MINISTÈRE DU PASTEUR CLÉMENT SALOMON · BIBLE STUDY #24

The Cross and the Empty Tomb: Why Jesus Died and Rose

If God is fair, how can He forgive people like us? The answer is a hill outside Jerusalem — and a grave that was found empty.

"Pastor, you don't know what I did. A fair God can't just say, 'Forget it.'"

Roland is forty-one. He drives a delivery truck in Boston. He is strong, he works hard, and he does not cry easily. But that night, after the Bible study, he stayed in his seat while everyone else went home.

"You talk about forgiveness," he said. "But I know myself. Things I did when I was young. Things I did last year. If God is really fair, somebody has to pay."

The pastor did not argue. He sat down next to him and said, "You're right, Roland. A fair God can't just say 'forget it.' Somebody has to pay."

Roland looked up, surprised. Then, very slowly, he told a story he had never told anyone.

When he was fourteen, in Les Cayes, he was playing football in the market with his friends. He kicked the ball hard — too hard. It flew straight into Madan Jozèf's table. Plates, glasses, cups — everything she had to sell crashed to the ground.

Roland ran. He hid all afternoon. That night he waited for his father, Papa Sérafin, to beat him. But his father only looked at him for a long time and said, "Next time, look where you're kicking." That was all.

Twenty years later, at his father's funeral, an old woman took Roland's hand. It was Madan Jozèf. "Your father paid for every plate," she whispered. "He worked two months of Saturdays to pay me. And he told me, 'Don't tell the boy. I don't want him to carry it.'"

Roland's voice broke. "I never even knew."

Hold on to that story. Because what happened in that market in Les Cayes is a small picture of the biggest thing that has ever happened in the universe.

Can't God just say, "Forget it"?

Many people think forgiveness is easy for God. He is big, He is kind — why not just wipe everything away?

But think about it. If a judge let every thief and every abuser go free and said, "Forget it," would you call him kind? No. You would call him unfair. In our last study we saw that God is a God of justice — "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the Bible is honest about us:

> *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*
>
> **Romans 3:23 (KJV)**

All. Not only the "bad people." Roland. You. Me. And sin is not a small thing. It breaks things — hearts, families, trust, lives. Like plates on a market floor, it cannot just be put back on the table. The Bible says where it leads:

> *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*
>
> **Romans 6:23 (KJV)**

So here is the problem: God is fair, and God loves us. How can He be both? **Somebody has to pay for the plates.**

The One who took our place

About seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah saw Someone who would carry what was not His:

> *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like*

> *sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."*
>
> **Isaiah 53:5-6 (KJV)**

Read it slowly. *Our* transgressions. *Our* iniquities. *Our* peace. And it all falls on *Him*.

That is exactly what happened at the cross. Jesus lived a perfect life — the life we could not live. He never sinned once. And then He took our place:

> *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:21 (KJV)**

Do you see the exchange? He takes our sin. We receive His goodness. It is like Papa Sérafin taking the debt of the broken plates — and the boy walking home free.

Peter, who ran away the night Jesus was arrested, later wrote it this way: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

Why would He do that?

Some people imagine an angry Father in heaven and a kind Son who had to calm Him down. That is not what the Bible says. Look at the most famous verse in the world:

> *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*
>
> **John 3:16 (KJV)**

The cross was not the Father's anger against the Son. It was the Father and the Son — together, with the Holy Spirit — paying the price of love. And notice *when* He did it:

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*
>
> **Romans 5:8 (KJV)**

Not after we cleaned up. Not after we promised to do better. **While we were yet sinners.** Like a father paying for plates his son broke — before the son even knew to say sorry.

And no one forced Jesus. He said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). He chose the cross. For you.

Fair — and forgiving

Now we can answer Roland's question. Paul explains why God put Jesus forward on the cross:

> *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*
>
> **Romans 3:26 (KJV)**

Just — because sin was not ignored. Its full cost was paid. **Justifier** — because the One who paid it offers that payment to anyone who believes. God did not lower the price. He paid it Himself.

Even while the nails were going in, Jesus prayed for the men holding the hammers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If He could forgive them, He can forgive Roland. He can forgive you.

And just before He died, He spoke three words in English — only one word in the Greek of the Gospel. A word that means *completed, done, nothing left*:

> *"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."*
>
> **John 19:30 (KJV)**

Not "almost finished." Not "you finish the rest." **Finished.**

Sunday morning: the empty tomb

If the story ended on Friday, it would be the saddest story ever told. A good man, dead on a cross. A heavy stone. Soldiers at the door.

But early on the first day of the week, some women came to the tomb with spices, crying. And an angel was waiting for them:

> *"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*
>
> **Matthew 28:5-6 (KJV)**

Come, see. The resurrection is not a nice idea or a symbol. It is something people saw. Paul calls it the most important message of all:

> *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (KJV)**

Why does it matter so much? Because the empty tomb is God's receipt. It is His public announcement: *the payment was accepted. Sin and death have lost.*

The keys in His hand

Years later, the apostle John saw the risen Jesus in a vision. Jesus said to him:

> *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*
>
> **Revelation 1:18 (KJV)**

The keys of the grave — in the hand of the One who loves you. That changes how we look at every cemetery. ("Hell" in this verse translates the Greek word *hades* — the grave, the place of the dead.)

> *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:20 (KJV)**

"Firstfruits" means the first part of the harvest — the promise that the rest is coming. Those who die trusting in Jesus are sleeping, waiting for His voice (our study *"What Really Happens When We Die?"* explains this). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

> *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:55, 57 (KJV)**

The cross says: **your sin is paid for.** The empty tomb says: **death does not have the last word.** Together they say: **God is fair, God is love, and God wins.**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sums up this Bible teaching like this: in Christ's life of perfect obedience, His suffering, death and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who accept it by faith may have eternal life; the cross both condemns our sin and provides our forgiveness, and Christ's bodily resurrection proclaims God's victory over evil and assures final victory over sin and death to all who accept Him (Fundamental Belief #9, "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ").

How do I receive it?

A gift that is paid for still has to be received. You do not earn it. You cannot add to it. You simply say yes. Paul did:

> *"...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*
>
> **Galatians 2:20 (KJV)**

Loved me. Gave himself for me. Put your own name there. Tell Him the truth about what you have done. Thank Him for paying it. And let Him give you a new life — not so that He will love you, but because He already does. (Our study *"Saved by Grace"* goes deeper.)

What Roland understood

That night the pastor opened his Bible to 2 Corinthians 5:21 and handed it to Roland. "Read it out loud," he said. "But where it says 'us,' say your own name."

Roland read: "He hath made him to be sin for *Roland*, who knew no sin; that *Roland* might be made the righteousness of God in him."

He stopped. For a long time, nobody spoke.

"It's the plates," he finally said. "My father paid, and I never knew. And Jesus paid — and I've been trying to pay it myself all these years."

They prayed together. Roland did not feel like a different man right away. But he went home lighter than he had felt in twenty years.

The next spring he flew to Les Cayes. He stood at his father's grave with flowers in his hand. And for the first time, he was not only sad.

"Papa, you're sleeping," he said quietly in Kreyòl. "But Jesus' tomb is empty. He has the keys. I'll see you in the morning."

Whatever you have broken, Jesus has already paid for it. Whatever you have lost to death, Jesus holds the keys. The cross and the empty tomb are God's way of saying: I am fair, I love you, and I am bringing you home. Will you say yes to Him today?

Before you close this — one question

Have you been trying to pay for your own "broken plates"? Carrying a guilt you thought God could never erase?

It is already paid. We would be honored to pray with you, open the Bible with you, and help you receive what Jesus did for you — just as you are.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, study the Bible, or go deeper on this topic? Reach us today:

📞 **903-748-9353** · ✉️ **jils19802012@gmail.com**
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Viewer Handout

The Cross and the Empty Tomb: Why Jesus Died and Rose — pocket version

5 truths to remember

1. All have sinned, and sin is costly; a fair God cannot simply say "forget it" (Romans 3:23; 6:23).
2. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not live and died in our place, carrying our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).
3. The cross is the love of the Father and the Son together, given while we were still sinners — and Jesus laid down His life freely (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; John 10:18).
4. At the cross God is both just and the One who forgives; the payment is complete — "It is finished" (Romans 3:26; John 19:30).
5. Jesus rose bodily on the third day and holds the keys of death; His resurrection guarantees victory over death for all who believe (Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20; Revelation 1:18).

Memory verse

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*
>
> **Romans 5:8 (KJV)**

Think & pray about it

- What "broken plates" have I been trying to pay for myself? What would it mean to accept that Jesus already paid?
- How does it change my picture of God to know that the Father gave and the Son gave Himself — together, out of love?
- Who in my life needs to hear that the tomb is empty? How can I share this hope with them this week?

FOR TEACHERS & SMALL GROUPS

Presenter Bullet Sheet

- **Open with the story** (an illustrative story: Roland, a delivery driver in Boston, who at fourteen broke a market vendor's plates in Les Cayes; his father secretly paid for them with two months of Saturdays) — ask: "If God is fair, how can He forgive people like us?"
- **Point 1 — Can't God just say "forget it"?** Romans 3:23; 6:23. Sin is universal and costly; a judge who ignores wrongs is not kind but unfair. Link back to the previous study (Genesis 18:25).
- **Point 2 — The One who took our place:** Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24. Jesus lived the perfect life and died as our substitute — the great exchange.
- **Point 3 — Why would He do that?** John 3:16; Romans 5:8; John 10:18. Not an angry Father and a kind Son: the Godhead together paying the price of love, while we were yet sinners. Jesus chose the cross.
- **Point 4 — Fair and forgiving:** Romans 3:26; Luke 23:34; John 19:30. God is "just, and the justifier"; He did not lower the price, He paid it. "It is finished."
- **Point 5 — Sunday morning, the empty tomb:** Matthew 28:5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. The resurrection is a historical event, not a symbol — God's "receipt" that the payment was accepted.
- **Point 6 — The keys in His hand:** Revelation 1:18; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 55-57; John 11:25. Christ the firstfruits; the dead in Christ sleep until His voice wakes them. Reference Fundamental Belief #9 in the Church's own words.
- **Point 7 — How do I receive it?** Galatians 2:20. A gift paid in full is received by faith, not earned; link to "Saved by Grace."
- **Close the story:** Roland reads 2 Corinthians 5:21 with his own name — "It's the plates" — and later stands at his father's grave in Les Cayes: "Jesus' tomb is empty. I'll see you in the morning."
- **Appeal:** invite each person to stop paying for their own "broken plates," to tell Jesus the truth, and to receive His forgiveness and new life today.
- **Close:** memory verse (Romans 5:8) + "It is finished — and He is alive" + tease the next study ("One in Christ: Unity in God's Family").

EVIDENCE-BASED · FACT-CHECKED

10 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact (with Bible)
1. God the Father was angry, and Jesus had to talk Him into loving us.	"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "God commendeth his love toward us" (Romans 5:8).
2. God could simply ignore sin and say "forget it."	"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). At the cross God shows He is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).
3. Jesus was a good man trapped by His enemies, a victim with no choice.	"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18).
4. My sins are too big for the cross.	"The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). He even prayed for those crucifying Him: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).
5. Jesus paid part, and I must pay the rest with good works.	"It is finished" (John 19:30). We are "justified freely by his grace" (Romans 3:24).
6. The resurrection is only a symbol or a nice idea.	"He was buried, and... he rose again the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:4). "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:6).
7. The cross is only for very religious or very good people.	"Whosoever believeth in him should not perish" (John 3:16). Christ died for us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8).
8. Death has the last word.	Jesus has "the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18). "O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).
9. Since Jesus paid for sin, how I live doesn't matter.	He bore our sins "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24); "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).
10. Jesus' resurrection has nothing to do with my loved ones who died.	Christ is "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20); "though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Where this comes from (Sources)

This study is built on the Bible and reflects the published beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Verify everything for yourself:

- The Bible — passages on the death and resurrection of Christ: Isaiah 53:5-6; Matthew 28:5-6; Luke 23:34; John 3:16; John 10:17-18; John 11:25; John 19:30; Romans 3:23-26; Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20, 55-57; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 1:18 (King James Version, public domain).
- Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #9, "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ" — official beliefs: https://adventist.org/beliefs (please read the statement there in full, in the Church's own words).
- 28 Fundamental Beliefs (2020 edition, PDF): https://adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: https://gc.adventist.org/
- Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 78, 79 and 81, "Calvary," "It Is Finished" and "The Lord Is Risen," public domain: https://whiteestate.org/ / https://m.egwwritings.org/
- Related studies in this library: *"Who Is Jesus?"*, *"Saved by Grace"*, *"What Really Happens When We Die?"* and *"The Thousand Years"* — https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/resources.html · Questions? https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/faq.html · Faith Journey: https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/journey.html

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