



Thinking Like a Christian January-March 2021 Zooming in on the Cross
10th January

1: The heart of the Gospel

1. The cross is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Heart of the gospels: Mark 1:15; 8:31-33

First thing we hear about Jesus in the Bible: Genesis 3:15

Heart of the apostles' preaching: Acts 2:23

'The word of the Cross', 1 Corinthians 1:17-18

The foundation of Jesus' glory: Revelation 5:9-10

Jesus' own explanations: Luke 24:46-47

John 12:20-32

The moment of his glory

It is his death which brings fruit

This redefines everything for his followers

The purpose he came to this earth

This is what will judge the world and cast out the devil

This is what will draw all people to himself.

If your Christianity would be essentially the same whether or not Jesus died on the cross, then it is not Christianity at all.

How would you respond to:

The values of Easter and the Christian religion – compassion, forgiveness, kindness, hard work and responsibility – are values that we can all celebrate and share. (David Cameron)

God expects certain standards of us; provided we have made a good effort at meeting them, he will reward us for them.

God welcomes everyone for who they are.

2. Forgiveness of sins

Forgiveness of sins is central to what Jesus achieved for us.

Matthew 1:21

Mark 2:17

Acts 2:38

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Isaiah 55:6-7

What does forgiveness mean?

2 Corinthians 5:19

Sin is a debt to God (Lord's Prayer)

Forgiveness is cancelling a debt – a real debt (Matthew 18:21-25)

Forgiveness is *not* acceptance

'In this family there are no outsiders. All, all, are insiders. All are children of our heavenly father; the rich, the poor, the lame, the blind, the clever, the not so clever, the white, the black, the red, the yellow. All, all, all. The Palestinians, the Israelis, Al Qaeda, Bin Laden George Bush. I will draw all into this embrace of love. All. Lesbians, gays, so-called straights. All, all, all. We are family. We are sisters and brothers.' (Desmond Tutu)

3. Forgiveness of sins only comes through the cross

Consistent Biblical position is that forgiveness *only* comes through what Jesus did on the cross.

Hebrews 9:22; 10:4

Why can God not 'just forgive'?

Exodus 34:6-7

Divine forgiveness without the Cross is impossible

Human forgiveness without Divine forgiveness is impossible

Forgiveness is not acceptance

Forgiving sins is not condoning sins

What would you say...

I don't think I'm good enough to be a Christian

How can I know that God has forgiven me?

**Ending a prayer* "We ask it in the name of the monotheistic God, Brahma, and God known by many names and by many different things. Amen and Awomen." (Ignore the 'Awomen'!)*

Of course God will forgive me. That's his job.

Whoever you are, you are special, unique, and deserve the best.