

The Sure Word Bible Studies *Lesson 11*

The Cross of Christ

As we continue to study the second and final death of the wicked it will be helpful to study the death of Christ. Everyone agrees Jesus died the death of the sinner, and that being the case, if we want to know how the wicked die all we have to do is go to the cross and see how Jesus died.

First we have learned that God is immortal, He cannot die. That being the case, Jesus the divine Son of God lowered Himself to become as one of us that he might experience the death of the sinner.

Hebrews 2:9 *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."*

Verse 14 *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,"*

II Corinthians 5:21 *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Jesus, as a human being unlike any other was perfectly sinless, but yet the time came when He was somehow *"made to be sin for us"* in order for Him to *"taste death for everyone."* Just as we are incapable of understanding how God became a man, we are incapable of understanding how Christ was made to be sin and die as a man, but we have enough evidence to believe both are true.

But how was Jesus death different from that of any other man? There have been many men who have sacrificed their lives to save others. There have been many good men who have suffered terribly being painfully tortured for days leading up to their execution. But dying in these horrific ways does not make them the Savior of the world.

The one unique thing regarding the death of Christ was that He is the only one who has experienced what the lost sinner will experience in the end. The death God had warned Adam and Eve about in the beginning was not just the "sleep" from which all will be awakened, but the final and eternal cessation of life, the second death.

According to traditional church teaching, in the end the unrepentant sinner will suffer the "wrath of God" against sin which is what Jesus suffered on the cross in our

place. But remember God is not like us, His ways are not like ours. The wrath of God is not being beaten up or burned up, but rather God “giving us up” to the consequences of our choices in life. Note the following texts that make this clear beginning in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 31:16 - 18 *"And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'"*

II Chronicles 15:2 *"And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."*

Note that it is only after men forsake God that He forsakes them. In the following verse it is put another way.

II Chronicles 29:8 - 10 *"Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us."*

In His "wrath," God had simply "had given them up to trouble," in other words, He let them go their own way and suffer the consequences He would have them avoid.

II Chronicles 30:7 *"And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see."*

Psalms 81:11 - 12 *"But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels."*

We see the same principle in New Testament book of Romans as well.

Romans 1:18 - 28 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being*

understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;"

Again we see that God does not willingly inflict pain and trouble on the unrepentant sinner, but rather reluctantly *"gives them up"* to suffer the consequences of their own harmful choices.

Galatians 6:7 *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."*

Our conclusion, according to the Bible, is that God's *"wrath"* is simply God giving the unrepentant sinner up to go his or her own way. God is love and this is the only way love can respond to rejection! If this conclusion is correct, then there should be a text that says Christ was *"given up"* and there is -

Romans 4:24,25 *"It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."*

Romans 8:32 *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

The phrase *"delivered Him up,"* is translated from the Greek word, *"paradidomi,"* which means *"to give over"* or *"to give up"* and is translated in some modern versions exactly that way, for example The English Standard Version by Crossway says:

*"He who did not spare his own Son but **gave Him up** for us all."* (Romans 8:32 ESV)

And if we look at the biblical record of the crucifixion we will find that is exactly what happened. The prophet David writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit foretold the crucifixion experience of Christ in the book of Psalms. The following is a

comparison of those verses written by David in Psalms with the verses in Matthew's New Testament account of the crucifixion that demonstrate this:

Psalm 22:1 *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"*

Compare - Matthew 27:46 *"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?"*

Note: Jesus did not say, "My God, why are you killing me, or punishing me," but, "why have you forsaken me," or "why are you giving me up?" Jesus would not have said that unless He actually felt He was being given up.

Psalm 22:6 - 8 *"But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"*

Compare - Matthew 27:39 - 40 *"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."*

Psalm 22:16 - 18 *"For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."*

Compare - Matthew 27:35 *"Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."*

In comparing Psalms 22 with Matthew 27 it becomes clear that David is describing the experience of Christ as He is crucified centuries before it actually happened.

In the same way, the writer of Psalms chapter 88 also records the thoughts in the mind of Christ as He experiences the suffering of death.

Psalm 88:14 *"LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?"*

Remember Jesus cry – *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Verse 15 (first part) *"I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth:"*

As we read in Hebrews, Jesus knew from an early age who He was and that He was born a human for the suffering of death.

Verse 15 (second part) *"While I suffer your terrors; **I am distraught.**"*

The word "*distraught*" is translated from the Hebrew word "poon" which means, "to be perplexed, confused, unable to think logically."

Though Jesus knew and foretold that He would suffer and die, yet as He actually suffered the terrors of this hopeless death He became distraught, perplexed, unable to think logically.

Verse 16 *"Your fierce wrath has gone over me; Your terrors have **cut me off.**"*

As Christ suffers the experience of being "forsaken" by God, for a time He senses that He is cut off – He feels separated from the source of all life and facing the second death from which there is no resurrection. This becomes clearer as we go back and read verses 3 - 8.

Psalm 88:3 - 8 *"For my soul is full of troubles, And my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, Adrift among the dead, Like the slain who lie in the grave, **Whom You remember no more, And who are cut off from Your hand.** You have laid me in the lowest pit, In darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah. You have put away my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; **I am shut up, and I cannot get out;**"*

"Whom you remember no more." Christ now feels that he will be eternally forsaken and forgotten. "I am shut up and I cannot get out." He feels there is no hope of coming forth from the grave, no hope of resurrection from the tomb he is about to enter. We find more evidence of this in the book of Matthew:

Matthew 12:40 *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

Here Jesus is comparing the experience of Jonah in the belly of the whale with His own experience with suffering and death He knows is soon to come. Read the story -

Jonah 1:17 - 2:1 - 6 *"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol (Hebrew for the grave) I cried, And You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me;*

Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever;"

Though the text says Jonah was in the belly of the whale only three days, how long did Jonah say he was there? Not three days and nights, but *"forever."* To Jonah this experience was like hopelessly being buried in the earth forever! He felt he would never get out of that whales belly!

But his story does not end there, verse 6 continues - *"Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God."* Even though Jonah had lost hope, in the end God did bring him out of the whale's belly.

In the same way, even though the Bible says that in three days Jesus was tried, tortured, crucified and buried, Jesus said that just as Jonah, His experience of suffering and death would be to Him like an eternity. That He would sense that he would never get out of the tomb. And yet, even though Jesus felt God had forsaken him, the third day God did raise him up out of the tomb.

The thing we need to realize is this - as Jesus suffered the horrors of the crucifixion and separation from His Father, for a time He became distraught and could not think logically. While in this confused condition He lost sight of his own resurrection He had himself foretold. For a short time He actually lost any hope of coming forth from the tomb.

Those who have given their life for others did so believing they would live again, that there was life after death. But Jesus did so feeling this death was eternal. That made His sacrifice different from that of any other.

Yet, even though He felt this death would be eternal, He refused to come down from the cross! He was committed to die the eternal death if it meant by His sacrifice that men and women would be drawn to God so that they would have eternal life!

Hebrews 12:2 *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross"*

John 12:32,33 *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This He said, signifying by what death He would die."*

I Peter 3:18 *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,"*

Romans 5:8 *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Christ's death was the perfect demonstration of God's unselfish, self sacrificing love in its purest form for each one of us. When we comprehend that, if we do not resist, it will draw us closer to God and change us forever!

Now the question, If God did not execute Christ on the cross, but "*gave Him up*" to die as the unrepentant sinner then what actually caused His death? First of all, though it certainly contributed to it, crucifixion was not the sole cause of Christ's death. Note the following:

John 19:31 - 33 *"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs."*

Crucifixion was a slow torturous death that usually took three or four days. In this case, because it was Friday and the Sabbath was fast approaching their legs were broken to hasten their death, but they found Jesus was already dead.

Mark 15:44 *"Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time."*

The reason Pilate marveled was because men simply did not die by crucifixion as quickly as Jesus did. The following verse gives us a clue as to what actually killed Jesus.

John 19:34 *"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out."*

Physicians say that the fact that blood and water came from the opening in the chest made by the soldiers sword is evidence that Jesus actually died from traumatic shock. Today this is known as the "broken heart syndrome." That is a condition that occurs when a person suffers from extreme stress, just as Jesus would have during this experience. A condition which causes the body to release excessive amounts of fluids and adrenalin which accumulate in the heart and the sac that surrounds the heart and if not relieved will cause the heart to fail.

Just as Christ on the cross, the lost sinner will also be under enormous stress as they stand outside the walls of New Jerusalem at the Great White Throne Judgment feeling the terrible weight of guilt, despair, self condemnation and having no hope realizing they have cut themselves off from the very source of life and face only an eternal death. This burden is more than the sinner can bear and he will perish under its weight. This will be the cause of the sinners death. God does not put them to death, they die as the natural consequence of what they are, not because God is

inflicting punishment upon them. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next lesson.

But there is one difference in the death of the sinner and the experience of Christ. As Jesus experienced this awful death, no matter how hopeless things looked to Him, He still trusted God's word that had told Him he would be raised on the third day and just before He died, He cried "*Father into your hands I commend my spirit.*" This is the "*Faith of Jesus.*" A faith that trusts in God no matter how dark and hopeless things may look. We all need that kind of faith.

The good news is this - Even though Christ would not come down from the cross that day - He did come up from the tomb on Resurrection Sunday and eternally reigns on God's Throne! Moreover, because He lives, you and I can be among those who will live eternally with Him in the earth made new!

In the next lesson we will complete our study in the final death of the wicked, the final end of sin and sinners and how God is involved in that.

Response Questions:

1. Is it clear to you that the wicked will be
 - (1) Destroyed - forever.
 - (2) On the earth.
 - (3) At the end of the 1000 years.Yes ___ No ___

2. Do you understand that if one willfully continues to cling to sin eventually they cut themselves off from the source of life and will die the awful second death? Yes ___ No ___

3. Do you understand Jesus died to demonstrate the gift of God is life and love but the wages of sin is death? Yes___ No ___

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