

DAY OF RESCUE

If human history was a movie, the climax occurred about AD33 in Jerusalem, Israel. We celebrate that history this week, observing the last days of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus the Christ. These are days of reckoning. Because you need rescuing, and the deliverer has come! Good Friday marks the day of rescue. It's the compelling story of the redemption of the human race. From creation to consummation, the cross marks the climax. It's the watershed of history. How are you part of God's story?

1- YOU NEED RESCUE! No doubt about it. Good as you are, you're not perfect. We're all in the same spot. Plot out a line and place the world's worst villain at the left-most point. Now plot where you fall on this line from bad to good. Then, consider where Jesus stands on the line (you may need to make it much longer). The reality is, compared to Jesus you are right next to the very worst. It's called "sin" which means "missing the mark." Romans 3:23 says *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* our Creator, who is perfect in every respect. Genesis 3 recounts how the first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. And all people have inherited their sin. Romans 5:12 explains, *"sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and death spread to all men because all sinned."*

2- WHO IS YOUR RESCUER? Romans 5:13 continues, *"For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many."* If only God is perfect, then only God could work the salvation of sinful human beings. The Bible makes it clear, no amount of good works could ever overcome your sin. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). The angel told Mary and Joseph, *"that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21) *"a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:11). Adam brought death and ruin, but Jesus, our rescuer, deliverer, savior, brings life.

3- HOW ARE YOU RESCUED? *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). You were helpless, dead in sins. But all who trust in Jesus *"are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith"* (Romans 3:24). Redemption and propitiation both speak of payment, satisfying an unpayable debt." Believers are justified, declared righteous before the holy God. Jesus paid the debt of sin with His own perfect life, because Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). That's the Good News! God Himself is your rescuer, through Jesus His Son. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). Wages are what you earn, and God says sin earns death. But a gift by definition cannot be earned. It can only be rejected, or received.

4- THE DAY OF RESCUE! That's what Good Friday is all about. We pause in somber reflection. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, sentenced. One by one, the earthly authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, condemn Jesus to death. The crowds demonstrably lauding Him as King just a few days ago now loudly demand, *"Crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!"* Jesus is brutally scourged, forced to carry the cross-beam to Golgotha, and raised up on the terrible Roman tree of execution. In His own body, He carries our sins. By His stripes we are healed. The holy God turns His face away, as Jesus cries out, *"Tetelestai! It is finished! Paid in full!"* and His spirit leaves His body on the cross. The world goes dark, the curtain in the temple is rent, and the disciples huddle in despair. Two secret disciples go public, as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea place His body in a new tomb, as the women watch. Only later they all realize how on this day, this Passover long ago, Jesus was God's sacrifice for sin. Our rescue! Romans 11:26, quoting Isaiah, *"The Deliverer will come from Zion, and this will be My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

5- ARE YOU RESCUED? The Son of God became flesh to pay for sin. The apostle writes how He came to His own, whom He had created and whom had rebelled against Him. *"To all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:11-13). This is what Jesus called in John 3:3 being born again from above by the Holy Spirit. That's what happens when you put all your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It means believing in Him with all your heart and mind and will, your whole person trusting wholly in Jesus Christ alone. Not just intellectually or not just emotionally or not just volitionally, but all of you putting all your faith only in Jesus Christ. Saved! Then He transforms you.

6- PROCLAIM RESCUE! Romans 10:9, *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* And *"faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."* Because 1Peter 2:24, *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."* If you truly believe this Good News, you will know it, you will show it, and you will tell it. Easter points to the rest of God's rescue story. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the climax. And as we wait for the glorious End, Jesus sets you free from the power of sin, so you live for Him and share the Good News! □