

The Glory of Easter

When a person has incredible ability or talent we often say that He or she was born to do such and such a thing. Michael Jordan was born to play basketball. Lionel Messi was born to play soccer. Simone Biles was born to be a gymnast. Luciano Pavarotti was born to sing. During their lifetimes they were regarded as among the greatest in their calling. They achieved fame and wealth.

Jesus was born to die.

He was not born to be an example or to show us how to live. He was born to be our Life. He was born to be crucified. In our place. For us.

The manger led directly to the cross. The more common name for manger was "feeding trough". His parents probably lined the trough with hay upon which clothes were laid so the hay would not hurt the baby. There was no comfort on the cross.

Jesus came in weakness and died in weakness. He was born in humble surroundings and died in shame. As a newborn babe he was surrounded by rejoicing angels, loving parents, worshipful wise men and joyful shepherds. Only a very small group were present at His birth, but crowds passed by the cross. On the cross, except for His mother, John and the two Marys, he was surrounded by cruel detractors, envious enemies, callous soldiers and disgusted passers-by.

He endured the shame of being regarded as a bastard in his youth and as a blasphemer in adulthood. He was slandered and plotted against. His own brothers mocked him. The people in high society were jealous of him and plotted to bring about his death. A man He loved betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. His best friends abandoned him on the night of his illegal arrest. He was tried before several kangaroo courts and was adjudged innocent, but still they crucified Him. He was crucified for admitting that He was the Son of God whom His detractors awaited. No one ever convicted Him of any wrongdoing. He was convicted solely for being Himself. The Roman official who sentenced him to crucifixion publicly acknowledged that He was innocent. The crowd preferred the release of a coarse murderer to Jesus. His crime was living the perfect life that we do not live. His punishment was to die the death we all should die but for which He substituted Himself. As the prophet Isaiah said: "He was pierced

for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities." (Isaiah 53:5) His death means eternal life for us. His condemnation is our justification. His shame is our glory. His resurrection is the sole and efficient basis of our own resurrection.

God's wrath was poured out on Jesus so that He could pour out His love and mercy on us. On the cross Jesus cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is the only time in the gospels that Jesus did not refer to God as "Father". Why? Because on the cross He was our substitute, our lamb of sacrifice, our representative. Because of our sins we do not have the right to call God Father. Therefore, Jesus, standing in our place, had no right to call God Father. But in dying Jesus gave us the right to call God our Father, "to become children of God." Because of His death and resurrection we can now come boldly before the throne of grace in His holy name. God's only Begotten Son was treated as though He was not the Son in order that we could be adopted as sons and daughters. Hallelujah!

He is risen!