



Bible Study Tools

The 6 Incredible Contrasts of the Cross

An Easter Bible Study Guide

by Clarence L. Haynes, Jr.



The cross. To some this represents the ultimate act of foolishness, and to others the ultimate act of love and sacrifice. The reality of the cross is that it comes with contrasts. Yet when you examine them thoroughly, you will discover they are beautiful in nature. In this season, when we think more deeply about the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, I want you to remember six contrasts that the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus represent.

1. The Creator Became the Created

In John's gospel we are reminded of who Jesus is.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-3).

In these first few verses, John establishes that Jesus was co-eternal with the Father. He was also co-equal and co-existent with the Father. We also see that Jesus was responsible for creation. But then later in the chapter we see a contrast appear. The one who was the creator became the created.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

Before there could ever be a cross, Jesus first had to become like us. The beauty of this is that he did it so in turn we could become like him.



*Why Is It Important for Your Faith
That the Creator Became the Created?*



2. Submission to Bring Freedom

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10:17-18).

In this passage we see that Jesus willingly laid down his life. No one forced him to – he chose to. On purpose Jesus laid down his life, submitted to the will of the Father and let go of any rights he had for one simple reason. So that he could provide a way for you and I to go free. His submission bought us freedom.

3. Punishment to Bring Peace

“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The words punishment and peace don't even belong in the same sentence, but again it points to the beautiful contrast we see in the cross. God took all the rightly deserved punishment for sin that should have been placed on us and he put that all on Jesus.

Honestly that doesn't seem fair because he didn't deserve it, but there again is another contrast. He didn't deserve punishment, but he took it so that we who didn't deserve peace would be able receive to have peace with God. This is one reason why the cross truly represents the love of God in action.

*What Does It Look Like for You to
Experience Freedom and Peace?*



4. Blood to Bring Cleansing

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14).

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is one of the hardest stains to remove. If you ever watch shows that deal with forensics, sometimes people would commit a crime and in the process of committing the crime, blood would be spilled. The criminal would try to clean up the blood, but when the forensics team comes, they spray luminol which detects trace amounts of blood at crime scenes. The bottom line is if you want to clean something, you don't use blood. Yet when it came to cleansing our sin, blood was exactly what was used. What a contrasting statement to make, the cleansing blood of Jesus.

However, there is another benefit of the blood of Jesus. It leaves an eternal mark on us that can never be washed away. Satan, no matter how hard he tries, can't get around the blood. If you have sinned, failed or really messed up, the blood is there to clean you up, and Satan can't get past that.

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.’” (Revelation 12:10-11). Thank God for the cleansing blood of Jesus that will never lose its power.



*How Has the Blood of Christ Left
a Permanent Mark on You?*



5. His Righteousness for My Sin

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In the old days, they used to use a barter system. People might bring a dozen eggs to the store and exchange them for a pound of flour. Bartering was all about even exchange. When you break it down, the cross is really a barter system. The difference is the exchange is not even. We bring him our broken, sinful condition and he exchanges that for his perfect righteousness. There cannot be a bigger contrast than that.

Consider for a moment what happens at the cross.

- You come guilty, you leave justified.
- You come broken, you leave whole.
- You come a sinner, you leave forgiven.
- You come dead to God, you leave alive to God in Christ.
- You come an old man, you leave a new creation in Christ.
- You come humble, you leave seated in heavenly places.
- You come in bondage and a slave to sin, you leave free from the power of sin.
- You come carrying the weight of eternal damnation, you leave with the hope of eternal life.
- You come with all your ugly stuff, and he turns it into something beautiful.
- You come with your sin, and leave with his righteousness.

Let's never underestimate the great exchange that happens at the cross, the ultimate barter system.

*What Did You Bring to the Cross, and
What Have You Been Given in Exchange?*



6. Death to Bring Life

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:23-24).

The last contrast to consider is that it was his death that produced life. His horrible death on a cross opened the way for you and I to have eternal life. Can there be a greater contrast than that? Sinless perfection died so that sinful men and women could live. There really is no greater love displayed than that.

As you remember the cross and the great sacrifice made for you, I want to remind you of this old song.

“I will cherish the old rugged cross.

Till my trophies at last I lay down

I will cling to the old rugged cross

And exchange it one day for a crown.”

When it is all said and done, that will be the last contrast and exchange. The cross of Jesus for the crown of eternal life. My prayer today is that we who carry this message would represent it well and share it with those around us. Let us be true ambassadors and bring the hope of Jesus to a dying world who needs to hear it more than ever.

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*Write Down a Quick Prayer, Thanking
God for the Contrasts of the Cross*

