

# Easter Shows Us That God Is in Control

## Palm Sunday

### By Phil Brainerd

#### Introduction

I recently ran into an article from the British Broadcasting Corporation. The article asks the question, “Why is Good Friday called Good Friday?” The article starts by saying this:

According to the Bible, the son of God was flogged, ordered to carry the cross on which he would be crucified and then put to death. It's difficult to see what is "good" about it.

What's so “good” about Good Friday? Well, that's a good question. Today, we'll find out. On Palm Sunday, we started a three-part series: “Easter Shows Us That God Is in Control”. The world sure feels like it's out of control sometimes. So, it's good to know that no matter what things look like, God is in control. In the first article, we talked about Palm Sunday. In this article, we're going to see how the events of the Good Friday fit in.

As we examine God's Word together, two things will stand out. **First**, just like on Palm Sunday, prophecy is one of the things that shows God's control over the universe. Many of the events on Good Friday were predicted in the Old Testament. **Second**, when we started our series, we mentioned how good it is to know that God is good. What if God is in total control, but he's bad? He could mistreat people all the time, and no one could do anything about it. However, God is good. Good Friday is one of the days that show us just how good he is.

We'll spend most of our time looking at a very important portion of Scripture: Psalm 22. We've said on several occasions that the book of Psalms was the hymnal for ancient Israel. It contained many of the songs that believers sang when they worshipped. So, many people in Israel were very familiar with the words to that Psalm.

Let's read:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?  
2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,  
and by night, but I find no rest.

(Psalm 22:1-2)

Why do those words sound so familiar? Those words were spoken by Jesus Christ while he was hanging on the cross.

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). (Matthew 27:45-46)

Psalms 22 was written by the Hebrew King, David. David lived about a thousand years B.C. He wrote things that would occur centuries later during the life (and death) of Jesus. That’s amazing!

If this was the only thing he wrote that was fulfilled centuries later, it wouldn’t matter that much - It could be a one-off coincidence. But we’ll see today that there is much more.

In what we just read, we see our first view of God’s sovereign control of his universe. As we said though, this also shows us the goodness of God. If we look, we see something about Jesus Christ. We also see something about God the Father.

Jesus had a number of things that he wanted to accomplish while he visited the earth. One of those things was to live as other humans, experiencing all the pain and temptation that humans face. That allows him to truly understand us. He’s been through all the things that we go through.

But he was not only to live a life. He was to live a perfect life - A life free from sin and disobedience to God - A life led by faith in God the Father. This allowed Jesus, the Son, to qualify as the perfect, spotless Lamb of God, who would die for the sins of the world.

To do all these things, Jesus did something that’s very difficult for humans to understand. He was fully God, but he let go of some of his abilities as God. How did he do that? Did God, who walked the face of the earth, become something less than God?

No. Here’s what he did. Imagine that you’re walking along, and you need some information. Today, lots of people have cell phones. You can whip out your cell phone and type some words into a search engine like Google (or speak if you have a really good phone). Then, click on the “search” button, and Viola! Your answer comes back in an instant.

Now imagine that you had to live someplace where no one has a cell phone or a computer. If you want to be like everyone else, you could choose to turn off your phone.

Jesus did something like that. As God, he has access to all the knowledge of the universe. But, he had to live like the rest of us. So, he let go of **access** to his infinite knowledge, and some other things. He, so to speak, turned off the cell phone. We don’t have time to go there, but the Apostle Paul talks about this in Philippians 2.

Now, back to the story. Jesus has succeeded. He lived a perfect life. He qualified as the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. Now, he’s ready to die on a cross for the sins of the world. Next,

something happens that is also very difficult for us as humans to understand. Jesus had all the sins of the world poured out on him.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (I Peter 2:24)

So, Jesus bore our sins on the cross. This creates a big problem for Jesus and for the Father. God is Holy - He can't tolerate sin.

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; (Habakkuk 1:13)

So, God the Father is looking down from Heaven. He sees his Son in agony there on the cross. However, he knows that something has to happen that is absolutely essential for humanity. Humanity cannot be saved from their sins unless the Son carries their sins. The physical pain of the cross was bad enough, but bearing the sins of the world was much, much worse.

So, for just an instant, the God the Father, who deeply loves his Son, had to turn away. In the infinity of God, we don't know exactly what happened, but the closest human experience we have is turning away.

Jesus has let go of the ability to know all things in the universe. He's left in a state where it **feels** like his Father has forsaken him. So, Jesus is emotionally torn. He knows his Father is good. He knows his Father loves him. But at the moment, there is not a single bit of earthly evidence for those things. What does he do? He could cheat and turn on the cell phone. But that would be a terrible thing. That would disqualify him from his mission.

So, here's what he does: First, he asks a question: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Because God is gracious, he allows people to ask questions. Asking a question is not necessarily bad faith, as long as you're sincerely looking for an answer.

Recall, this was all predicted, so let's go back to Psalm 22.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?  
2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,  
and by night, but I find no rest.

(Psalm 22:1-2)

Now, let's read what comes next.

3 Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.  
4 In you our fathers trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.

5 To you they cried and were rescued;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

(vs 3-5)

When King David wrote this, he looked a thousand years into the future and saw a man experiencing something horrifying. However, he also saw a man of faith. The man whom David saw looked to the history of Israel. He saw legions of men and women who trusted in God. When he did that, the man whom David saw found faith to persevere.

Jesus saw something that made no sense. So, he asked God to help him to find the answer - And he got it. Once he saw that, he did something. Let's read about it:

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)

Look at that: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When things could look no darker. When there was no evidence of God's goodness or his love. God reminded Jesus that everything was under control. With this, Jesus, the man who had lived a perfect life up to that point, found the strength to face the greatest enemy of mankind: Death.

So, we see here not only the power of God. We see not only that God had everything under control. We see the character of God. God the Father loved us so much that he allowed his precious Son to offer himself on the cross to carry away our sins. Jesus loved us so much that he endured unthinkable pain so that he could complete his mission.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Part of what motivated Jesus was seeing the oceans of people who would somebody be saved by his efforts. That brought him joy. And that joy helped to carry him through.

Now, some might say, "That's a nice story. But you know, we hear lots of stories. We read books. Friends send links to stories on the Internet. We watch movies on the TV."

That's why it's so important to know that this is not just one more story. God gives us evidence. Evidence that his story is unique. Evidence that his story is true.

Let's read some more of Psalm 22.

14 I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;  
15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.  
(Psalm 22:14-15)

The things that David wrote look like what would happen if a man was crucified. When David wrote Psalm 22, he saw a man who was drying out. Jesus was crucified in the afternoon on a dry day in the Middle East. Between the sun beating on him and the blood draining from his body, Jesus could feel the life leaving him. The Psalm talks about a man whose bones are out of joint. A few years ago, a writer names Lee Strobel wrote a book called "The Case for Christ." In one section, he teamed up with Dr. Alexander Metherell to find out what would happen to a human body if it was nailed to a cross. The weight would become too much to bear over time. The muscles would wear out, and eventually the bones in the arm would be pulled out of the shoulder. As dehydration continued, any blood that was not drained from the body would thicken. Eventually, the heart could pump no longer. The victim would then die of a heart attack. All along the way the victim would become more and more exhausted. You can imagine how dry someone's mouth would become through all this.

Again, if the psalm stopped there, you could say that the evidence is growing, but this could still be coincidence.

So, David writes more:

16 For dogs encompass me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me;  
they have pierced my hands and feet—  
17 I can count all my bones—  
they stare and gloat over me;  
18 they divide my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.  
(Psalm 22:16-18)

David sees a man who is surrounded by evil people. That was certainly true at the crucifixion. The Roman soldiers beat Jesus mercilessly. They made a crown of thorns that they made Jesus wear. All of this was totally pointless. It was just a group of horrible bullies beating a defenseless prisoner.

Now, look at this: "...they have pierced my hands and feet..." (v 16(b)). That is exactly what happens during a crucifixion.

This is important. Remember, David is writing a thousand years before the time of Christ. It turns out that crucifixion was not invented at that time. It wasn't invented until the time of the Romans, eight hundred years later. So, David is writing about a man whose hands and feet are pierced centuries before someone would die that way. That's amazing.

As if all this wasn't enough, here's one more thing: "...they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." (v 18). There was a practice among Roman soldiers who served on execution duty. Any belongings of the prisoner carried became theirs. That included clothing. But there was something unusual about the clothing that Jesus wore. Let's read about it:

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." (John 19:23-24)

A man named David wrote a psalm a thousand years before the time of Christ. If any one of the things he wrote about happened alone, you could say it was coincidence. But put together, these things add up to something far more than mere coincidence.

As we read, we're seeing the power of God. Yes, God shows us that he is very much in control. He did so at a time when there was no evidence that he was in control.

And God shows us his character. Our Lord Jesus Christ experienced pain and suffering far beyond what any of us could even imagine. His pain was so great, that English-speaking people invented a word for it: "Excruciating." That word actually means, "From the cross." It means that someone is feeling pain so great that it's pushing the limits of what humans can bear. Jesus did more. He felt more pain than any human can imagine.

How did he do it? He did it with God's help. And he was motivated by love. He did it out of love for you and me.

Let's pull this all together.

## Conclusion

How do we respond to all this? Sometimes the world feels like it's out of control. It seems like nothing could get worse. What do we do?

We can try to hide. We can live a life of fear. Or, we can do what Jesus did. When nothing seemed to make sense, he placed his spirit into the hands of his Father. We can do that, too.

God has shown us through the events of Good Friday that he is very much in control. And God has shown us his character. He loves us. God the Father and God the Son have both shown what they are willing give so that we might be saved from our sins.

What's good about Good Friday? For Jesus and the father, there was very little. There was pain and suffering on all levels. But because of that pain and suffering, God can offer us eternal life.

Accept his offer. Contact to us. Let us tell you how to accept the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Let us tell you how you can live with the assurance that God is in control both now and for all eternity. There is important information at the end of this article

If you've already done this, if you've accepted the free gift that God offers, take some time to reflect on what God has done for us. Then, place your spirit into his loving and almighty hands. Commit your spirit and your life to him.

And of course, watch for the final article, when we'll more about how Easter shows Us that God Is in Control.

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Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church  
[www.TrinityTeaneck.org](http://www.TrinityTeaneck.org)

Phil's Site  
[PhilBrainerd.com](http://PhilBrainerd.com)

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:  
[PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net)