

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

Lesson Four: Christ, The Crucified King

Did you ever have an almost unbearable job to do? Yet you went ahead with it willingly, though dreading it, because you knew it had to be done. Such an experience may help us to appreciate the Lord's willingly going to the cross with all its severity, pain, and horror. Then to say triumphantly, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Jesus made His way to Gethsemane. There, after His intense prayer, He was found by Judas and the mob. The betrayer kissed Jesus. The mob came with swords and clubs to take Jesus. They fell back to the ground when Jesus stepped forward and identified Himself without fear. Jesus was then seized by the officers. Some of the apostles wanted to fight to save the Lord. He told Peter to put away his sword. He could call legions of angels if He wanted to. The apostles fled. In the hours that followed Jesus was shuttled from one court to another. His case was heard by Annas, Caiphas, the Council, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again.

The Jewish leadership tried to carry out their scheme secretly. To avoid the possibility of interference by the people, the Jewish rulers sought to take Jesus in the night and get rid of Him as quickly as possible. In their many trials and with many false witnesses, they were not able to make a case against Him (Mt. 26:59,60). Finally, the high priest put Jesus under oath to tell whether He was the Son of God. Jesus solemnly and plainly affirmed that He was. They considered this to be blasphemy. Now they had their "lawful reason" to put Him to death.

The final disposition of Jesus' case rested with Pilate for he alone had the right to pronounce the death sentence (John 18:31). Pilate examined Jesus thoroughly, and said repeatedly that he found no fault in Jesus. Realizing that Jesus was innocent, Pilate is in a dilemma. How can he release Jesus and placate the Jews? Pilate offered the crowd a choice of Barabbas, a convicted criminal, or Jesus. The Jews checked every move Pilate made. Urged by the religious leaders, the mob demanded the life of Jesus. Pilate chose a cowardly way out. He went through the motions of washing his hands of it all, but instead of dismissing the case and freeing the prisoner, he allowed Jesus to be crucified.

JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE AS A WILLING SACRIFICE.

Jesus started out carrying His own cross, but as they went the soldiers compelled Simon to help carry the cross. The reason is unknown. No one knows the exact place of the crucifixion. It was outside the city. It is not known why it was called "the place of a skull" (Jn. 19:17). The Latin word "calvaria" gives us the word "Calvary." Modern translations do not use the word. Two were crucified with Jesus (Luke 23:32,39-43). Pilate's statement on the cross seemed to uphold Jesus' claim, and to accuse those who condemned Him. "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mt. 27:37). Thousands of Jews were gathered and would see the sign. The chief priests were made uncomfortable by it (Jn. 19:21,22). Pilate seems to be taunting them. Matthew and Mark mention a loud cry before He died. It may have been the shout of victory (Mt. 27:50; Mk. 15:37; Jn. 19:30). Prophecy is fulfilled. A new age is to begin. God's eternal purpose is fulfilled. He delivered up His spirit unto God (Luke 23:46).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

The death of Christ as a willing sacrifice for our sins is a subject all Christians should study. It is a basic and indispensable fact of the gospel, the grounds of our redemption, the source of our sanctification. It merits our continual meditation and increasing appreciation. He requested us to keep it ever before our minds in eating the Lord's supper (Luke 22:19,20; I Cor. 11:23-26).

The death of Christ goes back into the counsels of eternity (I Pet. 1:18-20). It was foretold by the prophets (Isa. 53; I Pet. 1:10,11; Luke 24:44). Through out the patriarchal and Mosaic ages, the dying Christ was typified in animal sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; Exod. 29:38). Of all the great and interesting things Moses, Elijah, and Christ could have talked about on the mount of transfiguration, it was the death of Jesus they discussed (Luke 9:28-31). Jesus' death was attended by miraculous phenomena (Mt. 27:45,50-54). It is to be preached to the whole creation (Mk. 16:15; I Cor. 15:1-4). It is the theme of heavenly praise (Rev. 5:9-12).

The death of Christ is typified, prophesied, proclaimed, or applied to every part of the Scriptures. It is one of the essentials that give the sixty-six books of the Bible their organic unity. Anywhere you scratch beneath the surface in the Bible, you draw blood, the blood of redemption in Christ. All through His ministry Jesus knew that the cross was the goal of His life, and He approached it with steadfast courage and willingness (Jn. 2:19-22; 3:14; 10:11). It was God's will that He should be delivered up to die for us (Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:32).

THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

Christ had to die. There was no other way. It was no mere convenience; no accident. He could not come down from the cross because of the inner and moral necessities of His own nature and mission. Why was it necessary? He had to die to fulfill the purpose and promised plan of God. "For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for all" (Mark 10:45). All the animal sacrifices, the altars, and offerings of the Old Testament were but shadowy promises of the death of Christ (Luke 24:46). He had to die to conquer death and bring to naught him that had the power of death, and to free men from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14,15). He had to die to reveal the reality of God's love, the infinite love and grace that God had toward man (Jn. 3:16). He had to die to win the hearts of men, to induce us to love God and forsake sin, to reconcile us to God, to break our unbelief and resistance to the righteousness of God. The power of the gospel to regenerate and transform grows out of the cross of Christ, by which one is crucified to the world and the world is crucified to Him (Gal. 6:14).

The big reason summarizes many of these and more. He had to die "for our sins." The wages of sins is death (Rom. 6:23). His death demonstrated the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25, 26). God is a righteous and knowing God. He cannot merely disregard sin. In order to call us righteous without making God a liar, Jesus died on our behalf that we may be forgiven of our sins on the condition that we yield our lives to Him. We are to be identified with Him, being found in Him and He in us. On our account He died for sin in love for us, that we might die to sin in love to Him.

God wants the death of Christ proclaimed because that death so vividly proclaims several lessons which we must not forget: the fact of sin and its severity; the wrath of God against sin; the wages of sin is death; the futility of man's attempts to remove or minimize sin; the nature of sin is selfishness; the nature of righteousness is surrender and self-denial; the only remedy of sin is the blood of Christ; and the love of God that seeks and sacrifices, not to condemn, but to save us.

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