

Empowered to Change

Lesson 1 – Passing Through the Door of the Cross into Eternity

John 19:17-18 – *“He went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.”*

The cross, representing the sacrifice of Christ, is the door into Eternity. It is by faith in Christ that all sinners are saved and pass through the door.

John 10:7-9 – *“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved...”*

Door to Eternity within History:

A door into eternity is the stuff of fantasy but the cross of Christ was real history. The Roman soldiers that day could never have imagined that one of those they were about to crucify had been ordained to die in that manner from before time.

Acts 2:23 – *“...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*

Christ’s death on the cross was a historical act that occurred under the eternal plan and purpose of God.

John 12:27 – *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”*

Gospels are not Mythology:

Jesus died on a particular day at a particular hour. It is history. This distinguishes the gospel of Christ from mythology.

Mythology separates truth from history as though the facts don’t matter. The gospels of Christ, on the other hand, communicate truth through history.

The gospels of Christ are historical. They combine truth with history, because the cross is the door into eternity made known in history.

Door to Reconciliation:

The words of Christ on the cross show us how the cross opens the door into eternity. Sin was what separated us from God and at the cross Jesus paid the price for our sins and opened the door of reconciliation with God. During the six hours that Jesus hung on the cross, he uttered seven phrases, all of which pertain to this reconciliation.

Forgiveness:

Luke 23:34 – *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”*

The first words Christ uttered from the cross were a prayer of forgiveness for those that crucified him. If Christ could extend God’s forgiveness to them, then certainly that same forgiveness could be extended to us. The cross is God’s arms of forgiveness extended to the world.

Assurance:

Luke 23:42-43 – *“And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’”*

Jesus spoke words of assurance to a dying criminal. We don’t know what this criminal did, just that he was getting what he deserved. In the last hours of his life, he turned to Christ and Christ promised him paradise. The cross offers assurance of eternal life to those that turn to Christ.

Compassion:

John 19:26-27 – *“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”*

Even while Christ was dying he demonstrates compassion towards his mother. The same compassion that he showed towards her is what motivated him to go to the cross for us. The cross shows the depth of the compassion of Christ.

Mystery:

Matthew 27:46 – *“My God, My God why have you forsaken me?”*

What was behind the mystery of such a cry?

Isaiah 53:6 – *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--everyone--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

When our iniquities were laid upon him, God withdrew his presence from Christ. The mystery of the cross was substitution. Christ dying in our place so that we might live before God.

Humanity:

John 19:28f – *“I thirst.”*

Jesus, even though he was the divine Son of God, did not use his deity to lessen his suffering. On the cross Christ suffered the pains of humanity to identify with our sufferings.

Purpose:

John 19:30f – *“It is finished.”*

These three words are translated from one Greek word “tetelastai”. It more accurately means “it is finished” as in “it has been paid.” God purposed to pay the debt of sin with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Christ paid that debt in full.

Authority:

Luke 23:46 – *“Father into Your hands I commit my spirit.”*

To the very end, Christ was in charge. No one took his life from him, he laid it down. This means that Christ did not die as a victim, but as a sacrifice.

Door to Blessing:

Doors both provide and limit access. Like any door, the cross only provides access for what can pass through it.

All the blessings of God that Christ purchased for us can pass through the cross. Any blessing that can pass through the cross belongs in Christianity. On the other hand, what cannot pass through the cross does not belong.

Condemnation Cannot Pass:

Condemnation cannot pass through the cross. If it cannot pass through, it does not belong in our lives.

Christians should be free from guilt manipulation, because the cross nullifies guilt by removing past sins. Once a sin is forgiven, we should no longer cultivate consciousness of it.

Curses Cannot Pass:

Curses also cannot pass through the cross. This means that whatever suffering you may have endured or whatever calamity has befallen your life, if you have placed your faith in Christ then those things cannot be caused by a curse.

Unconditional Love Passes:

The unconditional love of God passes through the cross. What God did on the cross was an act of unconditional love towards us. As we continue on in our lives, we live under that same unfailing, unwavering, unconditional love of God.

Empowered Through the Cross:

God’s historic intervention through the cross made possible his intervention into our lives. An historic event on a hill called Golgotha transforms those who believe in Christ because it empowers you to receive God’s blessings by passing through it into an eternal relationship with God.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is passing through the door of the cross evident in our lives?
2. What does it mean to be reconciled to God?
3. Why is it important that Christ's crucifixion is historical?
4. How do we help to limit access to those things in our lives that don't belong?
5. Why is it important to understand the good things that are allowed access through the door?