

Jesus Even Worked on Saturday Before Easter Sunday

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Many people had off on Friday because Easter falls on Sunday, so for many, Friday is a holiday. As Christians, we observe Friday as Good Friday. We may watch a Christian movie that has the scene of the Crucifixion. It's a day we should reflect on the suffering Jesus went through for us on the cross before His death. Then, on Easter Sunday, we may get up early to go to a Sunrise service somewhere. After that, we go to a Sunday service to celebrate the Risen Savior and the victory He had against the grave and satan. Afterwards, we may spend time with family. So, Friday and Sunday during the Easter Event is very important to us. How about Saturday? On the Saturday before Easter at John Rudy County Park, there is Easter egg hunts will be done at different locations of the park. Some organizations will have the egg hunt the Saturday before Palm Sunday. However, Saturday during Easter week is not talked about much anymore. During the old days, some called Saturday before Easter as Holy Saturday. Some Churches would celebrate with baptisms or with fasting and prayer. All of this done to reflect or celebrate the period of waiting for Jesus' resurrection from the dead. However, Scripture tells us that Jesus did work on that Saturday during the first Easter Event. This is what we'll be looking at today.

Let's turn in 1 Peter 3: 13-22 where we read this from Peter, "¹³ Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. ¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way.^[a] Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

¹⁸ Christ suffered^[b] for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.^[c]

¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.^[d] ²¹ And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from^[e] a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

²² Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.
(Biblegateway.com)

Peter has been giving a lesson on how the early Church was to conduct themselves in the midst of suffering. The early Church was going through great suffering and Peter would be executed at some point. So, in the early chapters, Peter gives guidance for wives, husbands, and slaves on how to live as true followers of Jesus Christ. We came in where Peter is now giving reason why the Church must endure this suffering. This letter could be written to the Church today because of all the suffering Christians are having to endure throughout the world. So, Peter states in verse 18 that Jesus also suffered when He died for our sins. Peter is talking about Good Friday when Jesus was put to death. Then Jesus was raised to life in the Spirit. Paul states that same thing in Romans 8. Peter would mention in verse 22 that Jesus would go to heaven. Between all this is verses 19 and 20 where it states Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison – those who disobeyed God long ago during the Great Flood during Noah’s day. Only Noah and his family survived that day. This same Jesus who never sinned, but died for sinners, went to “prison” to preach to the spirit’s who sinned against God during Noah’s day – those who would not repent.

Peter would add onto this in 1 Peter 4: 6, “⁶ That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead^[a]—so although they were destined to die like all people,^[b] they now live forever with God in the Spirit. (Biblegateway.com).

Peter then finally adds this in 2 Peter 2:4 – 8, “⁴ For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell,^[a] in gloomy pits of darkness,^[b] where they are being held until the day of judgment. ⁵ And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment. So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood. ⁶ Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people. ⁷ But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. ⁸ Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. (Biblegateway.com)”

Scholars will put these pieces of Scripture together from Peter and will try to understand them. The problem is this is what we call as “gray area” in Scripture. We don’t have enough evidence to piece together all what Peter is saying here and there are some theories on what Peter is trying to say. I have my own theory, but it is not important here. Let’s focus on what we do know. Jesus went to “prison” after He died to preach to the spirits. The Greek term of “prison” means imprisonment. Jesus then would preach to them. The Greek term for “preach” means to proclaim – urge acceptance with warning (Strong’s Concordance). The “spirits” are angels who sinned against God and the ancient world during Noah’s day who did not listen to Noah who warned them of their sin. Peter states God didn’t spare anyone except Noah and his family because Noah was righteous in the sight of God. Jesus went and preached the gospel message to all these spirits who were in prison or Hades (realm of the dead). We’re not sure of the total purpose or what happened, but these spirits heard the gospel message. Think about this, even in death, Jesus was showing love to the unlovable. Jesus showed love when He walked the earth by healing the sick and forgiving those who asked forgiveness. Jesus preached to those who He knew would reject Him – like Judas. We talked last week about how Jesus even loved Judas, the one who would betray Jesus and Jesus knew that. Jesus even reached out to the dead. The whole Easter event is about the love of God. John tells us this in 1 John 4: 7 – 10, “⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (Biblegateway.com). God is love and Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus was even doing His work on Saturday. What an amazing Savior we serve!

The other item we learn is that Jesus has victory over death and the grave. All the commentaries I read didn't give opinions on the full meaning of Peter's teaching. However, I liked the Lutheran commentary that stated Peter shows Jesus' triumph over "all" forms of evil including death and the grave and He did this out of love. Jesus didn't stay there. On Easter morning, He appeared to the women at His grave and later to His disciples. We truly do serve a risen Savior.

This love and this victory over death is so important to our faith. Paul tells us this in Romans 10: 7, "You don't need to go to the place of the dead to bring Christ back to life again. Salvation that comes from trusting Christ – which is the message we preach – is already within easy reach. (NLT)" Out of love, Jesus didn't stay in the place of the dead. The Spirit of God rose Him from the grip of death and Jesus was triumphant over death so we may have life. However, we need to understand something here. Jesus would preach before the cross, under the cross, and after the cross with His saving message. Paul then states this message in verse 9, "For 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. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. (NLT)" Paul only gets this from Jesus. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5: 3, "God blesses those who realize their need for him for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. (NLT). Those in the place of the dead was there because of sin against God. God had given them warning through Noah and the people still rejected the message from God. They would not realize their need for the Lord. In the time we live in, this teaching has gone to the wayside.

A. W. Tozer wrote this to his generation as a warning in his book called "God's Pursuit of Man" and it fits right into our generation:

Remembering my own deep imperfections I would think and speak with charity of all who take upon them the worthy Name by which we Christians are called. But

if I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of self-assured and carnal Christianity whose hands are indeed the hands of Abel, but whose voice is the voice of Cain. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it. The old cross brought tears and blood; the new cross brings laughter. The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before the cross it bows and toward the cross it points with careful staged histrionics – but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear. I well know how many smooth arguments can be marshalled in support of the new cross. Does not the new cross win converts and make many followers and so carry the advantage of numerical success? Should we not adjust ourselves to the changing times? Have we not heard the new slogan “New days, new ways”? And who but someone very old and very conservative would insist upon death as the appointed way of life? Before all who wish to follow Christ the way lies clear. It is the way of death unto life. Always life stands just beyond death and beckons the man who is sick of himself to come and know the life more abundant. But to reach the new life he must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and I know that at the sound of those words many will turn back and follow Christ no more. But “to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:68)” – A. W. Tozer

There are many and there may be some here who believe because they grew up in Church, they are a good Christian. However, there has to come a time where we realize our need for Jesus because of the conviction His Spirit is pounding against our heart and mind. We are ashamed of our sin. We realize that we are a sinner and death is our destination. We realize we have no hope in God unless we turn to Jesus the Son of God. When we confess our sins and confess Jesus is our Lord and we trust Him with our life and we realize Jesus will forgive our sin, we become justified before God through Jesus. Then regeneration happens – we are made anew in Christ through the Spirit. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the place of the dead. We become adopted as a new child of God. Now we can experience His Holiness filling us to the point where we want to be totally committed in Christ. We realize we want to love Him with everything we have and we want Him in every part of our life – entire

sanctification. There has to come a point where we must make a decision about who are we really going follow. Jesus or this world and we can't have both.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Do you know Jesus today as your one and only Savior? Do you feel the burden of sin upon you? Is the Holy Spirit telling you that you need to make a decision today to follow Jesus instead of your own selfish ambition? Maybe you grew up in the Church, but never have asked Jesus into your heart and mind. Today can be the day. Just follow Paul's example in Romans 10:9 as a prayer.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996.

Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.

Tozer, A.W. *God's Pursuit of Man*. Moody Publishers: Chicago, 1950