose sense of pride has been insulted or your rights infringed.

God's anger is a righteous anger for it is born out of perfect justice. It is a holy anger of perfect love.

[17 : 45] You see, our sin is an attack on God's character, on God's trustworthiness. It is an affront to his very being. Romans 1.18 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Now, here's the thing. I don't need to teach you this. You, by virtue of being a created being, knows this.

Every man, woman, and child who's ever walked the face of this earth knows that they are guilty for their conscience, accuses them so, because they know they have created an offense.

Now, the forsakenness that Jesus experienced was not simply a physical death, as horrible as it was, but it was a spiritual death.

It was Jesus being torn away from his very father, who he has existed in the present since eternity. The Bible teaches that you and I are created with a soul, a soul that will also last for eternity.

[19 : 07] Our bodies, as we know, age, they break, they fall apart, but our souls never do. The Bible teaches that our bodies will be resurrected and reunited with our souls in what the Bible calls the great day of the Lord.

And we will have to give an account of how we lived. For those of us whose sins were born by Christ on the cross, we will be welcomed in to paradise as the thief who sat on the cross next to Jesus was.

To those who haven't, who persist in their denial that sin exists in them, denial of God, the Bible clearly states that they will be cast out from the presence of God.

Both body and soul will exist outside of God, in a place that is called hell. That is the type of torment that Jesus faced on that cross 2,000 years ago.

The pain that caused him to cry out on that good Friday's day, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The greatest pain that Jesus could ever experience was to be separated from his Holy Father.

[20 : 38] Jesus Christ experienced the fullness of this judgment. This is what happened on that cross that day. Jesus endured our punishment. Jesus endured our judgment.

Jesus endured our wrath that was truly meant for us. Jesus bore the penalty of our sins. For three hours that frightful day, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, endured the torment meant for us, and in the end he cried, my God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Which brings me to my final question, or our final question that I would like to answer for you this night. Why?

Why did God forsake Jesus? Well, the answer is both simple and clear. Jesus was forsaken by God as Father so that you and I would never have to experience the forsakenness of God.

Christ was forsaken by God so that we who put our faith in Jesus will never, ever be forsaken. This cross at one time represented shame of rebelliousness, the traitors of society, the worst of the worst, now represents what we can boast in the most.

[22 : 16] Paul writes in Galatians 6.14, far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world was crucified to me and I to the world.

For those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, the cross demonstrates God's love and his justice, freedom from the judgment of sin, never to experience the forsakenness that Jesus experienced on that very day.

This cross represents our salvation. The sinless Son of God bore our sins, then God poured out the wrath that our sins so deserved, and Jesus the Son endured it so that we who deserve it may never encounter it.

This is the truth of the gospel. Do not listen to any liar who would say that Jesus did not need to die. He did need to die to demonstrate the great love that God has for those who he calls his own.

You see, this is the good news of the cross. This is what calls us to forsake our sin and to turn away from it. This is the type of forsakenness that leads us to embrace Jesus Christ and every promise he has for us so that we will never be forsaken.

[24 : 02] I want to leave you with the last items that is written in Scripture what the witnesses to Jesus' death said.

When God breathed it, when Jesus breathed his last and yielded up his spirit, then behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

The earth quake and the rocks were split and the graves were opened and many 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.

So when the centurion who stood opposite Jesus and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw that Jesus cried out like this and breathed his last and breathed his last, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly and glorified God, saying, truly, this man was the son of God and certainly, this was a righteous man.

The whole crowd who came together to that sight seeing what had been done beat their breasts and returned.

[25 : 34] Let's pray. Dear Lord, holy, heavenly Father, it's difficult to thank you for pouring your wrath out on your son and forsaking him.

The Bible clearly tells us that the reason you did this is because you had a great, you were filled with great love. That love that you chose to pour on us.

The love that you used to redeem us. that you, through your son, paid the penalty for our sins so we could rightfully stand before you without shame, without worry, without guilt.

That we can come before your throne knowing that we are totally clean as we have been cleaned by you through the blood of Christ.

Father, if there's any here who still clutch to their sin or clutch to their works to save themselves from their sin, may they release that and put those clutches around you.

[27 : 02] Let them forsake their sin, forsake their denial of a need for a Savior. Savior. The evidence that Jesus walked this earth is overwhelming.

The evidence that you died is overwhelming. And as we will hear on Sunday, the evidence that you rose from the dead conquering death is overwhelming.

Overwhelming. Father, I pray that you would open our eyes, break our pride, release us from our prisons of sin and ignorance, and welcome us in to the light of your glory.

So, Father, on this good Friday, may we praise you and be thankful that you chose to obey the will of your Father to die in our place.

In your most holy and precious name,