

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

Last week we studied what it means to confess that we believe in Jesus Christ. We started with the office of Mediator of Christ, which consists of two parts, namely the five degrees of his humiliation and his glorification. We studied the first two degrees, His birth and his judgment under Pontius Pilate.

Today we will take a closer look at the remaining three degrees of humiliation, namely, Jesus' crucifixion, his death and burial, and his descent into hell.

### 3. His crucifixion

What benefit has it for me to know that Jesus died on a cross and not by any other means. He could just as easily have been killed by mob rule, considering the level of hatred that ruled against Him at the time.

This death is a confirmation that Jesus carried the curse, which lay on me since God cursed death by crucifixion.

Deut 21:22, 23 "And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

This commandment contains a frightening qualification, doesn't it? Only a man who has committed a sin worthy of death should be hung on a tree. As we have seen last week, Pilate declared Jesus innocent and yet, He was handed over to be killed like someone who "has committed a sin worthy of death."

The death of the cross is an aggravation of Christ's punishment and at the same time it is a confirmation of our faith, because the fact that Christ was crucified, gives us the assurance that He has taken the curse which rested upon us, and suffered it till the wrath of the Father was exhausted; the injustice committed by man was satisfied. Jesus could not have died in any other manner without leaving us in doubt ...

- whether the Father's just judgment has been fully poured out;
- whether Jesus has fully drunk the cup of wrath; emptied it including the dregs;
- whether we are free from God's judgment.

God willed that Jesus should endure our punishment, because without that divine intervention, those whose names have been written in the book of life before creation would also have been lost, thwarting God's purpose in the process, which is absurd.

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

When God, therefore, purposed the end, He also purposed the means.

Let us look at four reasons why God willed that His Son should endure the punishment of such a disgraceful death:

- a) That we may know that the curse, which was justly laid upon us, could only be removed by making a sacrifice with equal value. An accursed death.
- b) That, by knowing that the punishment was beyond the ability of any sinful man and by knowing that Jesus has made complete satisfaction for that punishment, our faith may be even more strengthened.
- c) Our awareness from which terrible death we were saved, excites our sense of gratitude, inasmuch as our wickedness could not be redeemed unless it is by the most bitter and detestable death of someone who could raise himself up again.
- d) That the Scriptures would be fulfilled that set before the Israelites all the types of Christ, so that they may recognize the Christ when he arrived. Some did and some did not. It was also necessary that the types of Christ be fulfilled in the real Christ. Therefore, we have a scriptural fulfillment and a personal fulfillment.

Foreshadowed in Isaac was the sacrifice of Christ, who was laid upon the wood so that his father could sacrifice him. The brazen serpent which Moses set upon a pole in the wilderness was a type of Christ, Jesus declared, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14) and "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

What, therefore, do we believe in Christ crucified? We believe that Christ was made subject to the curse for me, that He might deliver me from it.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--

#### 4. His death and burial.

##### 4.1. Jesus' death.

God's justice and truth demanded that for the sins committed, the punishment of death alone would suffice (Gen 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.).

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

Since man's death would extinguish his life leaving no life to pay for others, the punishment could only be sufficiently suffered by one who could survive it, which left only God's Son who could pay for our sin.

Rom 8:3, 4 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Phil 2:5-8 Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Heb 2:9, 10 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. 10For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Some argue that Jesus was not really dead and his death was merely imaginary or, even worse, figurative. Alternatively, that it was just a mere appearance of flesh that Christ assumed and that He did not truly die.

How, then, do we know that Christ really died? It is important that we are fully assured of this fact or we cannot be sure that God's wrath is fully satisfied, since it is only by death that it could be satisfied.

When we confess that Christ died on the cross, we believe that He was truly dead and there was a real separation between his body and his soul. This separation was of a real local character, so that His soul and body were physically separated.

Matt 27:50 "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit."

In many places do we read that the soul and the body are separated at death, and in those cases where the dead person was resurrected, Scripture says that the body and soul were united again. In Matt 27:50 Jesus gave up his spirit, meaning that his life (soul) departed from his body. In Acts 7:59, 60 Stephen cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In Ecclesiastes 12:7, we read, "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

If we read the resurrection accounts in the Bible, we see that the body and soul reunites before life returns. This implies that they were separated when death occurred.

There is the account of Elijah resurrecting the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:21, 22 in which the son's soul came into him again. Some translations say "life" instead of soul, but the Hebrew word *nephesh* used here means soul.

In Luke 8:53-55 we read the account of Jairus' daughter being raised by Jesus and her spirit returned to her, meaning it was separated from her body when she died.

The body and soul have different destinations, the latter either in comfort at the side of Abraham or in torment, while the former always in the grave.

### **But doesn't this mean that just his Divinity departed from him?**

No, there is a difference between his Divinity and his soul. His Divinity, while united with his humanity, operated beyond and without his humanity and could not depart from it as it was in a hypostatical union with the body. His soul departed from his body at the moment of death and was taken up to be with the Father in heaven.

The reason for this difference is that his Divinity is infinite and is forever joined with Christ's human nature so that we may forever be sons of God through him. The soul, on the other hand, is created and would have naturally left his body upon death.

Even though Jesus' soul was truly separated from his body, the Second Person of the Godhead, the Word, never left the soul or the body. The Word remained personally united to each so that, during this separation of soul and body, the two natures of Christ were not disjoined or severed.

### **But, why, then did Jesus call out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

This cry was extorted from the suffering Son of God not because of any separation of the two natures, but because of the terrible agony of having the Son separated from the Father, so that we may never be separated from the Father.

Upon his ascension, Jesus was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of the God, being reunited with his Father.

(Mark 16:19; Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1Pet 3:22)

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

We should imagine that the two natures in Christ have been separated because God has purchased the church with his own blood. (Acts 20:28). That is also our security that our Brother, the first-born among the resurrected, has never been without his Divine nature and never will be without it.

The union of the natures in Christ remained intact even in death and in the grave. "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again." (John 10:17). How could Christ take up his life again if his Divine nature departed from his body?

Scripture also provides us with an account of the physical state of Christ after His death.

"But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe." (John 19:33 – 35)

Because of these testimonies in Scripture, we know that Christ has truly died.