

Signs of Salvation

Introduction

It is not surprising that the Old Testament is full of signs and images of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Bible is very clear that the events of that first Easter didn't take God by surprise, or off guard, but rather they had been planned even before the world was made. See Ephesians 1:4-11 The cross, not an event in history but the event of all history, was always on God's mind. No wonder we see glimpses of it on almost every page, even thousands of years before it actually happened.



Plan for the week:

1. The beginnings
2. The son that didn't die
3. The one who saved the world
4. The never ending sacrifices
5. The father speaks of his son
6. Sat down at last
7. Life out of death

Take time each day to read the bible verses suggested, and ask yourself what God is saying to you and what he asking you to do about it. As we travel towards Easter let's allow God's voice to speak to us.

Day 1: The beginnings

Key Verse of the Day: Genesis 3:15 (NIV)

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Longer readings for further study: Colossians 2:6-15, Genesis 3.

To think about:

In the very verses that first explain to us the mess we are in, the Bible reveals that there is already a plan to rescue us. Genesis 3 is a pretty sobering chapter as humanity turns its back on God and falls with a great crash. Yet don't miss the hope already tucked away in these verses. 3:15 shows us simply that one day Satan and his legacy of sin and corruption will be finally put to death. Colossians 2:15 clearly reminds of this. Even from the beginning the rescue plan is mentioned, even from the beginning God's victory is certain.

There is another point to consider though from Genesis 3. Amongst the sadness and rebellion, God's kindness still shines through. We read he covers their nakedness and deals with their shame. Genesis 3:21 *The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.* Even from the first great rebellion of humanity God showed incomparable kindness to those he loved. What a God we have.

Application: God's kindness is something we often overlook. Sit and make a list of the many acts of kindness God has shown you this week. If you are struggling to get more than 10, phone a friend and ask them to share some of theirs. Consider how you can be like God in the kindness stakes this Easter. Who could you show kindness to this week? Where could you be a blessing to someone else?

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Day Two: The son that didn't die.

Key Verse of the Day: Genesis 12:1 (NIV)

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Longer readings for further study: Genesis 22 v1-29

To think about:

People try to find favour by their own efforts (their own sacrifice) but that isn't what God is looking for; the message of Abraham is that *you can* find favour with God. God provided His own sacrifice. Jesus sealed the new covenant, once and for all, with His own blood.

This is the heart of Easter. Jesus has made it possible for us to be in God's presence because He loves us, unconditionally.

So, then; we ask.... *what does* God require of us?

Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and 'Love your neighbour as yourself. Matt 22:37-40

Application: What do you need to do to leave behind distractions of this world and enter fully into "the new land"?

Does something hold you back? A fear; a desire; a false belief about yourself; about other people; or about God?

Are you willing to sacrifice, to leave behind those things in your life that you put before God ?

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Day 3: The One that saves the world.

Key Verse of the Day: Genesis Ch37:19

“Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. 20 “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

Longer readings for further study: Genesis Ch37 & Ch39-50 (The whole story of Joseph)

To think about:

Throughout Josephs life he has been thrown many curve balls. He was bullied by his brothers, sold in to slavery, and accused of and jailed for something he didn’t do. However, without being sold in to slavery he wouldn’t have “risen” and become Pharaohs right hand man.

Imagine you were one of the disciples at the foot of the actual cross on Good Friday. You’ve just bean dealt the curviest ball of all – your saviour is hanging on a cross, dead. Thankfully, just as He did with Joseph, God had a plan – that Jesus would rise on the third day, conquering sin and death once and for all. Ironically Jesus had told His disciples he would rise again (John 2:18-19) but they failed to understand His authority over everything, even death.

How much are we like those disciples? The bible is full of Gods promises to us, of provision, blessings and beyond, yet we don’t see, or forget when times get tough. If Gods plan for Jesus included raising His son from the Dead, and considering we are all sons and daughters on God too, just imagine how much he can and will do for you. After all He has promised us so much already, and proven his provision time and time again.

Application: Spend some time concentrating on the promise of the cross. The promise of new life and of Gods all knowing plans. Thank the Lord this Easter for his promises, and that He will come through for us, in His timing and perfect plan.

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Day 4: The never ending sacrifice.

Key Verse of the Day: Leviticus 8:34 (NIV) Phillipians 2:6-8(NIV)

Longer readings for further study: Leviticus 8 (Full Chapter) Phillipians 2:1-11

To think about:

Sacrifice lies at the heart of the Old Testament because it would lie at the heart of the New Testament. At the very centre of their lives was the sacrificial system – God’s provision for dealing with their sin. Today’s verses mainly talk about the offerings needed to make atonement which mentions 3 areas; Sin offering, Burnt offering & an offering for the Ordination. Blood being shed is an important part of this which leads us to Jesus, the never ending sacrifice dying on the cross for the sins of the whole world and for the forgiveness of sins. In Phillipians 2:6-8 we read Jesus became obedient to death and as a servant (as were Moses, Aaron and his sons),. The difference we see in Jesus (God in the flesh) was the offering of atonement by his blood being shed is the ultimate sacrifice forever, one that only God can do.

Application: Really reflect on these words:

1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Memorise them, turn them into a piece of artwork, write them up on paper and put them on the wall. Really chew these words over and ask God to make you aware of his blood which makes you new and free.

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Day 5: The Father speaks of the Son.

Key Verse of the Day: *Isaiah 53:1-12*

- 1 *Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*
- 2 *He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*
- 3 *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
- 4 *Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*
- 5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*
- 6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- 7 *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*
- 8 *By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.*
- 9 *He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*
- 10 *Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.*
- 11 *After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*
- 12 *Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

To think about:

God the Father is talking to Isaiah here about his Son. These words are so rich in love, truth and outline God's big rescue plan. Today find as many different ways to experience these words....

- ❖ Read these verses in different bible translations. You version app or www.biblegateway.com makes this easy. Check out the NLT, The Message for example.
- ❖ Write these words in your way. Paraphrase and personalise what you read.
- ❖ Create something inspired by these words- Art, poetry, write a song.
- ❖ Share these verses as a family and ask each other which verse really speaks to you.
- ❖ Read through the passage drawing what happens to Jesus. Do so with compassion and sorrow. Jesus suffered for us. Spend some time looking at the picture you have drawn and praying.

And don't forget to ask What is God saying to you and What are you going to do about it?

Day 6: And he sits down.

Key Verse of the Day: Hebrews 10:11-12 (NIV)

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Longer readings for further study: Leviticus 1

To think about:

A priest's work was extremely hard and demanding. Imagine helping with sacrifices all day long. And you never stopped. As soon as one worshipper had finished another was waiting. It was your job to keep the fire burning, to dispose of the animal carcasses, to handle the blood and guts all day long. It was unbelievably hard work. How much fun can it be dealing with people's sin all day long?

How every priest must have longed for a break, to wash their hands and clean their clothes. How they must have longed to sit down. They believed in the sacrifice. They believed in the power of the blood. But they must have longed for a different way, "Will this work ever end? Could there just be one sacrifice?"

Each day the priests would work from early morning going through the five sacrifices of the first chapters of Leviticus. Then at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Jewish tradition says that the priest would come to the front of the altar and exhaustedly cry out: "It is finished!" But it wasn't finished. He knew that as the sun rose the next day he would be back to repeat it all again. So the longing grew for a sacrifice that would end all sacrifices, for a perfect life, a perfect death. Could they have imagined that one day at 3 o'clock in the afternoon an exhausted cry would ring out from a criminal's cross "It is finished!"

Application: God's victory is for all time and is for all of humanity. Spend time praying 'it is finished' over all the areas that need to know God's victory. If you are able spend some time prayer walking your neighbour calling for God's victory to reign in your street, pray for your family and friends. Pray for our world and for God's victorious kingdom to reign.

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Day 7: Life out of death.

Key Verse of the Day: Luke 24:44-47 (NIV)

*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*

Longer readings for further study: Luke 24

To think about:

After Jesus' resurrection, which we are celebrating today, we are told how Jesus spent his time showing the disciples how the whole of the Old Testament spoke about him. Our verses today see Jesus talking with those travelling from Jerusalem to their home. Jesus comes and opens their eyes to all that has been written about him. Can you imagine the wonder and awe they felt when this happened! As we have seen this week the whole of history and scripture speak of God's great rescue plan. Every story of grace, kindness and restoration whisper his name.

Application: How does your life whisper his name? Your story is a testament of his grace, kindness, salvation and restoration. Spend time in worship of what God has done for you. Also consider how you can share your story with someone else this week. Your life whispers his name. Who are you going to share it with this week?

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.