

THE SADDEST STORY WITH THE HAPPIEST ENDING

1 Corinthians 15:14; Mark 15:1-39; John 19:1-38

Introduction: A conversation between a Christian and a Moslem would go like this:

Christian: We believe God revealed Himself to man.

Moslem: We believe that, too.

Christian: We believe that God revealed Himself in creation.

Moslem: We believe that, too.

Christian: We believe God revealed Himself in a Book, the Bible.

Moslem: We believe that God revealed Himself in a Book, the Koran.

Christian: We believe that God revealed Himself in a man, Jesus Christ.

Moslem: We believe that God revealed Himself in a man, the prophet, Mohammed.

Christian: We believe that Jesus died to save His followers.

Moslem: We believe that Mohammed died for his people.

Christian: We believe Jesus was able to prove His claims because He rose from the dead.

Moslem: We have no information concerning our prophet after he died.

No doubt there have been many others who died sacrificial deaths too, and for some great cause, but nobody did what Jesus did in their death. The death of Jesus is the saddest story, but has the happiest ending.

I. THE SADDEST STORY

1. It was on the cross:
 - With power to smite His enemies with lightening from heaven, Jesus elected to die.
 - God's eternal enemies emptied their wrath upon the sinless sacrifice causing the earth to shake and the sun to hide its face in darkness.
 - God the Father of the rain clouds, permitted His Son to thirst.
 - God, who clothes the valleys and mountains in beautiful colors left His Son naked under the darkening sky hanging on a cross.
2. It was no wonder that:
 - the sun withdrew its light.
 - the earth reeled in its orbit.
 - the rocks were shattered.
 - the dead walked the streets.
 - the streets were crowded with gawking sight-seers.
3. The earth had no darker sin or history no blacker page or humanity no uglier spot than that of the Savior's crucifixion.
4. Here, in the Bible, the saddest story of man and the saddest story of God are found and together they make the saddest story of human history.
 - Man began in perfect surroundings, robed in righteousness, drinking from a life giving stream, eating from the trees in the garden, breathing the breath of God.
 - It was in this garden of Eden that man fell, thus beginning the saddest story of mankind.
 - Its tragic color is seen in the blood of Abel.
 - Its sadness is seen in the shame of a drunk Noah.
 - Its confusion is seen in the city of Babel.

- Its oppression is seen in the Egyptian bondage of God's people.
 - Its bitterness is seen in the sting of the serpents while in the wilderness.
5. The saddest story of God is Calvary.
 - In Eden is seen the beginning of the tragedy which was to end on Calvary.
 - At Calvary is seen the atonement of sin which began in Eden.
 6. Calvary casts its shadow back through the pages of history:
 - From Calvary go back to the courtyard of Pilate.
 - From Pilate go back to the upper room.
 - From the upper room go back to the Mount of Transfiguration.
 - From the Mt. of Transfiguration go back to the river Jordan where Jesus was baptized.
 - From the river Jordan go back to Nazareth where Jesus worked with His hands, living by the sweat of His brow.
 - From Nazareth go back to Bethlehem where Jesus was born.
 - The shadow of Calvary casts its long shadow across the pages of the Old Testament as seen in the prophecies of the many prophets.
 7. Jesus was born with the shadow of the cross.
 - He learned to walk in the shadow of the cross.
 - He learned to talk in the shadow of the cross.
 - He began to work in the shadow of the cross.
 - From His earliest moment on earth, the shadow of the cross fell across Him.
 - It fell upon His swaddling clothes.
 - It was upon the road to Egypt His parents took.
 - It fell upon the waters of Lake Galilee.
 - It was upon the Samaritan well.
 - It fell upon the Garden of Gethsemane.
 - It was on Him when the soldiers came to arrest Him.
 - It was on Him, when with a kiss, Judas betrayed Him.
 - He walked the streets of Jerusalem dishonored by its shadow.
 - He climbed Mt. Olivet oppressed by its weight.

II. THE HAPPIEST ENDING

1. Yes, they killed Jesus and buried Him - but no tomb on earth could hold Him. On the third day, just as Jesus had told His followers, He walked out, forevermore alive.
2. Sound impossible? If someone could step out of the eternal world into ours, His advent, career and ultimate return to the eternal world would be one of constant marvel and talk.
 - If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a myth, there is no reason to suppose that other extraordinary events reported in the gospels are anything more.
 - If on the other hand the resurrection story is true then we are given a measuring tool by which the incidents and sayings of Jesus would otherwise be opened to suspicion as mere philosophy and half-truths.
3. The resurrection is a historical fact in that the event actually occurred. It happened!
 - It is a "non-historical" event in that it does not fit into ordinary human experiences.
 - It belongs to all of God's people.
 - It is the center of the Christian's message.

- There is not a message delivered nor a sermon preached that the resurrection is not the central theme.
 - Jesus did not rise from the grave because of some innate power of immortality.
 - Jesus did not rise from the grave as an act of His own will.
 - Jesus did not rise from the grave because of some inevitable necessity.
 - Jesus rose from the grave because God acted to raise Him.
4. Yes! Jesus died, was buried and rose again, and for what reason, what purpose?
 - It was not by His sinless life that Jesus became man's substitute.
 - It was not by His miracles that Jesus satisfied God's justice, thus meeting God's demands.
 - It was not by His beautiful example that Jesus was able to take our place.
 - It was not by His character that the insulted dignity of God was repaid.
 - It was ONLY by His suffering - ONLY by His death that Jesus adequately compensated for man's (our) offenses.
 5. Jesus Christ died! Jesus Christ died for our sins. Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
 - Jesus Christ was buried. He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.
 - THIS is the ground of our hopes.
 - THIS is our Gospel.
 - THIS is our proof of triumph over the grave.
 - THIS message which our forefathers preached with the rattle of prison chains amid the searing heat and suffocating smoke of the burning stake and countless other ways of death.
 - THIS is our message.
 - THIS is our hope.
 6. The fingers of prophecy point to the resurrection.
 - The birth of Jesus Christ was preparation for the resurrection.
 - The transfiguration foreshadowed the resurrection.
 - Pentecost was the fruit of the resurrection.
 7. At the resurrection:
 - The history of man's guilt was closed.
 - Stan's armor was removed.
 - Our condemnation was lifted.
 - The death of sin was made certain.
 - The sentence of death revoked.
 - The door to heaven opened.
 - The fountain of salvation was unsealed.
 - The shadows of death were dispelled.
 - The darkness of eternity was lighted.

CONCLUSION:

1. It was for this that Jesus Christ was born, that He died on Calvary, that He rose from the grave.
2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ serves as a guarantee of a resurrection for all believer's bodies that will be like that of Jesus' and that they shall also have a life like that of Jesus also.
3. It was indeed a sad day when Jesus died, but it had the happiest ending - HE AROSE !