



# The Death of Jesus

READINGS FOR THIS LESSON:– Psalm 22; Isaiah 53.

### A prophecy of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ

We can read about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels. But we have a better picture if we read some of the prophecies of the Old Testament as well.

Turn to Psalm 22 and read it through very carefully. This Psalm helps us to understand how Jesus felt during the crucifixion.

*"All who see me mock me: they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." (verses 7-8).*

Jesus had to put up with not only the pain, but also the shame of being crucified. Perhaps more than any other words in the Bible, these words help us to appreciate what Jesus went through for us. Look again at verses 11 and 16-18,

*"Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."*

### How this all came about

When great crowds came to listen to Jesus, and he healed their sick friends, the rulers of the Jews were jealous and angry and hated Jesus. They could not see that Jesus' miracles were a proof that he was really the Son of God. They were blinded by their jealousy and hatred and so they decided to kill Jesus.

They falsely accused Jesus of blasphemy against God, which meant he was guilty of death! Israel at that time was ruled by the Romans, and although the Jewish religious leaders condemned Jesus to death, they could not do so without the agreement of the Roman Governor who was Pontius Pilate.

Pilate knew very well that Jesus was innocent, but he was afraid that if he opposed their desire, they would report him to Caesar in Rome, and he would lose his authority. He gave in and handed Jesus over to be put to death by crucifixion – the most painful and agonizing death – although Pilate knew that he was not guilty. So the Romans were also to blame for the death of Jesus Christ.

### Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?

As we think of Jesus hanging on that cross, and remember that he never sinned, but always did those things that pleased God, we ask ourselves, "Why did this have to happen to Jesus?"

One thing is certain: it was the only way by which men and women could be saved from sin. Jesus had prayed three times to his Father,

*"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me." (Matthew 26:39).*

Though he was careful to add,

*"Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

If it had been possible, we can be sure that God would have spared His son the agony. But it was the only way.

## Why did Jesus have to die?

Adam sinned and death was his punishment. Romans 6:23 records,

*"For the wages of sin is death."*

All people die for two reasons:- because we all have Adam's dying nature, and we all sin.

But Jesus died for only one reason:- because he had Adam's dying nature, but he did NOT sin!

Jesus was a human being, just like us. And, just like us, he was constantly tempted to do and say wrong things.

We read in Hebrews 4:15, that he

*" has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin."*

Jesus **had to die** because he had human nature, but he **did not deserve to die** because he had not sinned. Therefore God was able to raise him from the dead and give him eternal life. He can no longer be tempted to sin.

By requiring the crucifixion of Jesus, this sinless child of Adam, God demonstrated that human nature at its best is only fit for shame and death. In submitting to crucifixion, Jesus showed the righteousness of God as Paul outlined in Romans 3:25,

*"He did this to demonstrate his (God's) justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished."*

## The lessons of the crucifixion



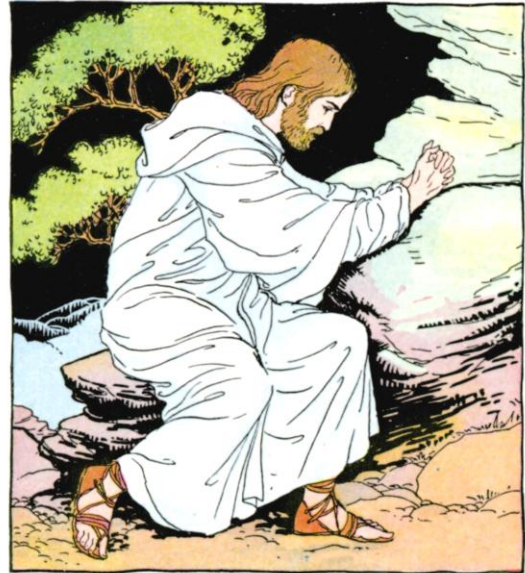
The cruel death of Jesus on the cross, showed us how evil we really are by nature and that we can never save ourselves. We must know this before we can even begin to live a way of life that is pleasing to God.

We do well to remember the fact that the Lord Jesus was an acceptable sacrifice. He was like a lamb without blemish; and God was willing to accept this perfect sacrifice as the offering of all those who believe in Jesus as

*"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).*

Another important lesson is that the suffering and death of Christ shows just how far God's love for us can go. Paul puts it like this: -

*"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also,*



*along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).*

## **What must we do?**

God has done all He can for us in giving Jesus as a sacrifice. Jesus gave his life for us, but unless we **truly believe** what God has done for us, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will not help us.

So what must we now do?

Carefully consider the answers Peter gave:-

*"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).*

And again,

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19).*

We can reject God's love and grace – we can ignore it. But if we are wise we will not do either of these things. We will want to be among those of whom Jesus speaks in Mark 16:16:-

*"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."*

## **Baptism begins a new way of life**

We are the children of Adam and, like Adam, we prefer our own ways to the ways of God. In giving himself as a sacrifice for sin, he made it possible for us to become the children of God.

John wrote -

*"Yet to all who received him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).*

Jesus also said,

*"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).*



We must be baptized according to Christ's commandment. So instead of walking in our own sinful ways, in baptism we **die** to sin (that means to make every effort to stop sinning), and walk with Christ in newness of life, always preferring God's way to our own.

The apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 5:24,

*"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."*

Read carefully Colossians 3:1-11.

## Summary

1. We all deserve to die because we are sinners.
2. Although Jesus lived a sinless life, he shared our human nature which has to die.
3. Wicked men put Jesus to death by a slow torture called "crucifixion". He was nailed to a cross and left to die.
4. God allowed this to happen, because it was the only way to save us from our sins.
5. It was the only way to make us realise how utterly wicked and deserving of death we are.
6. God raised Jesus from the dead, because he was sinless.
7. If we admit that we are sinners and worthy of death, ask God for forgiveness through Jesus Christ, He will forgive us our sins.
8. We need to be baptized to become the "children of God", with a hope of eternal life when Jesus Christ comes again.
9. The Bible tells us to be "crucified with Jesus". This means that our own sinful desires and actions must be destroyed.
10. The crucifixion of Jesus also teaches us that, like Jesus, we must try to obey God always, however hard it may be.