"SOMETHING TOO HARD TO IMAGINE"

Matthew 17:22-27

7-15-2018

INTRODUCTION:

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***Observe two totally incredible, yet unselfish, amazing acts of Christ!**

For the disciples. . .

I. It was hard to imagine that
the LORD would have to <u>DIE</u> --- But He did! (v. 22-23)
(He gave His life <u>to save others</u>)

II. It was hard to imagine that
the LORD would have to <u>pay TAXES</u> --- But He did! (v. 24-27)
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I. It was hard to imagine that the LORD would have to DIE --- But He did! (v. 22-23)
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V. 22

"The Son of man" - a common title Christ used of Himself to point to His Messiahship (Dan. 7:13) and His humility [points to the incarnation of Christ and His partaking of human "flesh and blood" (Heb. 2:14) so that He could die].

"Betrayed" = By Judas Iscariot with a kiss (Mt. 26:48-50).

V. 23

This is the third time Jesus mentioned His suffering, death, and resurrection (cp. Mt. 16:21, 17:12); and still it didn't "sink in" (Lk. 9:44).

"They shall kill Him" = His death, however, was no accident; it was prophesied in the O.T. (Dan. 9:26; Is. 53). A life voluntarily given by Christ (Jn. 10:18 - *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."*) by the will of the Father (Jn. 19:10-11 - *"Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have not power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.")* to be substitute payment for the sins of the world.

"Exceeding sorry" = to be so grieved that you are in pain; in agony over it. They were in deep distress.

Why were the disciples "***sorry***" when Christ just said, *"The third day He shall be raised again"*?

The concept of the Messiah suffering and dying was (in their minds) absurd, impossible, "out of the question" (Luke 9:44-45 - *"Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying."*)

They then were so hung up and pre-occupied with Christ telling them that He was going to die that His statement about His resurrection went in one ear and out of the other. His statement went right over their heads (Mk. 9:32 - *"But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him")*

The idea of a literal, physical resurrection of Messiah was foreign to their idea of things.

Perhaps the disciples "may have taken Jesus' reference to *"the third day"* as merely figurative" (MacArthur, p. 85) and not literal. Always take everything God says literally unless there is a compelling contextual or theological reason to take it otherwise.

Why was it necessary that Christ die? And why die by crucifixion?

Could not God devise another plan to rescue lost sinners? Why death? Why the Cross?

> A very good question has been asked by many:
> Why is the way to God exclusively through Jesus Christ? Why is Christ's Work on the Cross the only way to our attaining forgiveness of sins and eternal life?
>
> Wouldn't it make more sense to have some other way of forgiveness and redemption? Couldn't God have devised another means of Salvation? Couldn't there be an easier way? A less offensive way?

It must be noted that the Cross has always been a subject of attack. The Apostle Paul dealt with this issue back in ancient Corinth when he wrote to the Corinthians:
For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. *- 1 Corinthians 1:18*

- ***Christ's payment for sin at the Cross is the only payment God accepts.***

Why is the Cross the only way? Why is Jesus the only way to Heaven?

First a preliminary thought:
Because God is God, and Heaven is His Heaven, He deserves the right to determine the means by which anyone enters His Heaven! If He requires Faith in His Son, He has the right to do so.
(Illustration: Disney Land reserves the right to determine the means by which anyone enters their theme park)

In order for Salvation to be made possible, the following had to be accomplished:

1. Sin had to be paid for
2. Forgiveness had to be granted
3. Righteousness had to be imputed

1. God's <u>nature</u> demands a salvation plan which would be <u>consistent</u> with <u>His character</u>.

Whatever plan of salvation God designed would have to be in line with His character and nature. In other words, since He is holy, His plan of salvation would have to be holy; Because He is just, His means of salvation would also have to be just As Paul writes in Romans 3:26, God is both "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"

Since God is loving, His plan must be loving; Since God is wise His plan must be in agreement with His wisdom.

We have every right to expect that God would work in conjunction with His truthfulness and faithfulness. Anything otherwise would be out of His character. He must function in harmony with His divine attributes.

God's righteousness required our salvation
God's sovereignty planned our salvation
God's love was the motivation for Him to save mankind
God's grace provided our salvation
God's truthfulness provided our salvation
God in faithfulness applied and secures our salvation

2. God's <u>justice</u> demands that <u>sin be paid for</u>.

You see, God is righteous. Being righteous, He cannot ignore, deny or excuse our sin. He can't "sweep sin under the carpet" and pretend that it never happened. No, sin must be paid for.
Ezekiel 18:20 - The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

If a judge was to acquit a proven guilty man, that judge should go to jail. He would be guilty of a crime himself, if he was to let a murderer go free, a rapist to go unpunished, a robber to go without paying for the crime. So it is with a just God. He must deal with sin. It would go against his justice to simply say, "Oh it's OK, my love forgives you" No, my friend. God forgives you because He Himself bore the penalty of your sin.

The concept of substitution is taught from Genesis to Revelation.
1 Peter 3:18
For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Someone said to D. L. Moody, "I don't understand how a God of love could send anyone to hell." Moody replied: "I don't understand how a God of justice could allow anyone into heaven."

3. Sin's infinite <u>price</u> demands an <u>infinite payment</u>.

Sin must be infinitely more wicked than we can imagine, if God will really condemn people forever for having committed it.

A big price, demands a big payment. Christ being God can pay that infinite price.

2 Corinthians 1:9-10
But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

"That we should not trust in ourselves" –

"But in God" – self-trust is abandoned for divine trust. Depend on Him; rely upon Him!

> Which God do we trust? The only God. The God who has power over <u>death</u>. Nothing is more seemingly impossible than raising the dead back to life. God…**"which raiseth the dead."**

4. God's <u>holiness</u> demands a <u>perfect sacrifice for sin</u>. (Hebrews 9-10)

The Fundamental attribute of God is His Holiness.

God is called the "Holy One" (Hos.11:9) and the "Holy One of Israel" (Is.41:14,16,20)

Holiness is an attribute that God has to an infinite degree above and beyond anything or anyone in creation.
"*There is none holy as the LORD*" (I Sam.2:2)
"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy" (Rev.15:4)

God's holiness is manifest in two ways:

1) Majestic <u>Transcendence</u> - God is set apart from all that is created (Is. 57:15)

2) Moral <u>Purity</u> - God is set apart from all that is unclean (Hab.1:13; I Peter 1:13-16)

Christ's perfect sacrifice is illustrated in the animal sacrificial system of the innocent dying for the guilty.

Hebrews 10:10,14 - **By the which will we are sanctified (made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all…For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (made holy).**

5. God's <u>Son</u> is the only one who could <u>qualify to pay</u> sin's penalty.

Jesus qualifies because of both who He is and what He had done (including the prophesies He alone fulfilled).

He is qualified to be Savior because He is in nature both Holy God and perfect man;

He is the only one to be virgin born and thereby avoid the sin nature passed on from Adam;

He is the only one to live a perfect life without sin.

Christ had to die on the Cross.

To fulfill God's predictive prophecies

- In types and foreshadowings:
  (The sacrificial system; the offering up of Isaac)
- In prophetic utterances: (Ps. 22; Is. 53)

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
Hebrews 2:14 ¶ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Christ had to die on the Cross.

To fulfill God's requirements:

- The killing of an innocent lamb
- The shedding of pure blood

To reconcile man to God, Jesus must be a <u>mediator</u>, who <u>bears the nature of both</u> of the parties that He is reconciling. He is the God-man. The Theanthropic person. He had the nature of both God and man, and therefore is the only one who qualifies to form the bridge between God and man.

6. God's <u>glory</u> demands a salvation plan which would give Him the <u>highest credit, honor, and praise</u>.

Isaiah 42:8
I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isaiah 43:10-11
Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beside me *there is* no saviour.

God's plan of salvation will end up giving Him all of the glory. Man will have nothing to boast of. By Grace for God's glory.

Ephesians 2:9 **Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

So could there have been another way? Not if the above conditions had to be met! Jesus Christ is the only one who could qualify to be Savior. He is. Trust Him alone today!

It is not stunning that Jesus is the only way but rather that any way to God exists.
(**Boyet Olave)**

In light of man's sinfulness and rebellion against God, the greatest wonder is that God would condescend to save us in any way.

> *Romans 1:16*
> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Why the Cross?

It's message is simple enough for all to understand.
2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Trust Christ alone!
Acts 4:12
Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

II. It was hard to imagine that
the LORD would have to <u>pay TAXES</u> --- But He did! (v. 24-27)
(He paid taxes <u>to not offend others</u>)

V. 24
"Doth not your master pay tribute?" = This question seems to be aimed at discrediting Christ. To have something to accuse Him of.

People are always quick to discredit Christ and Christians. We must, therefore, live above reproach.

"Tribute" = *didrachmas*, meaning "double drachma"

Two drachmas were collected each year to support the Temple (This "amounted to about two days' wages for the average worker" (MacArthur p. 86).

To maintain the upkeep, beauty, and practical function of the Tabernacle, then the Temple, a tax was levied.

This tax had its origin in the days of Moses (Exod. 30:13-14) and was carried out throughout the Old Testament (II Ki. 12:4; II Chron. 24:6; Neh. 10:32).

"Capernaum" - This temple tax was to be collected before Passover, so the Jerusalem Temple "IRS" sent tax collectors throughout Palestine to seek the 1/2 shekel tax.

It is interesting that this miracle is only recorded in <u>Matthew's</u> gospel and it is the only miracle involving <u>money</u>.

"Since Matthew had been a tax collector, we would expect him to be interested in this miracle" (Wiersbe, p. 63).

V. 25

Peter, quick to defend the Lord he loved, ***"saith, <u>Yes</u>" -*** Peter knew it was right for all citizens to submit to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1ff).

"***Jesus prevented him" -*** Before Peter could even ask the question, the all-knowing Lord Jesus (knowing what was on Peter's mind) anticipates his perplexion and gives him an answer.

Jesus in effect asks this: Who do the Romans collect tolls (***"custom")*** or taxes (***"tribute"***) from? Do they take these tolls and taxes from their own children (their own offspring) or from strangers (common citizens)?

(ILLUS: How in some states in America, state troopers are more quick to pull over and ticket out-of-state speeders than speeders from their own state)

"It would not make sense for a father to collect money from his sons (*"children")* who were dependent on him. To assess them would be to assess himself. In this context, *"strangers"* is a general term referring to those outside the king's family, specifically his subjects. . . (but) in the human governments of that day, the rulers' families (represented by *"the sons"*) were exempt from taxation" (MacArthur, p. 88).

<u>Roman tolls and taxes Jewish temple tax</u>
V. 25-26 V. 24, 27

Must be paid by everyone Must be paid by all Jews
(all *"strangers"*) except members of the royal the king's children family

V. 26

"Then are the children free" - Children of the kingdom in power would be free from such tolls and taxes. Whereas those outside of the royal family would have to "foot the bill" and shell out to the reigning Empire.

One implied point is this: Jesus is saying, "Do you know why we should pay taxes? Because we are foreigners in this strange land, pilgrims, sojourners, aliens. We are not children of this world (Jn. 15:19; 17:14, 16).

Jesus, being the God of the Temple, actually did not have to pay the tax.

V. 27

Jesus, being the Son of God, was not personally obligated to pay for the support of

His own temple, yet to avoid offense, He did pay (Ryrie footnote).

"Offend" - anything that is a roadblock or a hindrance to others (coming to Christ).

If Jesus had refused to pay the temple tax, the tax gatherers may have thought He was rebellious or lawless, living in violation of the Law of Moses. Reason: They didn't realize who He was. He was Lord of the Temple.

"Regardless of how unjust a tax is assessed or how blasphemously or irresponsibly it is spend, it is to be paid. If the Son of God claimed no exemption for Himself in paying taxes to the *"den of thieves"* run by the wicked false teachers and leaders of Israel, how much less can His followers claim exemption for themselves" (MacArthur, p. 88).

"Lest we should offend them" - Jesus did not want those temple tax gatherers to have a reason to not listen to and believe in Him, so He did that which He was not obligated to do so as to avoid turning them off.

May we, too, never use our Christian liberty in such a way that it would cause a weaker Christian or a non-believer to stumble. (Jesus is serious, about not offending those who belong to Him - Mt. 18:5-7; cp. Rom. 14:13-16).

"The sea" - the Sea of Galilee

Cast a hook" - the most common form of fishing in Jesus day was to cast a "*net*" Jesus, however, is zeroing in on one particular fish. His omniscient mind and all-seeing eye knows of a fish swimming around with a coin in its mouth.

Jesus, being the Lord of earth, not only exercised dominion over the fish, "but also over the animals (Mt. 21:1-7) and the birds (Mt. 26:34, 74-75). (Wiersbe, p. 63).

"When we consider the complexity of this miracle, it amazes us.

1. First, someone had to lose a coin in the water.
2. Then, a fish had to take that coin in its mouth and retain it.
3. That same fish then had to bite on Peter's hook--with an impediment in its mouth--and be caught" (Wiersbe, p. 63)
4. Then the exact amount needed to pay the tax would be discovered (not a penny less or more)

"A piece of money" - a *stater* (another word for a sheckel). What is amazing is that Jesus and Peter needed a combined total of 4 *drachmas*. The silver coin found in the fish equals exactly 4 drachmas.

I have found a lot of things inside fishes' stomachs, but I have never found something to pay my taxes. What a miracle!

You can't explain away this miracle as an accident, or as a "freak of nature." It was too coincidental to be accidental!

In our lives the Lord Jesus still is able to glorify Himself by coming through (in response to prayer) to give His children exactly what they need, precisely when they need it, in just the right manner!

Trust Him!

"And thee" - This is one of many miracles that Jesus performed for Peter. He healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mk. 1:29-34), helped Peter to catch fish (Lk. 5:1-11), enabled him to walk on water (Mt. 14:22-23), healed Malchus' ear after Peter chopped it off (Mt. 26:47-56), and delivered Peter from prison (Acts 12:1ff). (Wiersbe, p. 64).

No wonder Peter wrote: *"Casting all your care up on Him, for He cares for you."* (I Pet. 5:7).

This is "the only miracle which does not have the results recorded. We would expect another verse that would read: 'And Peter went to the sea, cast in a hood, and drew up a fish; and when he had opened its mouth, he found there a coin, and used it to pay the temple tax for himself and for Jesus.' But Matthew 17:28 is not there. Then, how do we know that the miracle took place? Because Jesus said it would! *'There hath not one word failed of all His good promise'."* (I Kings 8:56). (Wiersbe, p. 64)

CONCLUSION:

The fact that the LORD of the universe was willing to die and pay taxes shows two key features about Jesus. What are those attributes?

1. HUMILITY !

   What a humble Savior!
   Hymn: "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, no not one, no not one!"

2. GRACE !

   He paid taxes so as to not drive anyone away from Himself unnecessarily
   He died to rescue us from perishing in Hell