A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

The Cross and the Empty Tomb

Starting Out with Christ · Book 5



What Easter means for my past and my future

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Easter is the center of the Christian faith. Without the cross, there is no forgiveness. Without the empty tomb, there is no hope. Paul said, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17, SLB).

After my failure came to light in 2020, and God began rebuilding my marriage and my walk with Him, the cross and the empty tomb became personal to me. I wrote this book for anyone carrying regret about the past or fear about what comes next. Easter answers both.

This book walks through the last week of Jesus' life, from the crowds on Palm Sunday to the empty tomb. Along the way I want to look at what the cross answers about my past and what the resurrection answers about my future.

1 The King who came to save

Picture the scene. Jesus rides into Jerusalem with crowds all around Him. Some had come from Galilee. Others came from Bethany, where they had seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead. The people shouted words from Psalm 118, crying "Hosanna," a word that means "save us."

They were right about who He was and wrong about how He would save them. Many expected a king who would overthrow Rome. Jesus came to deal with a far deeper problem. Within days, many of the same voices would be silent or shouting for His death.

I want to be careful not to make the same mistake. It is easy to welcome Jesus when I think He will give me what I want. The question is whether I will still follow Him when His way of saving me looks different from what I expected.

At work, authority usually means sitting at the head of the table and directing others. Jesus turned that upside down. He stepped down from heaven to serve and to die for people who had rebelled against Him (Philippians 2:6-8). In God's kingdom, real kingship looks like a towel and a cross.

2 Remember Me

On Thursday night Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples. He told them, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15, SLB). He knew exactly what was ahead.

> *And having taken bread, having given thanks, He broke **it** and gave **it** to them, saying, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this for My remembrance."*
>
> **Luke 22:19 (SLB)**

He knew His disciples would run away. He knew Peter would deny Him three times and Judas would betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. He knew He would be beaten, mocked, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. And still He said, "do this for My remembrance."

Every time believers take the Lord's Supper, we remember. We remember His body given and His blood poured out. We remember that He did not have

to go to the cross. He chose to go, "for the joy lying before Him" (Hebrews 12:2, SLB).

When my wife took me to my first 12-step meeting on May 29, 2020, she waited in the truck while I went in. I was drunk, and I sat there weeping as I listened to everyone, full of shame. I felt like my past had disqualified me. In that room I found that mercy was still within reach. The thief on the cross had nothing to offer but "Remember me" (Luke 23:42).

3 The cross answers my past

Blaming someone else is one of the oldest habits in the world. When Adam and Eve sinned, three things happened that had never happened before. They felt guilt and fear. They hid from God. And when God confronted them, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:8-13, SLB).

People still ask the same questions. How do I deal with my guilt before God? How do I fix a broken relationship with Him? How do I face the consequences of what I have done? Jesus answered all of those questions, not only by what He taught, but by what He did.

> *For He made the One who did not know sin **to be** sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:21 (SLB)**

On the cross, the one perfect person who ever lived stood in my place. He took what I had coming. My sin was the reason He came to Bethlehem, the reason He

walked the roads of Israel, and the reason He died at Calvary. At the cross I find the answer to my past.

Leading Bible studies and serving as a lay pastor, I have seen Christians carry guilt for sins God already forgave. I knew that weight myself after making choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. When you grasp that Jesus paid the whole debt, not part of it, you stop trying to pay God back (Colossians 2:13-14).

4 The empty tomb answers my future

On Sunday morning, women came to the tomb with spices and found the stone rolled away. The angels asked them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has been raised" (Luke 24:5-6, SLB).

The resurrection is not a nice story to make us feel better. It is the proof that Jesus is who He said He was and that His sacrifice was accepted. His disciples saw Him, were told to touch Him, and watched Him eat (Luke 24:39-43, SLB). Men who had run away in fear became bold witnesses willing to die for what they had seen.

People are searching for spiritual reality, wanting to do good, and afraid of the future. Jesus answers all three. In Him we meet God. Through Him we are made new and able to live for what is good. And because He lives, we do not have to fear death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one believing in Me, even if he dies, will live" (John 11:25, SLB).

I have worked about 40 years now, and I think more about eternity than I did in my twenties. Life is fragile, and everyone eventually asks what happens when their time here ends. Because Jesus walked out of that tomb alive, death is no longer a locked door for anyone who belongs to Him (1 Corinthians 15:20).

5 You cannot have one without the other

The cross and the empty tomb belong together. Good Friday without Easter would leave us with a dead teacher. Easter without Good Friday would leave us with a risen Lord and our sins still unpaid. Together they give us forgiveness for the past and hope for the future.

Many people try to win at life on their own terms. They chase money, success, relationships, and experiences, and still feel empty. Jesus offers something better. He lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose again. In Him we can find the meaning we were made for.

Easter is also a call to respond. Romans 10:9 (SLB) says, "if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of the dead, you will be saved." If you have never trusted Him, there is no better day than today.

In guitar building, a neck without a properly set bridge will never play in tune, however good the wood looks. Both have to work together. A cross without an empty tomb leaves us forgiven but still in the grave, and an empty tomb without the cross

leaves our sin unpaid (1 Corinthians 15:17). We need both.

The Cross and the Empty Tomb

✦ ✦ ✦

Without the cross there is no forgiveness, and without the empty tomb there is no hope. This book walks through the last week of Jesus' life, from Palm Sunday to the resurrection, and shows what the cross answers about our past and what the empty tomb answers about our future.

For He made the One who did not know sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (SLB)

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