

A Very Black Friday

Did you do any shopping on Black Friday? Most Americans did. Black Friday is often regarded as the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. Millions of people rush to the nearest Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, or Macy's in order to find the best deals on big-screen televisions, tablets, video game consoles, clothing, smartphones, Blu-ray players, and a host of other items. Each year, I try to tell myself, "I won't get involved with Black Friday," but the super deals and ability to save hundreds of dollars consistently change my mind. I am a huge fan of getting more while paying less!

Where did the term "Black Friday" come from? Many retailers are said to traditionally operate at a financial loss ("in the red") from January to November. But Black Friday indicates the point at which retailers begin to turn a profit, or get "in the black." For a store like Wal-Mart, their net income is positive starting on January 1, and Black Friday can boost their year to date net profit from \$14 billion to \$19 billion. I always thought the name "Black Friday" was given due to aggressive crowds in many stores. There is something negative about annual reports of assaults, shootings, and throngs of people trampling on other shoppers (in an attempt to get the best deal on the product they want before it runs out).

Our culture is obsessed with "Black Friday." But did you know there is a "Black Friday" in the Bible? Don't misunderstand. There wasn't a day when hundreds of Jews went to a Macy's or Wal-Mart to purchase expensive products for half the price. But there was a Friday in which the land of Judea was literally dark for hours because God's plan to save us from our sins was at work.

"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:41-46).

Although the death of the perfect and sinless Son of God provided a literal dark time on the face of the earth, spiritually men had never seen anything brighter. Because of our sin, we deserve to be lost in hell forever (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But through the death of Jesus, the debt for our sins was paid (Romans 5:6-9). Now we can be reconciled to God and be saved. This is only made possible because 2,000 years ago, Deity stepped out of heaven, walked on this earth, lived a perfect life, and gave Himself as a sin sacrifice.

What a paradox we find at the cross! What happened at the cross was the darkest moment in human history (a literal black Friday). And yet, humanity has never seen a brighter moment. While sinful men were killing the Son of God, He was giving the wonderful gift of salvation. While there is nothing wrong with shopping on the day our culture calls "Black Friday," never forget to praise God for the events that took place on that Friday 2,000 years ago.