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Glory to God! Christ is Risen!

Psalms 24:10: (NASB) *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.*

It was a long time ago - about 2000 years when he came. The world was going on just as before when he began preaching at age 30. He died young, at age 33½, unjustly crucified for deeds he did not commit. He had no family, he personally wrote no books or lessons to be handed down through the ages, yet his life and his death are the most celebrated in all of history. Why? Because he changed human destiny! How could the change have been good, for 2,000 years later the world seems worse off than ever! His actions and teachings in those short 3½ years of preaching were only the beginning, for he started a new cycle in human history, the results of which will be clearly seen and understood in due time. For now, let's just take some time and honor the life, death and resurrection of Jesus - the son of God and the Savior of men!

Part One of our Story: Ages of Preparation

Any truly effective plan requires truly effective planning, especially if the plan is designed to be eternal. God, in His foresight, knew the value of choice, the value of consequences and the value of experience. God created us in His image and did so for the purpose of having an earthly family that would forever live in unity and perfection. His plan was for this unity and perfection to be the heartfelt choice of the human race; so he gave us choice, consequences and experience so that we might unequivocally learn and choose His way in the end.

Let's take a look at the ages-long preparation and thought of God's glorious plan: 1 Peter 1:17-21: So the preparation began even before earthly civilization began. **The preparation continued with the very first people - they were given choices.** Genesis 3:9-12 **With their choices they were given consequences:** Genesis 3:13-15: So God's ages-long preparation included a prophecy of hope - even with the first sin!

Time passed and God's favor would find Abraham. He would prove himself to be a dramatic example of choosing God first. **This time the consequences for such an action were a blessing and a promise:** Genesis 22:15-18: Time and favor would pass from Father Abraham to son Isaac to grandson Jacob as God prepared a generational trust in His Name and His will. Now God's preparation would focus on a nation, born of Jacob. **This nation of Israel would need a law to guide them:** Galatians 3:19: The Law was there so sin could be identified - until the promised seed would come. Moses was there so the people could choose to understand God through him, and yet as great a leader as Moses was, he too was but another step in the ages-long preparation of God's plan. **Moses himself said:** Deuteronomy 18:17-19: Moses even knew that he was to be a forerunner of one much greater than himself. Just as Moses was the forerunner of Christ, the Law was the forerunner of faith. God's ages-long preparation gave ample time for learning, observing and for experiencing the long road back to their Creator. Galatians 3:22-26: **With the Law as a tutor in place, God's ages-long preparation would continue, now adding a deeper dimension of prophecy regarding the redemption to come.** Acts 3:18-19 **Some of these prophecies would detail another forerunner of Christ - the one who would prepare the people for their Messiah:** Isaiah 40:3-5: This prophet would be the first sent in over 400 years. John's message would lead to Christ. John 1:25-29: So we can see that God, in His eternal foresight and wisdom, meticulously prepared for the Messiah to come at just the right time to bring the planned redemption of the human race.

Part Two of our Story: The Last Days Preparation

In our last segment, we looked at a 4000 year plus period of preparation that God put in place for the purpose of laying the groundwork for Messiah's sacrifice. Jesus came on the scene and at 30 years of age went to work fulfilling the task before him. 3½ years later, he had flawlessly completed the *living* sacrifice portion of the mission. Now what was left was to fulfill the *dying* part of the sacrifice mission which was necessary to pay the ransom.

We now enter into Jesus' experience on the final night of his life. How would you spend *your* time if you knew that your next experiences would be torture and death? Let's see how Jesus chose to spend his time...

Jesus' first order of business was a much needed lesson in humility for those who followed him: John 13:3-9: This simple lesson of the washing of their feet was most profound - Jesus



being their leader, their teacher and mentor should have had his feet washed by somebody, yet they all deemed themselves of too high a station to perform such a task. So Jesus did it. He humbled himself to the lowest position among them to show them that they too could find the greatness of God's favor if only they would be small in their own eyes - if only they would stop worrying about what others might think - if only they would seek God's approval over the approval of men - if only they would serve one another.

After getting their attention by humbly washing their feet, Jesus next reveals his betrayer: Matthew 26:20-22 This would have been a shocking revelation - even to the point of disbelief, so Jesus showed them: John 13:26-31: Think about it - Jesus' betrayer leaves the room to betray him and his reaction is not one of hate or disappointment or frustration. No, his reaction is one of praise. NOW he could glorify God for the machinery of betrayal and death were irrevocably set on their course - and this - this is what he had come to do.

Jesus, now seeing the final stages of his life unfolding, had a choice as to what to do next. What would you or I do at such a time?

For Jesus, the choice was a simple one. He was so motivated by love that he chose to focus on giving strength to his disciples: John 13:33-38: Another shocking revelation that bordered on the impossible! How could Peter, the leader of the followers, Peter the outspoken one, Peter the one who even walked on water for a moment...how could *he* deny his Lord? Jesus told him to warn him. Jesus told him because he knew what was at stake. Luke 22:31-32 Jesus continues his encouragement. He now focuses on the future unity that they would all share as a result of his coming sacrifice: John 14:1-6

As they are walking to Gethsemane, Jesus continues to prepare for his death by preparing those he loves. Thus far he has taught them an almost embarrassing lesson in humility and servitude, told them hard truths while encouraging them, and talked of their future inheritance together.

Next, he would teach them about the simplicity of living their everyday lives by abiding in him, through the tender lesson of the vine and the branches: John 15:1-5

With this graphic lesson of how to live every day, Jesus now moves on to other trials that are upon them, but not without sharing the inspiration for victory! John 16:32-33: What faith! "I have conquered the world!" So, in the midst of the uncertainty that the disciples were experiencing and with the weight of the world that Jesus was carrying upon his shoulders, Jesus took this precious time to encourage and strengthen his brethren. He spoke plainly to them of the coming tempest and told them to stand unafraid, for whatever it is that they would be faced with - he had already overcome it! He reminded them of the necessity for humility and faith. Jesus showed them the way.

Jesus' final act of preparation that night was prayer. His prayer, as recorded in John 17, is a touching look into his heart, into his love for his Father and his love for us: John 18:1-2 Jesus was now ready and prepared to take the next trying and difficult steps.

Part Three of our Story: Gethsemane and Darkness

Jesus' time had come - the ages-long preparations of Almighty God meshed precisely with the last hours of preparations of Jesus, and now a deep and foreboding darkness was underway. Jesus and his disciples made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, a place that Jesus often went to meditate, focus and pray: Matthew 26-42: Just as a storm rises over Galilee, the storm of trial came quickly upon Jesus, as he knew that betrayal was imminent.

His instincts had led him to pray for the physical strength and the spiritual courage necessary to overcome... and pray he did, over and over and over. Luke 22:43-44

While Jesus was yet speaking to his followers, a crowd came to the garden. This crowd was led by a trusted friend - Judas, one of his twelve closest follower, one who had been deeply involved in his teaching and who had seen many miracles: Luke 22:47-48 John 18:3-9

Even now the power of God flowed through Jesus. He could have easily walked away, but he chose not to: John 18:10 Luke 22:51-53: So Jesus allowed himself to be arrested as he arranged for the freedom of his disciples. The soldiers, their officer and the Jewish police bound him and took him away. Jesus was now on his way to Annas, the son-in-law of Caiaphas



the high priest. Following behind in the distance were Peter and John, no doubt bewildered and unsure. Judas - their friend Judas - betrayed him? What was going to happen? Surely this must be some kind of misunderstanding! Once they got to the courtyard of the high priest, John had to arrange for Peter's entrance with the woman by the gate. **Once inside, Peter settled by a fire with others to keep warm.** Selections from: John 18:13-26: (NRSV) and Luke 22:55-65: (ASV) Luke 22:56,57: Peter must have surprised himself. Sure, he was scared, and sure he wanted to stay as close to Jesus as possible...but deny that he knew him? How could he? Perhaps he rationalized that anonymity was necessary to stay close by. So Peter sat quietly, maybe feeling a bit more self-conscious than before. He watched from a distance as Jesus was being questioned about his teachings. **He watched and he waited:** John 18:25: Again he denied Jesus! What was he thinking? Where was his courage? Where was the Peter who had boldly left all to follow Jesus, the Peter who would speak for his fellow disciples, the Peter who would stare fear in the face - especially when with Jesus...? Luke 22:59 Luke 22:60-62: All at once Peter's life had fallen to pieces, shattered upon the rocks of his own foolish pride, ground to dust by his own fear, and blown to the four corners of the earth by the winds of despair. Once not so long ago he had stood side by side with his master, willing to do anything, willing to go anywhere at Jesus' bidding. Now he could not even so much as acknowledge his discipleship. Jesus knew - Jesus saw him deny - he heard him deny - and now, now it was too late...all that was left for Peter was the bitterness of the tears of regret...it was too late...Luke 22:63-65: To be mocked and beaten - this would be the order of events for the rest of this fateful night for Jesus right up until his death. He was later taken to Pilate's headquarters in the very early morning, where Pilate could find no fault with him and sought his release. The gathered crowd, led by the Pharisees, had different ideas.

Pilate would now have Jesus beaten again. They put a crown of thorns on his head and dressed him in a purple robe. Pilate would try to release Jesus but Jesus himself would say nothing in his own defense.

So Jesus is now on his way to crucifixion. Unjustly accused, unjustly tried and abused, he opened not his mouth in his own defense, but went quietly as a sheep to the slaughter, for his mission required it of him.

Part Four of our Story: Crucifixion

John 19:17 Luke 23:26-28 John 19:19-22 Mark 15:27 Matthew 27:39-44 Luke 23:36-37 John 19:25-27 Luke 23:39-43 Isaiah 53:3-4 Mark 15:33-36 John 19:28 and 30 Luke 23:46 Mark 15:33-34: ³³And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is, being interpreted, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* John 19:28: ²⁸After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, *I thirst.* Mark 15:35-36: ³⁵And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah. ³⁶And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down. John 19:30: ³⁰When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished,* Luke 23:46: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:* and having said thus, he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit.

Matthew 27:51 and 54 Mark 15:40-41: It was in this manner that Jesus the Christ was crucified and it was in this manner that Jesus the Christ did die...Isaiah 53:6-7

Part Five of our Story: Resurrection and Forgiveness

There was a sense of urgency to end this crucifixion scene. The urgency was not driven by any form of compassion or mercy, but by the fact that sundown was the beginning of both the Sabbath and the Passover, which made this particular Sabbath a higher and holier celebration than normal. With the tens of thousands of extra people in Jerusalem for the Passover, the spectacle of bodies on crosses, especially Jesus', had the potential to cause a stir amongst the people that the Pharisees did not want to deal with. Thus the urgency was only for the Pharisees' protection. So Jesus was taken down, to be buried in a new tomb, belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph and Nicodemus respectfully wrapped the lifeless body with myrrh and aloes in linen cloths and laid it to rest. They then rolled the stone over the door... All was



now quiet and the following day at the request of the Pharisees, the guards arrived, sealed the tomb and watched - lest someone should steal the body and claim resurrection.

Mark 16:1-7: (KJV) and Luke 24:6-8: (KJV) Mark 16:1-6: Luke 24:6-8: Here was to begin a new frenzy of activity, for the resurrection of Jesus would not only energize the fragile followers he left behind, it would send a shock wave through all the nation. Mary would be the first to actually speak to the risen Lord. Peter and John would soon race to the sepulcher, only to find it empty. Now the realization of what Jesus had said all along would begin to sink in...he IS the son of God! He IS risen! He IS the long awaited Messiah!

The resurrection was truly a more remarkable event than could have ever been imagined, just as Jesus said it would be. With all of the excitement in the following days and weeks, the Apostle Peter would not be forgotten by his Lord. Jesus would pick up the pieces of Peter's shattered life, rejuvenate his faith and help him to break the chains of the darkness within him. This is amazing grace!

Redemption comes through forgiveness and forgiveness comes through grace. These are the gifts that Peter was given by Jesus, for Jesus knew his heart, Jesus knew his potential, and Jesus knew that deep within Peter lived a fearless and abiding courage. So, Peter is given a glorious redemption, and now it would be Peter's turn to rise to the challenges of leadership as he would stand upon the shoulders of his Lord.

Redemption is a powerful force!!!

John 21:15-17: Jesus said to Simon Peter, *Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?* He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, *Feed my lambs.* ¹⁶A second time he said to him, *Simon son of John, do you love me?* He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, *Tend my sheep.* ¹⁷He said to him the third time, *Simon son of John, do you love me?..* And he said to him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, *Feed my sheep...*

Part Six of our Story: Redemption

What did the life, death and resurrection of Jesus really bring? We say that we have been redeemed, but what does that really mean? Well, let's look at a number of scriptures and prophecies that describe redemption to us. Colossians 1:19-20: Let's notice the elements here: we have Jesus and the church, who are his "called out" ones. Then it says that God through Jesus and his sacrifice reconciled and made peace with ALL things - this is much more than the church - redemption is bigger! 1 Corinthians 15:21-22: Here we have the solid foundation of justice as the basis for redemption. All of us were subject to death because we were born in Adam; therefore, because Jesus died for Adam - a perfect man for a perfect man - justice demands that ALL of us are subject to resurrection in Christ. Daniel 2:44: The God of heaven will set up a kingdom. Where? Well, where are "those kings?" Here on earth! Not only does this prophecy speak of the setting up of a kingdom, it speaks of a kingdom that will NEVER be destroyed! How can this be? It is all as a result of the redemption of Jesus! No wonder Jesus taught us to pray, *"thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* See? Redemption brings blessing! So what will this kingdom look like? Micah 4:1-2: These are specifics about the future of earth. There will be many nations - they will ALL be seeking after God - they will walk in Godly paths with Israel as their example. Micah 4:3-5: God will teach the world the ways of peace: swords to plowshares, spears to pruning hooks, and no more war; rather they will all dwell in peace, each with the ability to provide for themselves and all while living under God! So, while those faithful to Jesus now will have an inheritance in heaven, the "everybody else" (the ones who most often seem to be left behind) will have an inheritance on earth, once they prove faithful to Jesus in the Day of Judgment Day. Praise be to God for his unspeakable gift!! Philippians 2:9-11: (NASB) ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is the greatest story ever told, one that changes the course of human events for all of eternity.

Glory to God! Christ is Risen!
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!