

There Was No Plan B

Joe Slater

We cannot fully comprehend the horror Jesus faced that night in Gethsemane. A merciless scourging awaited Him, followed by nails being driven through His hands and feet. For six endless hours searing pain would wrack His battered body as He struggled for every breath.

But that scarcely begins to describe our Savior's woe. Who can fathom the agony of taking the whole world's sins and bearing them in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24)? No wonder He cried out, "*O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me*" (Matthew 26:39a). Yet even as He pleaded, He knew there was no Plan B. Unless He stayed the course all the way to the cross, no sinner could be saved. Therefore, He continued, "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*" (26:39b).

Jesus had no Plan B when He sent His apostles to preach His gospel to the world. Not that long ago they had scattered like a covey of quail when Judas brought the Roman soldiers and temple police to arrest Him. Peter had denied three times that he even knew Jesus, much less that he was His disciple. Would you entrust those men with the most powerful and desperately needed message the world will ever know? Jesus did! And ten days after He commissioned them, they demonstrated that His confidence in them was fully justified. About 3000 souls believed and obeyed the glad tidings that the apostles proclaimed boldly. From that point on, the church grew by leaps and bounds.

You and I are still part of Jesus' Plan A. He is still the one and only way anyone can come to the Father (John 14:6), and His gospel is still God's power to save (Romans 1:16). He has no Plan B, so don't bother looking! Just follow Plan A, the plan "*ordained from the foundation of the world!*" (1 Peter 1:20).

Portrayed

"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified" (Galatians 3:1 NIV).

It was back in 2004 that Mel Gibson co-wrote and directed the movie, "The Passion of the Christ." Many couldn't bear to watch the horror of the treatment of Jesus, and His crucifixion. Before our eyes, Jesus was portrayed as crucified.

Back in 1957, journalist Jim Bishop wrote, "The Day Christ Died," which I read in the 60's. More recently, in 2013, Bill O'Reilly wrote "Killing Jesus" which, likewise, portrays Jesus' death. All these accounts are imperfect attempts to dramatize the death of Jesus given in Scripture.

The Galatians were being led like sheep to the slaughter by false teachers, and Paul described them as being "bewitched." How could this happen? After all, Paul said, "*Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*"

When we visualize in our minds' eye what Jesus endured that day "that will live in infamy" (to use Roosevelt's words), only a callused soul remains unmoved. How can we explain how anyone could walk away from this Jesus? This Jesus loved us to such a degree that He left heaven, humbled Himself in becoming a human being, and suffered such horrible torture that ultimately took His life.

We should reread the accounts in the gospels and let the Word "portray" Jesus crucified to us afresh. Actually, on each Lord's Day as we observe the Lord's Supper, we should do this.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

Sin Is Worse Than You Think

Sin is awful. Sin is ugly. Sin is gross. Sin is mean. Sin is sinister. Sin is hurtful. Sin is . . .

And it's not only the sinner who suffers. That is part of the reason sin is all of the above and more.

Think about Athaliah. What an example of sin at its worst! That woman was so bent on self-promotion and power that she, without feeling, would murder all of her own grandsons. That is a cold, calloused, selfish, wicked heart!

But that's not where it started. Go back to her daddy, Ahab, who chose for himself a wife who incited him to do evil more than any predecessor (1 Kings 16:33 & 21:25). There's no wondering about the influences on her life as she grew up.

And don't forget about King Jehoshaphat of Judah who was mostly a good king. But he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. Who knows what he was thinking – maybe that he could be a good influence on the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married Ahab's daughter – you guessed it, Athaliah!

When Jehoshaphat died, Jehoram became king. He killed all of his own brothers (2 Chronicles 21:2-4). Athaliah's influence? Who knows?

So, when Jehoram and Athaliah's son, Ahaziah, was killed by Jehu, Athaliah moved quickly and ruthlessly. But this wasn't new to her. Her innocent, dead grandchildren testify to the entangling, poisoning effect of sin. It is a mess – a tragic, horrible mess.

Athaliah's sin was her own, but not hers alone. It was also her husband's, her father-in-law's, her father's and mother's, and who knows whom else's.

With good reason we are warned: "*abstain from every form of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

--David Deffenbaugh (via *Old Paths*)