



Lesson 18

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Reading **Mark 14 and 15**

The problem of sin

It is clear that sin is a terrible problem for man. It is a problem that even the most sincere man or woman has never been able to solve. It is not possible for man to conquer sin by his own efforts. The whole of the Bible is about how God has provided the answer to the sin of man. God gave His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice that was necessary to break the hold of sin on man.

The Lord Jesus joined with his Father in this work. He offered a willing, obedient sacrifice of himself to overcome the power of sin over mankind and to make it possible for his disciples of all ages to do the same by following him.

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus makes it possible for both the Lord Jesus Christ and all his true followers to escape the consequences of the sentence of death inherited from Adam. And it also makes it possible for the followers of Jesus to have their sins forgiven. (Jesus of course was perfect and did not commit any sins.)

A prophecy of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ

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

Turn to Psalm 22. This psalm helps us to understand how Jesus felt during the crucifixion:

"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (verses 6-8).

Not only the pain, but also the shame of being crucified weighed heavily upon Jesus. Read this Psalm very carefully. Perhaps more than any other words in the Bible, these help us to appreciate what the Lord went through for us. Look again at verses 15-16:

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."

How it came about

The rulers of the Jews hated Jesus. When great crowds came to listen to him, and brought the sick to be healed, they were jealous and angry. They could not see that the miracles he did were a proof that he really was the Son of God. They were blinded by their jealousy and hate. They determined that Jesus must be killed. They accused him of blasphemy, which must be punished by death according to the laws God had given them.

Of course it was a false accusation, but they did not worry about that! Israel at that time was ruled over by the Romans, and although the leaders of the Jews - the priests and Pharisees - condemned Jesus to death, they could not put him to death without the consent of the Roman Governor.

The name of the Roman Governor at that time was Pontius Pilate. The Jews brought Jesus to Pilate and demanded that he should be crucified. Pilate knew very well that Jesus was innocent. He knew that the Jews wanted him killed because they envied him. But he was afraid that if he stood out against the Jews, they would report him to Caesar, and he might lose his position. So he weakly gave in. He handed Jesus over to be killed by crucifixion -

surely the most painful and agonising death ever invented - although he knew he was innocent.

So the Romans were also to blame for what happened to the Lord Jesus.

Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?

As we think of Jesus hanging on the cross, and remember that he never did anything wrong, 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 could be saved from sin. Jesus had prayed three times to his Father, "*If it be possible, let this cup pass from me*" (Matthew 26:39). (Though he was careful to add, "*Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done*" - Luke 22:42.) 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; so Adam died. Death was his punishment. We are told: "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). This is God's law, and it cannot be broken.

All men (except Jesus) die because: 1. We all have Adam's dying nature; 2. We all sin. (2 Reasons)	Jesus died because: 3. He had Adam's dying nature; But he did NOT sin. (Only 1 Reason)
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Jesus was tempted just as we are, and in some ways more than we are, yet he never sinned. In Hebrews 4;15 we read:

Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

So Jesus **had to die** because he had human nature, but **he did not deserve to die** because he had not sinned. Because of this God was able to raise Jesus from the dead without breaking His own law that "*the wages of sin is death*".

After his resurrection God gave Jesus a new nature - a nature that was no longer dying because of Adam's sin and also a nature that could no longer be tempted to sin.

We can have our sins forgiven by being associated with the sacrifice of Jesus in baptism and confessing and repenting. When Jesus comes again we can also overcome death.

The lessons of the cross

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was a terrible event. It showed men at their worst as they took the perfect, generous and lovely Son of God and killed him brutally. The crucifixion showed how evil men really are and how they could never save themselves.

We have to realise that we are sinners also, and desperately in need of salvation.

We do well to think about 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 for all those who believe in Jesus as "*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

Another important lesson is this: the cross of Christ shows the extent of God's love for us. Paul puts it like this:

"He... spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all... shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32).

At one with God

Man was separated from God by sin. The repair of that division is called in the Scriptures "Atonement". If you look at the word you can see what it means:

"At-one-ment"

This is what the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus can do for us. It can make us ultimately "at one" with God; in perfect harmony and agreement. This is achieved by our escaping from Adam to Christ and having our sins forgiven.

As David says in the Psalms:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalm 32:1,2).

What about our part?

God has done all He can for us. He has given us 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 will not do us any good.

What must we do? Some of the Jews asked the Apostle Peter this question and his answer is just as true for us today. Peter said to them:

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

Again, in the next chapter (Acts 3:19) the apostle says:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

God's grace and our faith

So we come to the very heart of the Gospel. In the fulness of His love, God has given Jesus as a sacrifice for sin. This free love of God is often spoken of in the New Testament as 'His grace'. So in Ephesians 1:6-8 we read of that grace:

"... wherein he (God) hath made us accepted in the beloved (Jesus Christ). In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

We can reject God's grace and love. We can ignore it. But if we are wise, we will not do either of these things. It is such a wonderful offer of life and love. We shall want to be among those of whom Jesus speaks in Mark 16:16:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Baptism begins a new life

We are the children of Adam, and, like Adam, we prefer our own ways to the ways of God. But Jesus, when he gave his life as a sacrifice for sin, made it possible for us to become the children of God and part of the family of Christ.

Jesus said:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

We must be baptized according to his commandment. This means that instead of walking in our sinful ways, we must **die** to sin (that is, 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:

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24,25).

Summary

1. All men deserve to die, because they are sinners.
2. God in His love for men has provided a way in which sin can be forgiven.
3. This way is through the death of His only Son Jesus, who lived a sinless life.
4. Although Jesus lived a sinless life, he shared our human nature which has to die.
5. God raised Jesus from the dead, because he was sinless.
6. If we admit that we are sinners and worthy of death, and come to God through Jesus, He will forgive our sins.
7. If we acknowledge our sins and are baptized, we may become the children of God, with a hope of eternal life.

Chapters to read

2 Corinthians 5; 1 Peter 1

A verse to learn

Romans 5:8

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."