



***RCC Phoenix – 4.12.20 – Before We Even Knew***

Today we remember and celebrate the most vital, caring, gracious, merciful, compassionate, loving act humanity has ever known.

As believers in Christ, it's easy to fall into the trap of assuming that everyone has the same \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ we have about God.

I heard a Biblical professor during a lecture make a simple yet profound statement. "Any theologian or believer in Christ can boast of \_\_\_\_\_. Anything learned from scripture or prayer has been \_\_\_\_\_ to us by God's gracious Spirit. We didn't come up with anything. He gets all the credit and our hearts should always remain in a posture of \_\_\_\_\_.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_

*Can we even believe what this ancient book says?*

One major factor in determining if ancient works of literature are accurate is the number of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ copies that exist.

Archeologists have discovered an impressive number of Homer's book the Iliad; around \_\_\_\_\_ copies. By comparing the copies, experts can determine the accuracy of the book.

Archeologists and researchers have discovered more than \_\_\_\_\_ verified copies of The Greek New Testament. Nearly 10 times the amount of Homer's Iliad.

The New Testament was also quoted countless times in other sources of ancient literature.

Bruce Metzger was a Biblical scholar and professor at Princeton Theological Seminary.

"If all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the other sources] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament."

Metzger also notes that of the \_\_\_\_\_ lines of text in the New Testament, only \_\_\_\_\_ lines have variants, (which are mainly spelling errors).

Greek scholar D.A. Carson sums it up this way: "The purity of text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants."

This means the New Testament we have in our possession is 99.5% accurate to the original writing! Let us not take for granted the massive and painstaking effort it took for thousands of writers to copy word for word, line for line, the entire New Testament.

Thank God for the Bible.

2. The \_\_\_\_\_

The torture and death of crucifixion was not \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus.

Roman soldiers who were commissioned to carry out executions did so with the understanding that if the criminal \_\_\_\_\_ the torture they themselves would be **killed**.

Jesus was beat with a whip some call a “flagrum” or “cat of 9 tails”.

This whip was unique because it had \_\_\_\_\_ objects including stones, metal and bone attached to the end.

It was designed not to only cut the flesh but also to stick in the skin and be ripped out.

Some people didn’t survive the beating before the crucifixion.

The idea of crucifixion was for the person to suffer tremendously and \_\_\_\_\_.

Any person who was sentenced to death by crucifixion immediately lost their privileges of **citizenship** when they picked up their cross.

People were free to do whatever they wanted to the charged criminal without \_\_\_\_\_ as they carried their cross.

Before we become too accustomed to the cross hanging on the wall in the back of the sanctuary, or on church steeples around the world, or with a cross or crucifix hanging from a necklace, the cross imprinted on the cover of some of our Bible’s or the wood/metal cross decorations that adorn our homes, can we stop for a moment and thank God for the cross and what it means to us today!

Thank God for the Cross.

3. The \_\_\_\_\_

After someone dies their body immediately begins \_\_\_\_\_. Blood stops flowing and pools at the lowest point of the body. The joints gradually tighten until fully stiff within **12** hours of passing.

Jesus resurrection also reversed the \_\_\_\_\_ effects of death.

Jesus first appeared to \_\_\_\_\_ after His resurrection.

This is important because women were not held in high regard in \_\_\_\_\_ culture.

For example, women were also not allowed to \_\_\_\_\_ in court because they were deemed as unreliable witnesses.

But Jesus puts one of the most important messages in human History in the mouths of those the culture saw as unreliable.

Thank God for the Empty Tomb.

Why would He do all of this?

#### 4. \_\_\_\_\_

God isn't the \_\_\_\_\_ we have when love is expressed. He is the creator, embodiment and ultimate example of true, pure and absolute love.

#### **Romans 5:1-8 NLT**

“Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

Before we even knew we needed a written, verifiable and historically accurate account of Jesus life, God provided the Bible for us.

Before we even knew we needed salvation and couldn't pay the price for our sins, God provided the Cross for us.

Before we even knew Heaven was a possibility and eternal life was available to us after our physical death, God provided the Empty Tomb for us.

We celebrate today because of His Word, because Jesus died and because He Rose again. But we also celebrate because before we even knew we needed Him and while we were still \_\_\_\_\_, Christ died for us.