

## **The Crucifixion**

### **What do you think was the main nature of Jesus's suffering on the cross?**

The praetorium to which Jesus had been sent for trial before Pilate was almost certainly the Herodian Palace rather than the Fortress of Antonia as Mark is specific about this (Mark 15:16).

Once sentence had been pronounced we are told that Pilate had Jesus flogged before handing him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15). Jesus was then mocked and ridiculed (Mark 15:17-20). It was now Friday morning – the eve of the Sabbath. Josephus' writings on the Jewish Wars tell us that the flogging and mockery were a completely normal part of the crucifixion process for male offenders under Roman rule. From the praetorium, Jesus was led to the place of his execution, a small hill, which at the time was just outside the walled city, which could be seen at a distance, as executions in these times were intentionally public acts as a warning against crime. Later when the city was enlarged by Herod Agrippa's third wall, the site came to be within the city. This place was called Golgotha in Aramaic, which translates to Cranium in Greek and Calvary in Latin.

It would appear that Jesus was compelled to carry his cross initially, but that the task was transferred to a man coming in from the country – Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21). Usually the victim was just compelled to carry the crossbeam only as the vertical beam was left in the ground at the site of execution as a constant warning. In any event, it would appear that Jesus' strength failed him (perhaps the scourging had taken its toll). Indeed, Mark also says that they "brought" Jesus to Golgotha, perhaps implying that he was so weak he needed physical assistance to walk there.

Victims usually carried their cross naked to the place of execution – which added to the shame and humiliation of the process. Perhaps Jewish sensitivity prevented this being required of Jesus as we are told that he was re-clothed with his own garments after the scourging and mocking (Mark 15:20; Matthew 27:31). At the cross these were removed and divided amongst the soldiers (as was customary at such executions) except that they did not divide his seamless undergarment but cast lots for it (John 19:23-24). This was a fulfilment of the prophecy in Psalm 22:18.

On arrival at Golgotha Jesus was offered wine mixed with Myrrh to drink (Mark 15:23). This was a normal act of mercy accorded to those about to be crucified, as the drink was believed to have a stupefying effect which lessened the pain. Jesus refused to drink it, probably because it would have interfered with his drinking the 'cup' that His Father had given him or perhaps in fulfilment of the vow he made at the Last Supper not to drink again during his incarnation.

Once the victim was fastened to the crossbeam, this was lifted up, located in a notch on the vertical beam, and secured. We are told that Jesus' hands were nailed to the crossbeam (John 20:25) and Luke implies that his feet were nailed to the vertical beam (Luke 24:39). In actuality the nails were normally driven between the two major bones of the wrists (as the bones and tissue of the hands are too weak to support the full weight of the body). This is consistent with the Gospel text as the Hebrew word for hands includes the wrists.

Crucifixion was such a horrible form of death that only Christians have ever spoken of it in a positive manner. It was particularly despised by the Jews as the reference in Deuteronomy 21:23 to anyone hung on a tree being under God's curse was deemed to cover crucifixion.

Mark tells us that Jesus' crucifixion began around nine O'clock on the Friday morning (around the third hour) (Mark 15:25). Although they do not specifically state the time, Matthew and Luke also seem to assume this timescale as they say that darkness came over the land around noon (the sixth hour). John states that Jesus was handed over to be crucified at the sixth hour (John 19:14), but probably John was using the more modern Roman method of timing which began from midnight. That would mean Jesus' trial was around 6 am. The gap between then and the commencement of the crucifixion around 9 am was presumably taken up by the flogging and mockery and the trek to the place of crucifixion itself.

We are told that Jesus was crucified between two bandits or revolutionaries (a better translation of the Greek word *lestes* than thieves or robbers) (Mark 15:27). As already noted we are told that the charge against Jesus – the King of the Jews – was fixed to the cross above his head. During the crucifixion Jesus was again mocked and ridiculed – by the soldiers, passers-by, the Jewish leaders and even his fellow victims.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus uttered seven different sayings from the cross. Luke and John each record three different sayings, whilst Mark and Matthew commonly record a different saying. We don't know in exactly what order these were uttered, but the traditional order is as follows:

Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing  
I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise  
Dear woman, here is your son ... Here is your mother  
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
I am thirsty  
It is finished  
Father into your hands I commit my spirit

Although both bandits initially mocked Jesus, one later had a change of heart. For what reason we do not know, the second saying only tells us that he received a pardon from Jesus. This is a wonderful witness to the fact that salvation is by grace and not by works. No one is so wicked or evil that they cannot come to Jesus and find mercy and forgiveness – even at the eleventh hour!

The fourth saying is the only one to be found in two Gospels. Interestingly it is the only time that it is recorded in the gospels that Jesus addressed the Father as "My God" rather than "Abba". Both Matthew and Mark confirm that this was after darkness came over the whole land (Mark 15:33). The darkness is a symbol of God's coming judgement over Israel. What caused this darkness we do not know. It was certainly not a solar eclipse, as this is impossible during the full moon at Passover time. Perhaps it was a dust storm, a very heavy thundercloud, or divine intervention, but we just don't know. I believe that the real theological significance of this saying is that God cannot look upon sin, and, as Jesus took the sins of the world on his shoulders and became sin for us, his Father was unable to look upon him and the close communion in which they had lived throughout eternity was temporarily broken.

The sixth saying tells us that Jesus knew that his work had been completed – he was victorious. He had completed the work he had been sent to do and had fulfilled God’s will. These words remind us that nothing needs to be added to the work Jesus did on the cross. Redemption was accomplished once for all and once and for all.

The final saying portrays Jesus’ confidence. He was completely confident that the Father would hear his cry and that he would be resurrected.

Simultaneously with Jesus’ death the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. This can be seen both as a symbol of judgement on the temple and as indicating that we now have direct access to God. Interestingly, Jews in mourning tear their clothing, so we could also see the rending of the veil of temple as a sign of God’s mourning for his Son.

John tells us that because the following day was the Sabbath, it was necessary for the execution to be brought to completion. The normal procedure – called *crurifagium* – was to break the legs of the victims. This hastened death as it made breathing more difficult. Accordingly the legs of the two bandits were broken, but it was not necessary to do this to Jesus, as he was already dead. One of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear and blood and water came out (John 19:34) – which would seem to be what the medical profession would expect following this kind of death.

The bodies of criminals, especially those executed for treason, were often denied burial, but this did not happen in Jesus’ case. His burial was arranged by the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea who was apparently a secret believer and also a member of the Sanhedrin. At what must have been considerable personal risk he approached Pilate and asked to have the body. Joseph’s action was bold because: (a) he was not related to Jesus (which was a normal requirement to claim the body); (b) his request was a favor that would likely be denied on principle since Jesus had been executed for treason; (c) he risked ceremonial defilement in handling a dead body; (d) his request amounted to an open confession of personal loyalty to the crucified Jesus which would doubtless incur his associates’ hostility. He was a secret disciple no longer. Pilate was astonished that Jesus was already dead, but on confirming that this was indeed so by questioning a centurion, he acceded to Joseph’s request, perhaps because he didn’t really believe that Jesus was guilty. So Jesus’ death was immediately confirmed by a Roman military officer. John’s gospel tells us that, Nicodemus, who was probably also a secret believer, assisted Joseph in burying Jesus. They placed his body in a rock tomb – which was Joseph’s own tomb and had never previously been used. Unlike the Egyptians, Jews did not remove internal bodily organs and practice true embalming, and we are told that Joseph and Nicodemus simply wrapped the body in linen cloths (John 19:40) after covering it with a large quantity of myrrh and aloe spices (John says 75 pounds of spices by modern reckoning, John 19:39). These spices did not eliminate bodily decay and served primarily as deodorants to offset the smell of bodily decomposition.

Once they had finished, the body was laid in the tomb, which was then sealed with a stone. Such tombs generally had an opening about three feet high and this was probably sealed with a stone shaped like a wheel. This stone would have been placed in a trench-like track and would be rolled down the trench to cover the tomb opening, resting securely against a wall. All the Gospel writers other than John state that Mary Magdalene and another Mary were also present observing the burial procedure.

Matthew tells us that on the Sabbath the Jewish leaders appeared before Pilate. They were concerned over Jesus' statements about rising from the dead on the third day. Whether they had re-interpreted Jesus' riddle concerning the temple being destroyed and rebuilt in three days (Mark 14:58) or whether they had heard of Jesus' own resurrection predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) is uncertain. However, they realised that if the disciples were to steal the body of Jesus and claim that he had been resurrected "the last deception would be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:64). Thus, they requested that the tomb be made secure against the possibility of theft. Pilate granted them a guard of Roman soldiers to secure the tomb (Matthew 27:65). The Jewish authorities now sealed the tomb, but on Easter day this would all prove to be for nothing.

In conclusion, let me just say that the crucifixion of Jesus and his burial in a rock tomb are very well attested historical events, possibly the best attested events relating to Jesus, and we should completely and unreservedly accept them as such.

## **The Resurrection**

### **Do you believe in the resurrection as a real historical event?**

As we have seen, Jesus' body was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea late on Friday afternoon. The following day was the Sabbath and a day of rest, although for the disciples it must have been a day of emotional turmoil. On the Sunday, the greatest event in human history was set to occur. The predictions surrounding Jesus' resurrection stated that he would rise either after three days (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) or on the third day (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; Luke 9:22; 18:33) or in three days (Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19-20).

In any event on that glorious Sunday morning several of the women who had been important to Jesus during his life discovered that his tomb was empty and were told to inform the disciples (Mark 16:7). Jesus subsequently confirmed his resurrection by appearing to the disciples and many others on a number of occasions.

Matthew refers to a great earthquake (Matthew 28:2) taking place at this time and the angel of the Lord rolling back the gravestone. This earthquake should not be confused with the earthquake which occurred at the moment of Jesus' death (Matthew 27:51) and to regard it as an aftershock is purely speculation. Matthew reports that the earthquake brought fear and panic and the guards fled. When the guards reported what had happened and that the tomb was empty, the Jewish leaders bribed them to say that the disciples had stolen the body whilst they (the guards) were asleep.

Coming to the tomb the women found the stone rolled away. The purpose of the stone's being rolled away was not to allow the risen Christ to leave the tomb – we know that was not necessary (see John 20:19) – but to allow the women to enter and see that the tomb was empty. At this point, the four Gospel accounts become difficult to harmonise. However, something like the following seems to have taken place.

The tomb was discovered empty, and rather than thinking that Jesus had risen from the dead, the women were convinced that someone had come and stolen the body (John 20:2; 13-15). An angelic messenger or messengers told them that Jesus was not dead but had risen. For Mary Magdalene this was confirmed by Jesus himself (John 20:16-17). Told to go and

inform the disciples, the women left the tomb and proceeded to do so. The report of the women was greeted with scepticism by the disciples who were also unprepared for the resurrection, in spite of Jesus having taught them clearly about this prior to his crucifixion. The women's report was considered an idle tale (Luke 24:11). Peter and the "other disciple" (John 20:3) ran to the tomb to check and found it just as the women had said. Nevertheless, doubt remained, and was not overcome until Jesus appeared to them.

I do not believe that it is possible to completely harmonise the Gospel accounts of the resurrection on the basis of what we know, but I do believe that it might be possible if more information was available to us. In any event, we know today that different eyewitness accounts of the same event often differ substantially from each other. This should not be seen as diminishing the reliability of these accounts as testifying to the main facts – the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus.

### **Why do you think God made women the first witnesses of the resurrection?**

Some twentieth century scholars have sought to deny the empty tomb as an historical reality. However, I consider that there is overwhelming evidence in favour of the historicity of the empty tomb.

- There are multiple attestations as to the empty tomb – which is mentioned in all four Gospels;
- The proclamation of Jesus' resurrection by the disciples and the early church (which was never contradicted by their opponents) assumes the empty tomb;
- Women were portrayed as the witnesses of the empty tomb even though their testimony was not acceptable under Jewish Law;
- The fact of the empty tomb was acknowledged by the Jewish leadership, their invented explanation set out in Matthew 28:11-15 makes it clear that they conceded this point immediately;
- The empty tomb was a well known tomb;
- The earliest church traditions of the resurrection, such as 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, allude to the empty tomb. This was written quite soon after the events, certainly not later than 55 AD, some 20 years after the resurrection.

From the very beginning, opponents of Christianity have sought to propose natural explanations of the empty tomb. The most popular theories have been (i) the women went to the wrong tomb, (ii) Joseph of Arimathea took the body, (iii) Jesus never died on the cross he merely swooned and (iv) the disciples stole the body.

Several factors argue against the first explanation. Firstly, there was not a great deal of time between the burial and the arrival of the women at the empty tomb. It seems unlikely that they would have forgotten its location so quickly. Secondly, this was a private burial tomb. We have no reason to suppose that there were other similar tombs in the area. Finally and most convincingly the authorities could have simply produced Jesus' body from the real tomb when the disciples started to proclaim his resurrection and it would certainly have been very much in the interest of the authorities to do so had this been possible.

Turning now to the second explanation, there is no more historical evidence to support it than a theory that Pontius Pilate stole the body. It is pure supposition. Also, we have to produce a mechanism whereby Joseph could have dealt with the Roman guard who had been told to secure the tomb.

The third proposed explanation strains our credibility even more than the second. To suppose that the detachment of Roman soldiers presiding at the crucifixion would not have been aware whether or not Jesus was dead is unlikely in the extreme. These soldiers would have been well acquainted with death and indeed death by crucifixion (which was a very frequent punishment at the time). Additionally, it is unlikely in the extreme that even a fit man, let alone one who was almost dead, could have rolled away the stone sealing the tombs entrance from inside that tomb. Finally, such a half-dead Jesus, no doubt in need of medical care, would never have been able to convince his disciples that he had indeed risen from the dead. Such a Jesus could never have inspired the post-resurrection faith of the disciples.

The fourth explanation is also rather incredible. Why would the disciples have wanted to steal the body? How could they have circumvented the Roman guard? The disciples had fled at Jesus' arrest and it seems incredible that they could have suddenly found the courage and resolve to engage in such a plot. The supposition that their subsequent courage derived from their knowledge of the resurrection as a reality is far more credible.

However, the early church never relied on the empty tomb as the evidence for the resurrection. Their proclamation was that he died for our sins, was raised and appeared to .... [various groups of people] (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). The Christian church has never preached the resurrection of Jesus as a spiritual event or a philosophical abstraction, but rather as a physical fact that occurred on a particular day in history nearly 2,000 years ago. Jesus in fact made a large number of appearances that are recorded in the Gospels:

- To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11, 18)
- To the women (Matthew 28:9-10)
- To Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- To the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
- To the ten disciples (Luke 24:36-40; John 20:19-23; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- To the eleven disciples (John 20:24-29)
- To the eleven disciples in Galilee (John 21:1-23)
- To five hundred followers (1 Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16-20)
- To James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
- And to the disciples at the Ascension (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:3-8)

Even given his physical appearances, the disciples were often reluctant to accept the resurrection (see Luke 24:11, 25, 38). Take, for example, the reaction of Thomas, commonly called "the doubter" (John 20:24-28). These experiences were not visionary – all the disciples appear to have experienced exactly the same thing! Furthermore, the sudden courage displayed by Peter and the other disciples in proclaiming the "Good News", as recorded by Luke in the book of Acts can only be explained on the basis that they underwent a real life changing experience the truth of which was absolutely convincing to them. They braved arrest (Acts 5:18), flogging (Acts 5:40) and even death (Acts 7:58). What a transformation from the band of men who had cravenly fled at Jesus' arrest and had not even dared to attend his crucifixion. I believe it is also significant that Jesus' brothers became followers and believers after the resurrection.

I believe that the Gospel accounts and the book of Acts provide us with convincing evidence of the reality of the resurrection. They are simple, straightforward and totally believable

accounts. In addition Paul's testimony also testifies to the reality of many of the post resurrection appearances by Jesus.

## **The Ascension**

### **Why do you think Jesus Ascended in the plain sight of his followers?**

Christ appeared to his followers for a period of 40 days after the crucifixion (Acts 1:3). During this period, he taught them concerning the kingdom of God. Shortly before Pentecost, Jesus, after commanding his followers to remain in Jerusalem and await the coming of the Holy Spirit, ascended from their presence into heaven. This marked the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. What the church now looked forward to was the day when "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11). The life of Jesus is incomplete. We await that day when he will return to share the messianic banquet with his followers (Mark 14:25). This is a day to be longed for by those of us who follow him and love him, so we pray "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

## **THE MEANING OF JESUS' LIFE AND WORK**

Jesus was undoubtedly the greatest moral teacher the world has ever seen. Both the content and presentation of his teaching was superb. Yet, in my view, that was not his most important message to us. I believe that his incarnation, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection are his primary message which call us to the only sure way to salvation and eternal life – a true belief in his resurrection and Lordship (Romans 10:9-10).

The question that people most often ask me in this regard is why did Jesus have to die? Why couldn't our loving God simply forgive our sins? This approach is to fundamentally misunderstand the seriousness of sin.

In order to illustrate this, how much do you have to obey God's Laws, in order to be righteous. .... Most Christians will say you have to obey them say 60 or 70 percent of the time, (incidentally that's exactly what Islam says about keeping God's laws, but that's a topic for another day). However, that's not what God says to us in the Bible he says you must keep them all the time. God's pass mark is not 60% or 70% or even 99% - its 100%. That's how seriously God regards sin. It's also why we could never achieve salvation by ourselves; we can't achieve 100%. If we're honest, we know that we sin. As Paul says (Romans 3:23) for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God. God hates sin, is angered by it and refuses ever to come to terms with it.

The seriousness of sin, even sin itself, is not an acceptable topic today. We downplay the importance of sin.

As I said a moment ago, one of the things that people frequently say to me is "we understand that we have been sinful and that we need to be forgiven, but God is merciful and wants to forgive our sins so why couldn't he just forgive us. What was the need for Jesus to die a horrible death?" As the cynic Heinrich Heine put it "the good God will forgive me, that's his speciality".

I must admit that at first sight the idea of Christ being sacrificed on the cross for our sins sounds like a primitive superstition which should have been discarded long ago. However, the more we look at Christ's death on the cross the more it makes sense, the more it becomes absolutely central.

Those who express the view that God could simply forgive us are lacking a balanced view of the gravity of sin on the one hand and the majesty and nature of God on the other. God IS completely loving BUT he is also completely just and completely righteous and all these aspects of his nature are unchanging and unchangeable. Let me say that again, God's nature is immutable – unchanging, unchangeable and absolute. Yes, he is absolutely loving and wants to forgive us, but he is also absolutely just and couldn't simply forget about our sin. God acts in accordance with ALL of his attributes ALL of the time. The problem of forgiveness was not in the world, it was within God. If nothing else, Christ's agonised cry from the cross when Jesus was separated for the first time from his Father as he assumed our sins should show us the terrible seriousness of sin.

Sin is a rebellion against God's laws and a law which has no sanction against breaking it is no law at all. It is inconceivable that God's moral laws could be of that kind. The sanction against breach of these moral laws, in other words the sanction against sin, is death. In the words of Romans 6:23 "the wages of sin is death". This does not mean that God's laws are mechanical, they are alive in God, a part of his nature, and that unchanging nature makes them unalterable.

If we try to bring God down to our level or try to raise ourselves to his level, we see no need of a radical atonement to secure salvation. We need to hear again the words of Peter in 1 Peter 1:17 "since you call on a father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives ... in reverent fear". When we tremble before God and acknowledge that we are hell deserving sinners the necessity for the cross becomes clear. Perhaps if we spoke less about God's love and more about his holiness, we might say more with more meaning when we did speak of his love.

Nothing reveals the gravity of our sin like the cross. For what ultimately sent Christ there was neither the greed of Judas, nor the envy of the Jewish priests, nor the vacillating cowardice of Pilate, but our own greed, envy, cowardice and all our other sins. I cannot face Christ's cross with integrity without feeling ashamed of myself. Indeed, in the words of Canon Peter Green "only the man who is prepared to own his share in the guilt of the cross may claim his share in its grace". "Christ was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5). In other words, Christ died for my sins and yours to bring us forgiveness and healing.

So, God couldn't simply forgive our sins. His just and righteous nature precluded that. Thus, it was necessary either that we should all die as our sins deserved, or that God should somehow arrange for the punishment we deserved to fall on someone else. In his mercy, he took the latter course and the punishment we deserved was suffered by Jesus on the cross.

God's love must have been wonderful. He could, quite justly have abandoned us to the fate our sins deserve – to perish in our sin. But he did not. Because he loved us, he pursued us in Christ – as the good shepherd pursues his lost sheep.



Of course, Jesus well knew that this was his mission on which his Father had sent him, he predicted it many times to the disciples, as we've seen earlier today. Indeed if Jesus had not been a willing substitute for us all, I do not believe his sacrifice would have been effective. But why did Jesus have to come down to earth and suffer this terrible fate.

Really, there is only one simple reason for this – that was the only way the mission could be fulfilled. God's just and righteous punishment could not have been visited on any ordinary man. Our sins already justified our punishment by death – each and every one of us, so we could not act as a sacrifice for anyone else by suffering a punishment we already deserved. On the other hand, God could not suffer a punishment as God, because the guilty sinning party was mankind. Only someone who was both wholly God and wholly man – and that was uniquely Jesus – would do.

We need a balance between awareness of sin and awareness of forgiveness in our Christian lives. If we concentrate on the former we shall be sorrowful and guilt ridden (one author called Christianity the “guilt edged religion”), but if we focus too much on the latter we are likely to carry on sinning as if it didn't matter.

Let's now look at what Christ did for us. Christ took upon himself all the sins of the world past present and future. As he said on the cross “it has been and will for ever remain finished” – he spoke here in the perfect tense. Because he has paid the price for our sins, we are able to stand before God clothed in Christ's righteousness, to escape any condemnation for our sins and enter into salvation or eternal life.

This forgiveness is a free gift from God. Although it was purchased at great price by Christ's life blood all we have to do is to receive it. We cannot earn it or even contribute the smallest element to it. In the words of Saint Paul in Ephesians Chapter 2 and verses 8 and 9 “For it is by grace you have been saved .... not by works so that no one can boast.”

Also, it's only true, we can only receive salvation, because Jesus willingly died and shed his blood on the cross to pay for my sins and yours. Yes it was by God's will – “.. it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and the Lord makes of his life a guilt offering ...” (Isaiah 53:10) But it was with the consent of Jesus who subordinated his will to the Father throughout his life and especially in the olive grove.

However, we do have to receive this grace, this forgiveness. The world was not automatically put right because Christ died for us, nor have we automatically been forgiven. We need to appropriate his death to ourselves in order for it to be effective.

Fortunately it's extremely simple to be saved - we just need to turn to Jesus, truly believe in his death and resurrection in our hearts and confess him as our Lord with our mouths. And that's perfectly true, it is exactly that easy and precisely that straightforward. If you have any doubts look at the words of Saint Paul in Romans Chapter 10 verses 9 and 10. But, you do need to do that, your acceptance of God's grace is essential, and if there is anyone here today who has never done these things I urge you to do them right here right now today. Don't wait. Your salvation, your eternal life, is too important to put off to another day.

As we come to a close, let's have a summing up in what we've covered in this closing section on the meaning of Jesus' life. We see that God couldn't simply forget about our sin. Sin is too serious in God's eyes and his nature would not have permitted that. But – “It is finished”

- because he loved us so much he sent Jesus Christ to die for us on the cross, which secured the forgiveness of sin; he was the innocent lamb slaughtered to pay for all our sins past present and future – and we should be eternally grateful for what he has done for us. May that gratefulness be reflected in the lives of each and every Christian. In the words of the well known hymn:

Were the whole realm of nature mine  
That were an offering far too small  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, my all

We each need to take up our cross and follow the master. I hope our four mornings have brought Jesus into a clearer focus for you as a real historical figure and also as our Lord and saviour and has cemented your confidence and belief in the Gospel accounts of his sacrificial saving death and resurrection. I believe there is no other knowledge of comparable importance for us today as belief in them is the key to our salvation.