

If It Dies . . . **(The Epic of the Cross Series – Part VII)**

4/12/2009 (Easter)

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. Pastor Steve opened with an illustration related to the planting of a seed. Reconstruct that illustration, noting the significance of the parts.

When the seed is planted, it essentially dies. You bury it into something that you don’t value much (dirt), but the seed combined with the dirt come together to make a beautiful plant. While no one is looking (it is hidden away underground), something special happens as the seed converts dirt into something else.

2. Read John 12:20-23. What is Jesus saying to the disciples and the guests from Greece?

This is it. What is about to take place is the reason why I came to earth. You’ve been waiting for me to do something spectacular that will call attention to my ministry; well, here it comes.

3. Read John 12:24-25. It sounds like a riddle, but it’s not. What is Jesus trying to say?

We all must die to self, to the love of these earthly surroundings, in order to bear fruit. He had to die to provide a path to salvation. We have to die and be born again in order to be brought into the family of God. That is difficult for us because we like to be in control and we fear the unknown.

4. What happens if we decide not to do that (not to turn our backs on earthly things)?

We will remain alone and trapped.

5. Read John 12:26-33. What effect does the voice from heaven have? What does all this mean relative to Satan (the ruler of this world)?

The voice from heaven evidently was not clearly heard by those at the gathering. Some thought it sounded like thunder, or maybe an angel. Thus, it seems likely that they did not understand the specific words spoken. However, Christ’s resurrection makes it crystal clear that Satan has no ultimate power. (see also 1John 3:8)

6. The war against death, hatred, fear, pride and other vices is not against individuals, governments, or nations. Who is the enemy and what are two aspects of his campaign against us?

The enemy is Satan. The war against Satan is manifested in **sin** and **death**. The church believes the cross is the cure (not a treatment) for **sin**. (see 1John 3:8-9) In the cross, God goes into the heart of evil and plants something good. When we **sin**, we feel like we need to justify it, demonstrating that we have an urge to do good. At the same time, we tend to run from **death**, even though we know it is a natural part of this earthly life and allows us to transition into the next life. We do not conquer **death** by running, but by dying, which is actually coming alive to the life for which we were made.

7. Pastor Steve described death in a different sort of way. See if you can reconstruct his description and then point out how it is different from the normal view of death.

We normally talk about people passing away, but Pastor Steve talked about the temporary world passing away from us as we die. The new life simply eclipses the old and we find ourselves in the spiritual world. Thus, we are actually coming alive. We plant a physical body into the ground, but raise a spiritual body.

8. So why do we need Easter, if so much was accomplished on the cross? [Note: this message was delivered on Easter Sunday.]

Easter is the expression of the New Life. With the resurrection, it ushered in the opportunity for God to live in each of us (Holy Spirit). It was clear proof that death is conquered. It was proof that Jesus really was the Son of God. It was proof that His teachings and his prophecy were all true. It was proof of the victory over sin and death.