

“24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." 26 ¶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (Joh 20:24-31 NIV)

As we read about the end of Christ’s life, we are touched by God’s extravagant love for us.

We read about how humanity reacted to Jesus when He came, in many ways type of how humanity still reacts to Him today.

In John 19, we see that both Pilate Pontius Pilate who was the Roman governor of Judaea at that time (from 26 CE to 36 CE ;) and Herod did not find any reasons to condemn Jesus. When offered a choice the religious community and the people preferred that an insurrectionist and a murderer be released from prison instead of Jesus.

(Lu 23:18-21 NIV) “18 With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" 19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) 20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"”

The attitude of the people back then was to prefer a criminal over Jesus. Jesus, as was prophesied died a horrible death at the hands of the Jews and the Romans. The seat of the Roman Empire was Italy.

When we think that Jesus submitted Himself voluntarily to this treatment, it causes us to stop and think. Jesus could have put a stop to all of this if He had wanted to do so.

(Joh 18:33-37 NIV) “33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" 34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" 36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." 37 "You are a king, then!" said

Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.""

Jesus told Pilate that He did not originate from planet earth. His Kingdom is not of this world. He came to this world to be one of us to save us from sin and death.

As Christians, we celebrate a momentous event today. We celebrate that Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, died and on the 3rd day was resurrected. Not one of us has witness this event. Not one of us has seen Jesus with our physical eyes and senses. Not one of us has eaten with him or put our hand in His side, the side where the soldier's spear entered. Yet we are here because we believe that it has happened! We believe what Peter said to the people listening to Him on Pentecost.

(Ac 2:22-24 NIV) "22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

We believe that Jesus is alive today or we would not be here. We believe that He is God, as Peter indicated, or else we would not be here worshiping Him today!

(Ac 2:32 NIV) "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

(Ac 2:36 NIV) "'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord (kurios) and Christ (Christos khris-tos'or anointed)."

Believing that Jesus is alive makes an enormous difference in our lives. We believe that He has accomplished what He came to do in His mission on earth.

We believe that Jesus is God and we believe that He is our Savior. Those 2 words are very powerful – God and Savior! Jesus is God. He is of the same essence as the Father and Holy Spirit and part of the Triune God of love Who has existed from eternity!

(Tit 1:1-3 NIV) "1 ¶ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— 2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,"

The promise of a Savior was promised before the beginning of time, from eternity! This Savior has come to the earth as one of us. He is alive and well! It is a truth that changes lives. It is a truth that leads to godliness!

God is our Savior!

What does this really mean – that He is our Savior.

(Da 9:20-24 NIV) “20 ¶ While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill— 21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: 24 "Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”

This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ’s mission on the earth! Look and understand the prophecy:

1. **to finish transgression**
2. **to put an end to sin**
3. **to atone for wickedness**
4. **to bring in everlasting righteousness**
5. **to seal up vision and prophecy**
6. **to anoint the most holy.”**

This is what Jesus came to do – to put an end to sin, to bring everlasting righteousness, etc... Can we believe it? This is the truth. This is the good news!

When Jesus died, His last words were, "**It is finished.**"

(Joh 19:29-30 NIV) ““29 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. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

We read that He became sin for all of us so that we could become the righteous of God in Him.

(2Co 5:20-21 NIV) “20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The sin of all humanity fell on Jesus! He absorbed all our sins. He became sin. The sin of humanity, all of them have been taken care of and forgiven!

(1Jo 2:1-3 NIV) “1 ¶ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 ¶ We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.”

He became sin not just for the few but for the many, for the sins of the whole world, we are told!

In Jesus, the whole world is reconciled.

(2Co 5:17-19 NIV) “17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”

God the Father is not counting men’s sins against them because men, women and children everywhere have been reconciled to God, everywhere and in all ages, in Jesus. Humanity’s sin has been forgiven!

It means that all of my sins and yours have been forgiven, atoned for by Jesus. Humanity is already all included in Christ. All that separated humanity from God has been dealt with by Jesus.

This is why John the Baptist said about Jesus:

(Joh 1:29-30 NIV) “29 ¶ The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” 30 This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”

Jesus came to take away the sin of the world! Do we believe that Jesus has the capacity to have done this or will be like the oldest son in the Parable of the Prodigal found in Luke 15 who refused to welcome his sinning brother even if his father rejoiced in his return?

This means that the sins of the drug dealers, the child abusers, the murderers, the adulterers, the liars, the children dishonoring their parents, the idolaters, and the list goes on – all their sins have been atoned for and forgiven.

When we read in John 3, “**16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**” (Joh 3:16-17 NIV), It truly means what it says. God’s intent was to save the world through Jesus Christ! God the Father has no interest in condemning the world. He was not and is not angry at the world. He is angry that sin has separated us from Him and He has dealt with it in Jesus Christ.

Sin still exists in the world and it is creating havoc, chaos, mayhem, destruction and disorder everywhere around us. Most people do not yet know that they have been set free. This is what Steve McVey says in a recent interview with Michael Morrison, in *You’re Included*, in a program entitled, **YOU CANNOT OVERESTIMATE GRACE.**

That’s right. That’s exactly right. We live in this little box called time/space and we need to be clear about one thing, and that is the old Adamic race died with Jesus, and he did defeat sin. He conquered it once and for all, as the phrase goes, once and for all. But you see, yes, we know the truth...people say the truth will set you free. The truth is, Jesus dealt with sin. No, no, no...the Bible doesn’t say the *truth* will set you free. The Bible says, “You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. It’s not just the truth that sets you free, it’s *knowing* the truth that sets you free. The truth is, he has dealt with sin. He’s conquered it. It has no power over us. But if you either don’t know or you don’t believe the truth, then a person will still live under the lie that befell Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And if they appropriate the lie, then guess what they’re going to live like? They’re going to live as if the lie is true. It’s not. They’re going to live in a counterfeit reality, which seems like an oxymoron, but you get my point. They’re going to live out of a delusion, they’re going to live as if Christ didn’t really do what he did, but he did.

The fear is that if we tell people this and if we preach this good news that it will give people free reign to sin and to indulge in iniquity. Why stop sinning if all my sins have been forgiven?

Sin is bondage? Why should we indulge in sin when God has given us freedom from sin?

God never encourages people to sin. His word, the Bible is very clear on this subject.

Does grace teach us to go on sinning? OF COURSE NOT!

(Tit 2:11-13 NIV) “11 ¶ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,”

What does grace teach us?

1. to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions

2. and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age

Because of grace, as a result of grace, Titus was commissioned or charged to teach the following:

(Tit 3:1-2 NIV) “1 ¶ Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no-one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.”

Then Paul goes on to say:

(Tit 3:3-8 NIV) “3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

Our salvation originates in its entirety from God. We are to react to grace. We are to embrace grace by living lives that reflect God’s life in us! We are to cooperate with Him. These verses are pregnant with so much richness!

God is teaching the truth. He is setting us free to participate in the eternal triune relationship of love that He has had from all eternity in His eternal Son through the Holy Spirit.

This is the message we can share with others! This is the eternal good news that Jesus came to bring to this world from His Father’s throne!

We can all say “no” to God’s invitation to believe in the good news found in Jesus Christ! Should we do this, it is not God rejecting us, it is us rejecting God. God has already accepted us in Jesus Christ.

The world still sins because it is still in darkness. The reality is that all people have been forgiven. Our sins have been taken away!

(Heb 9:26-28 NIV) “26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

The apostle had tremendous hope and faith in Christ. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was awed by God's saving work!

(Ro 11:31-32 NIV) "31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. 32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all."

Let's rejoice as we wait for His second appearance knowing that we are safe in Him as we trust and place our weak faith in His faithfulness for us! Let's believe and join the celebration that has already begun and which will be in its fullness at His return!

He is alive and well. Let's Rejoice in Him!!