

The Sure Word Bible Studies
Lesson 11

The Passion of Christ

Before we continue to study the final death of the wicked it would 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.

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."*

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, being sinless, was somehow "*made to be sin for us*" in order for Him to "*taste death for everyone.*"

But how was Jesus death different from that of any other man? There have been many men who have given their lives to save others. There have been many good men who have suffered terribly being painfully tortured as they were executed. But dying in these ways does not make them the Savior of the world.

Yet it is true, 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 warned Adam and Eve about in the beginning was not the "sleep" from which all will be awakened, but the final and eternal cessation of life, the second death.

According to traditional church teaching, 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.

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 “given them up to trouble,” in other words He let them go their own way and suffer the consequences.

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 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;"*

According to the Bible, God does not inflict pain and torture on the unrepentant sinner, but rather "gives them up" to suffer the consequences of their 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."*

Therefore, God's "wrath" is simply 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 translated in some modern versions as follows -

*"He who did not spare his own Son but **gave him up** for us all."*
(English Standard Version, ESV)

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

The following is a comparison of the verses in Psalms with the verses in Matthew's 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 are you forsaking me, or giving me 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 *"I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught."*

"I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth:"

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

"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 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, He senses that He is cut off – 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 senses 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 view recorded 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.

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.” This implies that to Jonah this experience was like hopelessly being buried in the earth forever!

In the same way, though the Bible says in three days Jesus was tried, tortured, crucified and buried, Jesus says, just as Jonah did, that his experience of suffering and death would be to him like an eternity.

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.

All those who have given their life for others did so believing they would live again. But Jesus did so feeling his death was eternal. That made His death different from 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,"*

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

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

If God did not execute Christ on the cross, then what caused His death?

First of all, Christ did not die as the result of being crucified. Note the following texts –

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 the Sabbath was approaching their legs were broken to hasten their death.

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 that He was already dead” 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 adrenalin which accumulate in the sac that surrounds the heart eventually causing the heart to stop.

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 weight is more than the sinner can bear and he will perish under its weight.

But there is a difference in their death 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 as He died He cried, "*Father into your hands I commend my spirit.*" This is the "*Faith of Jesus.*" We all need that kind of faith, a faith that trusts in God no matter how hopeless and dark things may look to us.

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 continue our study in the final death of the wicked, the final end of sin and sinners.

Response Questions:

1. 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 __

