

Watergate. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. The Ides of March. The execution of Jesus of Nazareth. What do these have in common? They are all crimes that changed the course of history. Watergate led to the resignation of a president. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand led to the First World War. The Ides of March was the murder of Julius Caesar that changed the Roman Empire. The execution of Jesus of Nazareth was a travesty of justice because Jesus was falsely charged with blasphemy. The prophet Isaiah predicted, **“He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.”** (53:3-4 NLT)

If there was such a thing as the Jerusalem Daily News, it may have reported Jesus’ death this way. *“Jesus of Nazareth was executed today on the orders of the Roman State. Method of execution: Crucifixion. The charge under Roman law was treason, and under Herodian law blasphemy against the temple. The evidence against this anarchist was so strong that authorities of both the Roman State and the Kingdom of Herod concurred with the arrest and execution, and he was subjected to trial by both governments.”*

Jesus’ death not only changed history, it changed the world. Isaiah wrote, **“He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.”** (53:12 NLT) The world was changed when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command and brought sin and death into the world. Everyone has followed in their footsteps, disobeyed God’s command and been cut off from Him. Jesus changed all of that with His death and resurrection. He paid the price for sin that no one else could pay. He rose victorious over death and opened God’s Kingdom to all who believe, trust and follow Him.

That does not change the fact that His execution was a capital crime because Jesus was innocent. He committed no crime. He did not deserve to die. Isaiah predicted this. **“Unjustly condemned, he was led away. . . . He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone.”** (53:8-9 NLT) Jesus was falsely accused of fake crimes that resulted in a very real, awful crime against him. Testimony was withheld. False testimony was given. No corroborating evidence was presented.

Jesus was killed to pay for the sins of others. Isaiah saw it coming. **“We thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.”** (53:4-6 NLT) We are the guilty ones. Jesus took our place on the cross. He died to forgive our sins. He died in our place.

Sin and death have been defeated. God entered our world in the person of Jesus Christ to launch the ultimate revolution. He didn’t defeat the Romans. They would have been no match for Him. Jesus defeated sin, death and the demonic powers that want to control the world. He changes our lives. Sin leads to death, total isolation from God. Jesus has restored us to right relationship with

God. We are no longer forced to look from the outside and wonder what it would be like to be inside God's Kingdom. We are citizens in God's eternal kingdom. We are members of God's family. No one can condemn us or bring any charges against us.

Jesus death and resurrection launched the beginning of God's Kingdom on earth. The world has never been the same. Jesus turned everything that was upside down right side up. Human categories and divisions are eliminated. The Apostle Paul tells us, "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28 NLT) There are no longer insiders and outsiders, high class and low class, males and females. We are all are one in Christ.

Jesus died to restore everyone to a right relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is working to bring the Gospel message through God's people to all nations. The Christian faith spread and "conquered" the Roman Empire with the love of Christ. The Christian faith continues to spread throughout the world.

We are now free to live as followers of Jesus. But we are not free to do anything we please. We have been liberated from sin and death. That doesn't mean we have been given a license to do anything we want. Paul tells us, "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace. Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not!" (Romans 6:14-15 NLT) Jesus sets us free to live in faith, to be God's people in our world today.

Jesus died for us, but He didn't die so that we could be comfortable.
He didn't die so that we could do whatever we please.
He didn't die so that we could ignore him.
He didn't die so that we could keep his death and resurrection a secret.

Jesus died to give us a new life.
Jesus died so that we could learn to follow Him.
Jesus died so that we could respond to His love by returning His love.
Jesus died so that we could change the world in His name.
Jesus died so that we could let the light of His love shine through us.

It would be a capital crime if we fail to respond to His love, if we refused to follow Him, if we denied knowing Him. We can do a whole lot of good in Jesus' name if we embrace His mission, share His love, help the helpless and offer hope to the hopeless. Jesus' story didn't end on Good Friday. Everything changed with Jesus' resurrection. This is the Good News that changes us. It is the Good News that has the power to change our world today.