

Easter Response, part 1

March 29, 2015

Mankind has come a long way since the stone age. In fact, we have come a long way in the last 30 years. Recently a man was released from prison after more than 30 years in jail. He is in awe of the inventions that have so changed life on planet earth.

This week I was looking for lists online of the most important historical events in human history. There are a number of such lists. All the ones I looked at were based on the idea of events that changed the course of human history in a major way. All of them included Jesus. You can't ignore the impact that Christianity has had on human life and history. Out of Christianity came the modern education movement, healthcare movement, and science movements, just to name a few.

I did not see any lists that ranked events by impact or importance. Well I'm going to go out on a controversial limb and tell you what three events I believe to be the most important in all of human history. **I declare that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the three most important things to happen on planet earth since the creation of mankind.**

Now let me tell you why. While the invention of personal computers, the internet, the wheel, the automobile, and the printing press have affected nearly every life in modern history, they all have one shortcoming. While empires, the Reformation, the American Revolution, and the creation of the United Nations continue to affect human life, they all fail to make my list. While science, medicines, and schools have improved the lives of countless people, they fail in one common element. Every bit of progress that mankind has made for himself has one thing in common.

None of those things have any effect on what happens to people... after they die. Of all the things man has done he has only affected life on earth. Nothing man has accomplished has had any impact on life after death.

My list is made up of the three things that can have an eternal impact for a person after death. Only Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have affected what can happen for us after death.

Let me point out the common outcome of every person's life. Death is the common outcome. We all die. And what comes next is described, briefly, in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 20:12-15 (NIV) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades (Hell) gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Note that every person will be found guilty of sin and the consequence of sin is the Lake of Fire. The only exception is those who have their name written in the Book of Life. So the all-important question is how to get your name in that book.

Several times in the Bible we are told that this is the Lamb's Book of Life. The Lamb of God is Jesus. In short, Jesus is the key to getting your name in the Book of Life. Jesus is the key to eternal life. Jesus is the key to avoiding the Lake of Fire. How are Jesus and eternal life connected? The story is Easter.

Next Sunday we celebrate in special ways the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We call it Easter. This morning I am starting a series of sermons about how to respond to Easter. How should you respond to the greatest events of all time? How should you respond to what can affect what happens to you after you die?

There are several parts to a right response. This morning we are considering the first part of that correct response. This is the response that God is looking for.

We're going to look at a conversation that Jesus had with a crowd of people. They had come to Him in hopes of getting a free meal. The day before Jesus had miraculously multiplied bread and sushi for them and they had full bellies. Many of these people rarely had full bellies. Today, they came looking for Jesus for another free meal. Instead, Jesus is hoping to interest them in something more lasting. We pick up the conversation in John 6.

John 6:27 (NIV) "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

The food you work for satisfies your bodily hunger temporarily, but has no effect upon you after you die. Most of us will go find something to eat in an hour or so, but it won't last. You will have to eat again today or by tomorrow. This food is no good for obtaining eternal life. Jesus wants them to focus on the food that results in eternal life. Jesus is that food.

John 6:27-29 (NIV) "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Jesus said, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent." Note that God sent someone. God sent Jesus to die for our sins. God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. We needed a Savior, someone to rescue us from the lake of fire. Jesus came to be our rescuer.

But it could not be just anyone. It had to be a very special person. In fact, in order to secure our rescue, it would have to be a sinless person, a perfect person. It would have to be a one-of-a-kind person. It would have to be someone who was both God and man.

Let me tell you...

What Easter is about.

- **Jesus, the God/Man lived without sin.**
- **God approved of sinless Jesus to be a worthy substitute for us on the cross.**
- **Jesus then died for our sin.**
- **God proved His approval of Jesus by raising Jesus from the dead.**

That is the essence of Easter. That is the good news of Easter. Listen, when God does something and then tells us about it, He wants us to believe it. Believing God about Jesus is the first part of a correct response to Easter. Jesus said, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent." That includes believing the why and wherefore of His being sent. He was sent to be our Savior because we needed a Savior.

Now some will object to this. They will say, "Believing in Jesus is too small. Believing in Jesus is too easy. Surely there is more God wants." There is more. And we will look at the rest in the coming weeks. But it starts here. **The response that God is looking for first, and most, is that you believe in Jesus.**

But believing in Jesus is no small or easy thing to do. You see believing in Jesus will cost you your pride. You have to admit that you need a Savior. Believing on Jesus will cost you everything you want to brag about. You have to willingly admit to God that you are not good enough to earn eternal life on your own merits. You have to agree with God that you need a Savior. You have to agree with God that you are not strong enough, talented enough, bright enough, skilled enough, wealthy enough, influential enough, giving enough, or loving enough to gain eternal life for yourself. You must admit to God that Jesus, the one God sent, is the only path to eternal life for you.

That may be really difficult for you to do. This is difficult for many people to choose to do. It is hard for the sophisticated. It is hard for the educated. It is hard for the talented. It is hard for the rich. It is hard for the privileged. It is hard for the comfortable. It is hard for the healthy. It is hard for the famous. It is hard for the skilled. All the things that man is prideful of stand in your way of believing in Jesus. All of the things for which you thinks yourself to be better than others stand in your way of believing in Jesus.

You will have to lay these things aside as worthless for gaining eternal life. You will have to lower yourself in your eyes to the same level that everyone else is on in order to believe in Jesus.

Your pride wants to do some big thing for God, something courageous and sacrificial. Well it will take courage... and humility... in order to sacrifice your pride. But you can make these choices in order to believe in Jesus.

Your pride wants something you can take credit for. That is the opposite of believing that Jesus did what you could not do. Only Jesus deserves the credit for eternal life. Eternal life is an unearned gift from God earned by Jesus for us on the cross. As long as we hold on to what we are, and have, and have done, we are not believing in Jesus as the Savior we need.

Believing in Jesus is a big, hard thing to do. It is big because it is believing more than that Jesus was a human being that lived 2000 years ago and then died. That's all that the world wants to believe about Jesus. If that is all you believe about Jesus, you will find yourself facing the lake of fire after death.

To believe in Jesus is to choose to believe all that Jesus said and did. That is not anything little. Let me give you an example.

John 14:6 (NIV) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

To believe in Jesus is to believe that He is the way (to God), the truth (of God), and the life (with God).

Jesus is the way to God. While it is popular today to believe there is any way that you want to make up, the only approved way is Jesus. If there were many paths to eternal life, then Jesus came for nothing. If there were many paths then Jesus died for nothing. But God sent Jesus. He did so because we needed a Savior. We cannot invent our own way. We cannot approve our own way. We needed someone greater than us to rescue us from the consequences of our sins.

Jesus is the truth of God. Jesus told His followers that to see Him was to see God. If they wanted to know what God was like then look at Him. Every character quality of God is in Jesus. The love of God, goodness of God, mercy of God, wisdom of God, faithfulness of God, kindness of God. these are all seen perfectly in Jesus.

Jesus is the life with God. When we are given eternal life instead of the lake of fire, eternal life is characterized as life with Jesus, with God.

You can choose today, the lake of fire, or Jesus. Do you want to live forever with Jesus or be thrown into the lake of fire? You get to choose. The day that Jesus spoke with the crowd, they could choose. Today you can choose.

The first part of a correct response to Easter is to believe in Jesus. The first part of a right response to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is to believe in Him.

Believe you need a rescuer.
Believe you need a Savior.
Believe that God sent you a Savior.
Believe that Jesus is the Savior God sent.
Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins.
Believe that God raised Him from the dead.
Believe everything that Jesus said and did.

In believing you need to respond personally to Jesus in prayer this morning.