

## **The Death of Christ**

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### Introduction

Let us in our minds turn the pages of time back some 1,900 years ago and let us imagine ourselves living in Palestine of that day. We hear of strange kind of Being who is going about Galilee and Judah and who even passes through Samaria. He does good everywhere He goes. Blind see, deaf hear, dumb speak. The lame walk. The demon-possessed are made normal. We wonder about this strange Being. Some say He is a sinner. Others say He is a good man. Some say He is a prophet. But till others insist that He is the Son of God. One day we hear that He is coming to Jerusalem and we hear He will come to the house of one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem where there is an upper room.

We stand and watch and sure enough a strange looking man comes walking down the street and there follows Him 12 men, many of them fishermen from Galilee, but we recognize one as Matthew who used to be a tax-gatherer. These 13 stop for a moment and then climb the stairs into the Upper Room. We wait outside for another glimpse of this wonderful Being who has such a marvelous glow in His face. Soon we hear footsteps and a man comes, but only a glance shows us it is not He. We are told afterward that it was Judas and that he was hastening to his rendezvous with the priests to tell them where they could find Him. But soon the sound of footsteps in the night is heard again and here once more comes that One with the wonderful glow and look of love and He is being followed by 11 men this time. We follow at a distance and they go out of the gate in the wall around Jerusalem and to the Garden of Gethsemane. The 12 halt and we see 4 of them go on a little further into the Garden. We see this one go off and leave the three, but each time He finds them asleep.

Just then we hear the sound of a great multitude as they approach the entrance to the garden and at their head is this man who had come out alone from the Upper Room. Just then this wonderful One stands before the multitude and we hear Him ask, "Whom seek ye?" and they answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." He quietly and calmly answers, "I am He." And something in His bearing, as He faces this multitude, and the look in His face is so wonderful that they all fall back before Him on their faces. But this man whom we have learned was named Judas comes up to kiss Him and they rush on Him and bind Him and lead Him away.

As we have seen Him, we have become more and more impressed with Him and find ourselves following the priests as they lead Him to the house of Annas the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Then they come out and lead Him to Caiaphas where they stay until almost day-light and then take Him before Pilate. We stand watching and see them bring Him out with an old discarded purple robe stained with blood where they have beaten Him. Blood is streaming down His face from where they have pressed onto His head a crown of thorns which He still wears. Soon the crowd begins to cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" They then take Him away and bring Him back soon clothed in His own garments. They take a wooden cross and put it on His shoulders and start a march out of Jerusalem and we follow in our minds eye. We see Him as with a pained look of exhaustion on His face, but still having that wonderful glow, He falls in the

dust exhausted. The soldiers look around and see a negro, a Cyrenian, coming along and they make Him take the cross and carry it. The procession moves on to Golgotha and there they nail this One to the cross. We approach a little nearer to listen to hear whether or not He will say anything and soon we hear Him say, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' Then again we hear Him say, 'I thirst,' and they dip a sponge into vinegar and give Him to drink. Again we hear words and one of the thieves is saying, 'Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom, remember me.' And we hear Him answer, 'Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' And then somehow we think we can see His face light up as He looks rather intently at one of the women standing close by and we hear Him say, 'Woman, behold Thy son.' And then turning His eyes to one whom we recognize as one of His followers, 'Behold, thy Mother.' Will He speak again we wonder and then, with an agonized look on His face, we hear Him say, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Surely we stand there in utter amazement wondering if He will utter another word for He seems so near death. Then we hear Him cry, in a loud voice, 'It is finished.' And His head bows and He is gone. Done to death on a Roman cross. We have seen enough and now turn away to go back down the hillside to Jerusalem.

But we keep asking ourselves, 'Why? Oh, why was He crucified?' As we turn for an answer to that question, we find that one of the great mysteries of all time is unfolded before us. He died to make an atonement for our sins. Here is the only answer to the question, 'Why was He crucified?'

We answer, 'Why was it necessary for One to die for our sins?' 'Well,' we answer, 'there were only three ways God could have dealt with a rebellious, sinning humanity.'

a. He could have dealt in justice. But, if He had, none could have been saved; all would have been cast into hell for we know, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' Again, we read, 'If thou Lord shouldst mark iniquity, O! Lord, who shall stand?' You know you have sinned against God and I know I have sinned against God. If God were to deal with us according to justice, we would surely be lost.

b. Or again, God might have dealt with us in mercy alone without any regard to justice and righteousness. For He is also a merciful God. But if He had laid justice and righteousness aside and dealt only in mercy, where then would have been the moral law and order in not only the world but the whole universe? God is merciful, but He is also just. He cannot simply pass over the rebellion and sinful nature and acts of mankind.

c. The only other way left for God to deal with man was for His mercy to express itself in finding a way whereby sin could be punished and man forgiven. This way He found in giving His Son to die for the sins of mankind.

Christ alone can save.

#### I. Because He was the One divinely appointed for this mission

1. Whether God foresaw the fall of man and then ordained that Christ should be the Savior or whether He ordained Christ to be Savior and then permitted the fall is a question over which the early church fathers spent hours debating. But which after all

does not really matter. The important thing is that He foreordained before the foundation of the world that He would give His Son, Christ Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

2. Listen if you will to some passage of Scripture.

- a. 1 Peter 1:20
- b. Acts 2:23
- c. Revelation 13:8

3. You may not care to accept Christ as your Savior and complain at God for not finding some other manner to be more suitable to you.

- a. But this is God's way which He determined before the foundation of the world.
- b. It is in this way or not at all.

II. He is only one because He alone was perfect

1. There would have to be a perfect One to atone for my sins.

- a. No one else could do it because no one else has ever been perfect.
- b. Had Christ committed one sin in thought, word, or deed, He would have been disqualified as a Savior.

2. He was God

- a. Not only in His power and might
  1. Could perform miracles
- b. But was God in His holiness
- c. No stain upon Him

3. 1 Peter 1:19 – describes Him

III. He is capable also because He was a unique Being

1. With one hand He reached up to God

- a. To be equal with Him
- b. In perfect holiness

2. He was man. With the other hand He reached down to sinful man and died as a sinner.

- a. He shed His blood for us
- b. This was God's way
  1. Without shedding of blood is no forgiveness

IV. He became our substitute

1. Let me illustrate from a true story told on one radio program in January 1936 by one Captain Von Hoffman:

“I was a member of the 28<sup>th</sup> Calvary and we were on the train crossing Siberia to Harbin and I want to tell you what happened to a fourteen year old cadet who was along. The cars in which we ordinary soldiers were being shipped were the cattle cars – we slept with the horses. It was August 12, 1904, late in the afternoon. One of the peasant soldiers got drunk – and he staggered up into the officers' quarters – the officer was shaving in a luxurious bathroom. This Russian said to the

officer, Captain Savilyer, who was a tyrant, “There’s a big difference between the beautiful place you have and the pig-pen we’ve got back there.”

The officer grabbed his sword, plunged it through the soldier, but the soldier was able to crawl back to our car before he died. That was the spark that ignited the mutiny. The men revolted – they took possession of the train and Captain Savilyer in great fear, locked himself in his car, but that didn’t stop the enraged men. They unhooked his car, pushed it down the track, and set fire to it and roasted him alive.

When the soldiers realized what they’d done they realized they’d be punished, but we camped three days alongside the track and waited. Then three regiments of Russian Cossacks arrived, in command of a general. The court martial lasted only five minutes – the decision was to stand our regiment in line – have the men count off – the odd ones step forward, and everyone who stepped forward would be shot.

There were 250 in the company and a boy, a 14 year old cadet.

They stood the 250 of us in a line – our executioners lined up in front of us. The 14 year old boy was at the far end of the line. He was standing like a little soldier – but his fists were clenched and the tears were rolling down his cheeks. The counting started. We couldn’t look – we didn’t know which one of us was even – which was odd. I could hear, “One” – the man stepped forward, “Two” – that one was saved and dismissed. “Three,” he stepped forward – it meant that he was dead – “Four” that one was saved. The counting started again. “One, two, three, four” and so it went, down the line, the little 14 year old cadet stood pale as a sheet, the voices getting nearer and nearer. Then out of the corner of his eye he could see the counting was only about six away. Would his number be even one so he could or would it be an odd number and death. One – two – three – four – one – then the boy could see that the man next to him was even – the man said, “Two.” It was the boy’s turn. He gritted his teeth – started to say that deadly number – he had just gotten out the first syllable, “Thr” – when he felt himself swept from the ground and thrown backwards. A gruff Russian voice answered in his place, “Three.” There was a roar – a blanket of flame and those 125 men fell to the ground – everyone a corpse. The boy stretched out his arms – the big Russian peasant, who had slipped forward in his place, fell back into them – dead. I know – for I was the 14 year old boy.

Who that Russian peasant was, who pulled me back – slipped in my place and said, “Three,” – I don’t know. I’d never seen him before. I don’t know to this day who he was – but he must have noticed I was just a boy. He had picked me up – tossed me behind the line – and I wouldn’t be here tonight if he hadn’t said in my place, “Three.”

Conclusion:

1. One who accepts Christ no matter how sinful they have been can sing:

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name; On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the ‘whelming flood; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay; On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

2. Have you accepted Christ?
3. Will you accept Him now?