

9 - THE SUPREME SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

The truth that Jesus was crucified to be the Savior of the world is at the very heart of the gospel message. Therefore, it is Satan's determined purpose to distort this truth. While crucifixion was indeed horrible, the physical suffering Jesus experienced was similar to what other people endured, like the two thieves who were crucified with Him. However, the emotional and spiritual anguish that He suffered was so much greater, He died after just six hours. Normally it took much longer for a person to die on the cross (Mark 15:25,33-45; John 19:31-34).

When we understand the cross of Christ from the Jewish perspective, as the New Testament writers did, we are able to understand more clearly God's amazing love for us and the supreme sacrifice that was made for the human race.

Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). May our hearts be drawn to Him as we understand "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18 NIV). Then we will be able to say with Paul, "The love of Christ compels us" 2 Corinthians 5:14.

JESUS HUMBLLED HIMSELF

1. What attitude or mindset are Christians to have? Philippians 2:5

2. What was Jesus' position in heaven before He came to earth?

A. Philippians 2:6

B. John 1:1-3,14

From the beginning, Jesus was with God and was God. Then He came to earth as a baby to be our Savior (Galatians 4:4; Luke 1:26-38).

3. List the five humbling steps Jesus took in His mission to save the human race. Philippians 2:7,8

- A. Made Himself of no _____
- B. Taking the form of a _____
- C. Coming in the _____
- D. Humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of _____
- E. Even the _____ of the _____

JESUS EMPTIED HIMSELF

4. How did Jesus make Himself of “no reputation”? Philippians 2:7

- A. Isaiah 53:2 “He has no _____ or _____; and when we see Him, there is no _____ that we should desire Him.”
- B. John 5:19, 30 “The Son can do _____ of Himself.... I can of _____ do _____.”
- C. 2 Corinthians 8:9 “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was _____, yet for your sakes He became _____, that you through His _____ might become rich.”

The Greek word translated “no reputation” means “to make empty, make (of none effect, of no reputation, void)” Strong’s Concordance.

Isaiah 53:2 – “He has no comeliness.” The Hebrew word translated comeliness means, “magnificence, that is ornament or splendor” Strong’s Concordance.

The New International Version translates Isaiah 53:2 this way: “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”

Outwardly, Jesus was very plain. This was by design. He wanted people to be attracted to Him by His love and truth, not by His outward display. John describes what he saw in Jesus: “We beheld His glory . . ., full of grace and truth” John 1:14. The same is true today. The “fruit of the Spirit” makes a person attractive and a witness for Jesus (Gal. 5:22,23).

John 5:19, 30 – Jesus was helpless and dependent upon His Father. His Divine power and knowledge had been laid aside. On earth He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He relied upon His Father, the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures to guide His words and empower His actions (Luke 4:18).

2 Corinthians 8:9 – There are two Greek words that describe poverty. "Penia" refers to someone who has the basic necessities. "Ptocheia" refers to someone who has nothing. The latter is used of Jesus in this verse. He emptied Himself that we might become rich. With the riches we have in Jesus, we are invited to serve others as He has served us.

JESUS LIVED TO SERVE

5. Why did Jesus take the form of a bondservant? **Philippians 2:7**

- A. Mark 10:44,45 “The Son of Man did not come to be _____, but to _____, and to _____ His life a ransom for many.”
- B. Luke 22:24-27 “I am among you as the _____ who _____.”
- C. John 6:38 “I have come down from heaven, not to do _____ own _____, but the _____ of _____ who sent Me.”

Mark 10:44,45 – The nature of God’s love is giving and serving. The human race needed to be saved from sin. Jesus, as the Creator of the human race, was the only One who could legally become the last Adam. Out of love, He came to serve, giving up His life in order to redeem us.

Luke 22:27 – In this world, the rich, powerful and important people are served by others. In the kingdom of God, those who serve out of love are the ones who are great. Jesus was simply carrying out the principles of the kingdom of heaven by coming here to serve.

John 6:38 – Jesus was tempted just as we are tempted (Hebrews 4:15). There were times when His desires were different than His Father’s, but He always chose to follow His Father’s will. (See Matthew 26:39-44.)

JESUS CAME TO REDEEM AND TRANSFORM US

6. Why did Jesus come in the likeness of men? Philippians 2:7

- A. Romans 8:3 “...by sending His own Son in the _____ of _____, ... He [God] _____ sin in the flesh.”
- B. 2 Corinthians 5:21 God “_____ Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
- C. Galatians 4:4, 5 “God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to _____ those who were under the law.”

We are “by nature children of wrath” Ephesians 2:3. Adam passed his sinful nature onto us and brought condemnation to everyone (See Romans 5:18). When God “condemned sin in the flesh,” He was saying the sinful nature needed to die. (For example, if Jesus had condemned the woman who had been caught in adultery, He would have been saying she would need to be stoned. See John 8:1-11.)

Since Jesus created Adam, He could legally become another head of the human race. As the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45,47), Jesus became one with the human race. When Jesus was “born of a woman, born under the law,” he took upon Himself our human nature.

By coming in the “likeness of sinful flesh” and being “made... sin for us,” Jesus was able to take us, our sin and sinful nature to the cross and die for the sins of “the whole world” 1 John 2:2. This enabled Him to “redeem those who were under the law,” for in Christ, we all died the death the law demanded (Galatians 4:5; 2:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

Instead of saying Jesus had a sinful nature, it is more accurate to say that He took upon Himself our sin and nature that He might take us to the cross. It was our transgressions and iniquity that was laid upon Him:

“He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isaiah 53:4-6.

WHEN JESUS TOUCHED A LEPER

Some have thought that if Jesus received our iniquity, He would become a sinner Himself. But instead, His perfect life and death saved us from sin (John 3:17). This is illustrated by Jesus healing people with leprosy.

The law of Moses communicated that people would become “unclean” if they touched a leper (Leviticus 22:4-6). However, when Jesus touched a leper, he made the leper clean (Matthew 8:2-4).

“The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from his terrible disease is an illustration of His work in cleansing the soul from sin. The man who came to Jesus was ‘full of leprosy.’ Its deadly poison permeated his whole body.”

“The disciples sought to prevent their Master from touching him; for he who touched a leper became himself unclean. But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement. His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed.”

“Thus it is with the leprosy of sin,--deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by human power. ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores’ Isaiah 1:5, 6. But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no

pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,' shall hear the answer, 'I will; be thou made clean.' Matthew 8:2,3, R.V." The Desire of Ages, page 266.

7. What other reasons are given for Jesus becoming human?

- A. Hebrews 2:10,11 "Both He who _____ and those who are being _____ *are* all of _____, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."
- B. Hebrew 2:14,15 "As the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might _____ him who had the power of death, that is, the _____, and _____ those who through _____ of death were all their lifetime subject to _____."
- C. Hebrews 4:17,18 "In all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a _____ and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to _____ those who are _____.

Hebrews 2:10,11 - Jesus became one with us so He could be our Savior from all sin. This enabled Him to legally sanctify the human race through His perfect life and death and spiritually sanctify believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:10,14; Gal. 5:23,23).

Hebrews 2:14,15 - Since God is immortal, He cannot die (1 Timothy 6:16). Therefore, Jesus "shared in the same" flesh and blood so that He could die for the sins of the world and free us from our "fear of death."

Satan has appealed to our fear of death in order to manipulate and tempt us. Freedom from this fear destroys Satan's power over us.

The word translated “destroy” in verse 14, means, “To render inactive, idle, useless, ineffective” AMG Complete Word Study New Testament.

The NASB translates it, “that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death.” Understanding God’s perfect love will “cast out fear” and free us to be motivated by love (1 John 4:18).

Hebrews 2:17,18 - In order to be our High Priest, Jesus “had to be made like His brethren.” He is able to understand the suffering that we experience on this earth in the midst of our trials and temptations. Instead of being impatient with us, He encourages us to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4:16. As our High Priest, He is also able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before God because He gave His life for the human race (Rom. 12:1; Jude 24; Heb. 10:10,14).

JESUS LOOKED FORWARD TO BEING WITH US

8. Why was Jesus willing to die for us? Philippians 2:8

- A. Isaiah 53:11 “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be _____.”
- B. John 12:19-24 “Look, the _____ has gone after _____!.... Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and _____, it remains _____; but if it _____, it produces much grain.”
- C. Hebrews 12:2 “... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the _____ that was set before Him _____ the cross, despising the _____, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

From the prophecy in Isaiah, Jesus was able to understand that His sacrifice would “justify many” and bear much fruit. The Greeks were a reminder of this truth. Through faith in the promises in Isaiah, He was

able to focus on the eternal joy of being united with people who received His gift of salvation and wanted to be reconciled to God.

THE CROSS FROM THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

9. Why did Paul say “even the death of the cross?” Philippians 2:8

- A. Galatians 3:13 “Christ has _____ us from the _____ of the _____, having become a _____ for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a _____’).”
- B. Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 “If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to _____, and you _____ him on a _____, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is _____ is _____ of God.”
- C. Joshua 10:26 “Joshua struck them and _____ them, and _____ them on five _____; and they were hanging on the trees until evening.”

Crucifixion in the days of Christ was synonymous to hanging on a tree (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29; 1 Peter 2:24). When a person was hung on a tree, it signified the curse of God; death without the hope of eternal life. A story in Joshua 10 illustrates the concept spelled out in Deuteronomy.

Soon after Israel entered Canaan, five kings led armies against them. After the kings were killed, Joshua had their bodies hung on a tree until evening. This signified that the kings and their armies had rejected God and were cursed by Him. They had rejected the evidence that God was leading Israel. He had freed them from Egypt, kept them safe in the wilderness, helped them over Jordan and conquered Jericho.

10. What did Jewish leaders want to happen to Jesus? John 19:5-7

Pilate found no fault in Jesus. So the Jews had to give a reason why they were demanding His crucifixion. They accused Jesus of blasphemy for referring to Himself as the Son of God (John 5:18; 8:58,59; 10:30-33).

11. How were people to die if they blasphemed? Leviticus 24:16

The law against blasphemy demanded death by stoning. When Jesus said, “I and My Father are one,” the Jews took up stones “again” to stone Him (John 10:30-33). This proved they were aware that stoning was the method of death for blasphemy.

12. Thought question - Why did they want Jesus to be crucified?

The Jews believed that God would not allow a person to be “hung on a tree” unless he really was under the curse of God. In their minds, having Jesus crucified was a way to “prove” that He was not the Messiah.

Also, since Jesus predicted His resurrection (John 2:19-22; Mark 8:31), the Jewish leaders wanted to make sure God would “curse” Jesus so that He would not rise again.

JESUS GAVE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

13. How did people mock Jesus on the cross? Matthew 27:41-43

A. (42) _____

B. (42) _____

C. (43) _____

14. What happened soon after these taunts? Matthew 27:45

Darkness covered the land for three hours. This had an impact upon all those around, stopping the mocking and scorn. The people who were watching, “beat their breasts and returned” Luke 23:48.

15. What did Jesus cry out after 3 hours of darkness? Matt. 27:46

At the same time, Jesus was experiencing the “curse of the law,” feeling totally forsaken by God. He was dying without *feeling* any hope of being resurrected. Jesus was willing to say good-bye to life forever that He might give eternal life to the human race.

16. What were the last words of Jesus before He died?

A. John 19:30 “It is _____!”

B. Luke 23:46 “Father, into Your _____ I _____ My spirit.”

Jesus realized His mission of saving the world from death was completed. While He had felt forsaken, He chose to trust in His Father’s love and the promises from scripture. Isaiah promised that if He gave His life as an offering for sin, Jesus would “see His seed” and “prolong His days” Isaiah 53:10. He would leave His life in His Father’s hands.

17. What events happened after Jesus died that signified this was a very important moment in history? Matthew 27:51-54

A. (51) _____

B. (51-52) _____

C. (53) _____

When Jesus died, the veil in the temple was torn in two. This signified the earthly temple and animal sacrifices were no longer necessary. A violent earthquake shook the ground. “The rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen

asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

As a foretaste of the resurrection of the righteous, many saints came to life after Jesus rose from the grave. Their testimony added to all the evidence that Jesus truly was the Savior of the world.

After experiencing the mysterious darkness and the earthquake, soldiers at the cross “feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was “the Son of God.”’

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. . . . The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.”

“All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Savior in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.”

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race.”

“It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.” The Desire of Ages, page 753

JESUS' LOVING GIFT INVITES A RESPONSE

18. What did Jesus say He would do if He was lifted up? John 12:32

19. In the light of what Jesus has done for the human race, what did John invite us to do? 1 John 3:1,16

20. As you contemplate the supreme sacrifice of Christ, what thoughts come to you? How does it lead you to respond to Him?

MARY'S SON

By Clinton Meharry, © 2005

Mary gave birth to a wonderful Son,
But experienced pain like everyone.

She couldn't have had a better child,
More loving, friendly, patient and mild,

More helpful, courteous, kind and strong,
Forgiving others, while hating wrong!

But that is why she experienced pain,
He hated wrong, and that was plain.

People who wanted to cling to their sin
Felt the rebuke that came from Him.

He didn't have to say a word,
Loud and clear, they still heard –

For the life He lived and choices He made,
Came from One who always prayed.

Abiding with His Father above,
He showed us how to truly love.

Those who felt the need for grace,
Were gently drawn by His smiling face.

Those who thought they upheld the law,
Didn't like the things they saw.

“Why do you want to eat your dinner,
With the Publican and sinner?”

God condemns the thief and liar,
He will throw them in the fire.

If you approve of what they do,
Then surely God is not with You!”

Then Jesus looked around and asked,
“What do you think is the doctor's task?”

He comes to help the ones in need,
The lame, the sick, the ones who bleed,

I've come to heal those who hurt;
Those who feel they're good as dirt.

I've come to love and save all men
From slavery to their selfish sin.

The truth will truly make you free
When you believe and trust in Me.”

The Jewish leaders replied with scorn!
“Through fornication you were born,
How can you be teaching us?”
They looked at Him with mean disgust.

“We're sons of Abraham, you see,
We don't need to be made free!”

But as they spoke their anger grew.
Jesus knew what they would do.

When He was finally crucified,
He still loved them; He still replied,

“Forgive them, Father, they don't know
We're not doing this just for show.

When I am raised up from the grave,
They might believe I came to save

Everyone from every sin,
Simply because we love all men.”

As Mary stood beneath the cross
Weeping over the imminent loss,

She remembered the promise from years before,
A reminder of the spiritual war:

“A sword will pierce your soul too!”
She felt it now, it was surely true!

But on Sunday morning when the Son had risen,
In spite of the guards, from His tomb-sealed prison,

Mary now had a new song to sing,
Of her Son – The Savior, Creator, and King!