

The Death of Christ

Studies in the life of Christ

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Bible Text: Mathew 27:33-59; John 19:14-37

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The Death of Jesus Christ. What does it mean to me personally? Does it have any impact on us as we read it? It is not just from a sadistic aspect that we are reading about some cruel punishment that a person endures, though it was cruel, inhumane, unjust. But it is much more involved than that. This is the very vertex of all time. We date time, before Christ and after Christ. All the Old Testament brings us up to this focal point. We have read in our reading that the veil in the temple was rent in twain. That is not just an insignificant statement. It is God demonstrating that all the Old Testament sacrifices and the Old Testament mode of worship has now been accomplished and fulfilled. Now we begin with a new administration, with a new priesthood, with a new mode of worship and it is set forth by our Lord in John the fourth chapter, as we have shared with you before in his statements there with the woman at the well.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The only thing necessary for the child of God today to worship Jesus Christ is to have been regenerated and to have the truth of God. And those two, as I have said, are always abiding together. You cannot separate truth from the Spirit of God.

I do not mean to say that they are the same. There are those who teach that the Bible truth is the Holy Spirit. No. The Holy Spirit is the third person. We refer to him in that aspect. He is very God as much as is Jesus Christ. He is part of the godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Word of God contains the truth of God and is the revelation to us of the mind of God. When the truth of God is believed and when it is declared, it is believed by regenerated people who have the Holy Spirit. You cannot understand the truth of God apart from the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord told Simon Peter, “Blessed art thou,” when he gave that great confession.

“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

And Peter said: “Thou art the Christ.”

The definite Greek article “the” is very important there. It is there.

“Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

All those times you have the definite Greek article, which means you are peculiarly the Messiah, the exclusively the Son of the living God.

And our Lord said to Simon Peter, which is something that we need to understand about all truth:

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

So we may read and memorize the Word of God and never have understanding of it. The understanding of it must be given to us by the Holy Spirit. So when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to God’s elect people revealing to them the truth, they are blessed then to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth.

To show to us that this transition has taken place, we have the veil in the temple being rent in two. And should we lose the significance of that, in 70 AD the Romans totally destroyed the temple. Even today, the orthodox Jews cannot, even to this day, cannot keep the Passover. They cannot keep the Old Testament feast and sacrifices because they do not have the Temple. They have made some provisions and substitutions and arrangements, but they are not doing it according to the Scriptures. They are doing it according to the rabbis. But it is not according to, “Thus saith the Word of God.”

You and I who have been brought by the Holy Spirit of God to know Jesus Christ as Savior have this understanding that the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ, the very Lamb of God and that his death fulfilled all the Old Testament sacrifices. That his death was, indeed, the means whereby God has saved his people from their sins. It is the glorious news of the gospel that thrills the hearts of God’s people and it never grows old. It is, I trust, always as thrilling to you as it is to me whenever I consider it and think of it. And we should not fail to be constantly minded of God’s great love toward us.

Now there were three words that I want to use today in our consideration today about the death of Christ. I don’t think that I am saying anything new to you at all, but I want to just refresh your minds, as Peter says, and stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And I will use three words to kind of hang my thoughts on this morning and those three words are: predetermined, preordained and propitiatory, those three words.

The first thing that I want to point out to you about the death of Christ—and you very well know this already, but just remind us about this, because it is significant. If we are going to understand aright the death of Christ, we must understand that the death of Christ was not by accident. It was not a mob getting out of control. It was not just things happening, but rather everything involved with the death of Christ, as it was also his life, everything involved about his death was according to God’s predetermined will.

Now you have Peter saying in Acts chapter two when he is speaking there on the day of Pentecost to those very same Jews in Jerusalem who just a few days before, (50 days) had put Christ to death and Peter is preaching that great message there in Acts chapter two. He speaks to them and says, “Him,” referring to Jesus Christ and, again, in the Greek there that word “him” is very emphatic. He is speaking particularly to about this man.

“Him, being delivered...”

That is an important phrase, too.

“Him, being delivered...”

The Greek word would also mean him being surrendered over. Never did things get out of control. You remember when they came to the garden they were going to take and arrest the Lord and Peter drew his sword. The Lord said, “Put away your sword. For I could call legions of angels.”

It was not that a mob overruled. It was not that things could not be prevented, but rather Christ was verily delivered. He himself submitted himself and became willing in the eternal counsel of God, before the foundation of the world, to experience death and to become flesh and dwell among us to experience death for the sins of his elect people whom the Father had chosen and given unto him. And so everything is a matter of submission.

“Him, being delivered...”

Surrendered over. That would tell us something about how that God is always in control of the wrath of men and wicked things. God suffers, God allows people to do wicked things. Not that he is in any way the author or instigator of them, but rather he allows men to exercise and manifest their anger and their wrath to accomplish his eternal will.

Psalm 76:10.

“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel...”

The word there “determined” is a Greek word from which we would get the word “horizon.”

And to pronounce the word orizw (hor-id’-zo) which is very close to our word “horizon.” When you look out across the horizon, especially if you were out on a high mountain or on the sea, you would see something of a line and that would be the boundary, the line between earth and the skies. And so that is the horizon. It means the limits or the lines drawn or the boundary of something.

You can see this, I believe, when we look at the death of Christ and you read over and over, “This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”

Now what are the Scriptures? The Scriptures are simply the unfolding of the revelation of that which God has determined to happen. So when we say, predetermined, that is what prophecy is. People get all excited about the word “predestination.” They get upset about predetermination. They seem to have problems with it, yet they believe prophecy. I don’t see how you can believe one and not believe the other.

“Him being delivered.”

God had determined before the foundation of the world that Jesus Christ—and Christ had agreed to this—that he would come and experience this very death so that we might understand that this was happening by the determinate will of God and was not just simply the wrath of man being manifested. God puts little significant phrases in His Word so we would come to understand he is always in control. So everything about the death of Christ was determined.

You go back in the very first prophecy about the death of Christ in Genesis chapter three and verse 15 that the Lord there spoke to the woman and said that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

Now I could just imagine the old rabbi scholars reading that and scratching their heads and saying, “How is this going to be done? What is meant by this phrase, “the seed of woman?” Always in the Old Testament when it is talking about begetting and genealogies and so forth, it is always in the masculine sense, the seed of man or the seed of so and so. But here it is the seed of woman.

You and I, who have been made to understand about the marvelous work of the incarnation, understand how that the virgin Mary was moved upon by the Holy Spirit of God so that she conceived without a man being involved. The body of Jesus Christ was formed by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit of God, uniquely. No other way could it have been done.

So here God put himself, so to speak, in a bind. I don’t like to use that terminology, but that is how I have said it, God put this thing in such a restricted frame that when it happens, we would understand that it was exactly as God had determined that it would happen.

Isaiah 7:14: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”

This verse has been attacked by all of the Atheists and all of the Bible deniers of the world. They have tried to twist and pervert it and make it to mean something else other than it does mean. Indeed, in the Hebrew language, the Hebrew word there for virgin could a young woman, but, you know, it is not like our modern day society. If you were

not a virgin, you were stoned in Israel and so it is a young woman who is a virgin because that is the only kind of young women that was unmarried at that time.

And yet Mary confirms that and proves that when she said to the angel:

“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

The rabbis are still scratching their head over that one.

So God put this in a predetermined way that we would understand that as it is unfolding across the pages of time, exactly as God had ordained it to happen. He made promises.

For instance He said, “the seed of David” and it is exactly what Christ was.

You read in Romans chapter one that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David. And who was Mary? She was of the tribe of Judah. Who was Joseph? He was from the tribe of Judah. So it was that the tribe that Jesus Christ comes forth, was the tribe of Judah.

But not only was the birth of Christ predetermined, but also the very means whereby he was to be put to death. It may not be well understood, but in John the third chapter when Jesus Christ said:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

That was reference to a unique way in which he was to be put to death and it was unique especially to Israel because Israel never crucified or hung anyone. They never hung anyone except, as it was, referred to in Deuteronomy the 21st chapter. It was understood that this person was in a special way accursed of God. Very rarely did it ever happen. And so now Christ said that in that manner he would be put to death, he would be hung on a tree.

Paul makes reference to that in Galatians the third chapter where he says that this is proof that Christ was made a curse for us. No other way could he have died. While they at times wanted to push him off a cliff, yet he passed through the midst of him. When they at times wanted to pick up stones and stone him, they did not do it. He was untouchable or invincible to a certain degree, until it comes to the very hour and day when he is to die and he dies uniquely in a very special way exactly as he had told his disciples he would die.

In Luke the 22nd chapter he said in verse 22:

“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined.”

There is the word, “determined.”

“...as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”

In Acts the 17th chapter we have this Greek word again orizw (hor-id’-zo), Acts 17 verse 26:

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined [put in bounds] the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

Did you know this? The very community you live in, the very house you live in, I believe, is ordained of God. That is what it says right here. And that is what the word habitation means, the very residence that you live in. Now I don’t know about you, but I have a very blessed and confident assurance that I believe that I live in the very house that God has ordained and prepared for me to live in.

Yes I have got to pay a mortgage on it, but I believe that it was planned and I can go through the history and tell you that I think this was the appointed place for me to live.

But this is what it says.

Acts 17:26:

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

In Hebrews chapter four and verse seven this word is used and it is interesting here because it gives us, when you compare Scripture with Scripture, you get a Greek lexicon. You get an understanding of the various meanings of this word. And here in Hebrews 4:7 it says:

“Again, he limiteth a certain day...”

It is the Greek word orizw (hor-id’-zo) which means, he set the boundaries or he framed a certain day.

“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

You see, the word “determined” means that you shut everything else out and you close in, you are setting boundaries. This is exclusively the way it will be done. That was the way it was about the death of Christ.

In Matthew 27 verse 35.

“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.”

Now that is a very insignificant statement in a relative sense. These Roman soldiers have absolutely no interest at all; they didn't even know what the Bible or the Old Testament said about them. They had absolutely no interest in fulfilling the Scriptures and if you had walked up to him and said, "You all are fulfilling the Scriptures," they would have laughed you to scorn and probably given you a back hand, because they were not interested in fulfilling the Scriptures. They were doing totally what was their own volition was to do, but you will see that God restrains them in the tearing of the robe and cast lots for it. The Bible says:

"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

God was controlling what these wicked men will do. And lest you missed the point there, you come on down and you read that he was numbered with the transgressors. That is spoken of in Isaiah the 53rd chapter. That is exactly what Isaiah said 700 years before the birth of Christ. Isaiah said that he would be numbered with the transgressors, one on the one side and one on the other side.

John 19, the Scripture we read, verse 36 and 37.

"For these things were done..."

What we are reading about is:

"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

The soldier came with every intention of breaking the bones of Jesus Christ. He was an ungodly person. I personally believe that he experienced regeneration and came to the knowledge that, "Truly this is the Son of God."

Now you may differ with me and that is all right. But I think that God made a direct revelation to him that this was the Son of God. But he walked up to the cross with every intention of doing what he had done to the other two men, breaking their legs to hasten their death. He was going to break the legs of Jesus Christ, but God had said that not a bone of his body would be broken. That was God's predetermination. That was the boundaries that God put on his death. Wicked man will act. They will do what God has determined to be done, no more, no less. Not a bone of his body would be broken, but his side will be pierced. The soldiers did just that.

"For what reason," you may have asked? "I don't know," he might have answered, but he just fulfilled the scriptures. He did the predetermined will of God!

"Oh, no, I just did it because I am disgusted or angry. I want to be sure the man was dead." He pierces the side of our Lord, fulfilling all the Scriptures

Why? Because God determined that his death would be exactly as God had ordained it to happen so that you and I would understand that it was not just happening, but it is happening for a divine purpose.

Now, here is the second word, preordination. They are very similar and we sometimes use them interchangeably, but they are not synonyms.

I'll just try to give us some illustrations. You are here today by the grace of God, but you are here today because you determined to come. But the reason you determined to come here is because you came for a purpose. So the purpose determined the predetermination. You cannot separate the two. But they are not the same.

A young lady is getting married and she, in a traditional wedding, would wear a white gown. She just doesn't say, "Well, you know, it doesn't make any difference or I kind of like white or I don't know, maybe I will wear blue."

Certainly she wouldn't choose black. She chooses white for a reason. She predetermined, she chose to use the white because it would accomplish a purpose. There is a purpose to it. It has significance to it. And so she is going to wear this gown, predetermining it, choosing it, but she uses this gown because it declares, it has a purpose.

And so these things are closely related, predetermination and purpose, preordination, but they are not one in the same.

John the 15th chapter you have that word used by our Lord. Verse 16 he says:

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you."

Now we could say that predetermination is involved with choosing. But you also have the other word here, "ordained." It means that I have put you here for a purpose and he tells you what that purpose is.

I have set you here. That is what the word "ordained" means. I have put you in place. I have a purpose for you. Your purpose is that you would go forth and that you will bring forth fruit and that your fruit will remain.

Some say, it has happened because those apostles were such great preachers and they worked miracles and they were so gifted with such abilities. That is the reason, some would say, they were so successful.

Well, if you would look at Paul in prison you wouldn't think of him being successful. Or if you had followed the paths of those apostles, most of them were put to death. You do not think that they were successful from human aspects, but you and I know the full story and the reason they brought forth fruit and the reason there were there were 3000 souls saved on the day of Pentecost and the reason they had such an impact on the world so that it was said on occasion:

“These that have turned the world upside down...”

It is because God had chosen them as an instrument to do his will and he said, “I have ordained you.” This is the reason I chose you. I ordained you to go forth and to bring forth fruit.”

The fruit that came forth was not because of their abilities, but rather because what God did through and by them. And then he said:

“...that your fruit should remain.”

You are here today to worship the Lord in a New Testament church because God made that promise right there. Your fruit will remain. I do believe in the perpetuity and preservation of the Lord’s Church not because some history book says it, but because God said it. Jesus Christ said:

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Oh, I know history will support it, but I don’t look to history. I don’t have to have a biology book or a science book to believe Genesis chapter one through three. I just believe what the Bible says, “God created the heavens and the earth.” The same thing is true about the preservation and perpetuity of the Lord’s Church.

Ordained! So the death of Christ is not just something that is happening. It is because it has a purpose to it. It has been preordained that he die and that he would die to accomplish a certain purpose. That is where we have problems with other religious orders because they don’t understand and they deny the purpose of the death of Christ. He is not dying as an example or as a martyr. He is dying to save his people from their sins. In Matthew chapter one and verse 21, we read:

“And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

And so there is a divine purpose in Christ’s death.

Hebrews chapter one you have this word used in verse two where it says that:

“God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”

Now there is that word “ordained.”

“...whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”

Now would anyone argue, regardless of whether you are an Arminian or a Calvinist, as such, would anyone argue that Jesus Christ is “the heir of all things” and that he will,

indeed, manifest throughout all eternity that he is that one whom God has appointed the heir of all things?

Why is it? Why is it that he will be heir of all things? Well, of course, we could say that he has fulfilled the will of the Father. In Philippians chapter two, we read, “God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.” The reason all of this has happened is because God “hath appointed” it. It will be, because God has ordained it.

1 Thessalonians chapter five. That word is used again.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Not a one of God’s elect people will die and go to hell. They are not appointed to wrath, but rather they have been appointed or ordained unto eternal life.

2 Timothy chapter one verse nine.

“[God] Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13.

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

Why do those things happen? Because God ordained them to happen. They shall not fail to happen. Every one of those that Jesus Christ died for on the cross of Calvary, everyone of them have been redeemed. Every one of them have been justified. Everyone of them shall, indeed, be heirs of eternal life. Everyone of them shall be glorified, because Jesus Christ came to accomplish the purpose that God sent him for.

Just consider with me such a foolish idea as this, if you would, please. If it is true, as the Arminians and the free-willers say, that Jesus Christ died and it is up to you to make a decision to accept it or reject it in order to be saved.

Now let’s just suppose, using that reasoning, that no one, absolutely no one in all the history of time, no one accepts him. I mean when you consider the doctrine of the depravity of man that is not an impossibility. It is not impossible, knowing that people are dead in trespasses and sins and knowing that the carnal mind is enmity with God and knowing that there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after the Lord. And when you look at what the Bible teaches about the depravity of man, it would not be far fetched to say that if it were left up to man’s human free will to come to Jesus Christ, not a single one would come.

Then what about the death of Christ? It is all vain and foolish!

God would send forth his only begotten Son into the world to be made flesh and to suffer the inhumane, unjust death on the cross of Calvary and all of this would be done according to the will of God for the purpose to save people from their sins and then time is all over and nobody chooses Christ and be saved, so everybody would die and go to hell.

That is not a very wise God. That is not the God of the Bible.

The Word of God teaches that God had a divine purpose in sending forth his Son and that he was ordained before the foundation of the world to be the sin bearer for the sins of his people and that Jesus Christ who died according to God's predetermined plan, that he accomplished that purpose on the cross. If you will accept nothing else, take this. Jesus Christ, when he had suffered, said, "It is finished" and it was finished!

The death of Christ for his people was accomplished.

No works, nothing that we have done, not one thing can we do, not one thing must we do. Christ has paid it all and salvation is certain and sure to all of those who have been chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, because it was preordained for that purpose.

Not because of what man makes out of it, but because of what God has ordained.

Which brings me to the third and final point, that it was propitiatory. You have that word in the third chapter of the book of Romans where we read, verse 25:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

The word propitiation is a word that is used exclusively in the New Testament. It is a New Testament word primarily, although we do have a similar word in the Old Testament when we read about the mercy seat. But the real understanding of that word is taken from Isaiah the 53rd chapter where you read:

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Now you who are my regular listeners, you know very well that I do not use the word atonement. I try to abstain from using the word "atonement" in the death of Jesus Christ, because the word atonement means primarily a covering and it was a temporary covering and so every year Israel of old had to have a Day of Atonement. They did this annually, every year, because it is only temporary. It was pointed to the time when Jesus Christ would make the once and for all final sacrifice for sin and there would need be no more sacrifice because God says, "I am satisfied."

That is what it means, to be satisfied. The law of God has been satisfied. The sword of God's judgment was drawn and was plunged, as it were, into the heart of Jesus Christ. The sinless Lamb of God, on the cross of Calvary, shed his precious blood and in those three hours of darkness, there was such a transaction going on between the Father and the Son that God put a cloud over the sun.

Christ said:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

When the three hours was over Christ said:

"It is finished."

And the light returned. The Lord said:

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And he dismissed his spirit and bowed his head and died. It was finished! It was accomplished! He had paid the price and the sword of God's justice was put back into its sheath and God said, "Justice has been fulfilled and the law has been satisfied. There is no more condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus."

Not a single one of those for whom Christ died will ever die and go to hell. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Don't speak of people dying and going to hell for whom Jesus Christ died. You belittle the death of Christ. You dishonor his work on the cross of Calvary. The death of Jesus Christ was by divine design for a divine purpose and it accomplished that purpose. When you read and think about the death of Christ, rejoice and sing.

"He died for my sins and I am free, free of the law's condemnation. Hallelujah, what a Savior."

Propitiation, satisfaction. I don't know of any other word better to describe the death of Christ. There are many other words that talk about the transaction that took place. Ransom. He paid the ransom price. You wouldn't have dared to pay a ransom price and then not get what you paid the price for. When people, who kidnap a person and put a ransom price on that person, if they don't deliver that kidnapped person, we think of them as being the most inhumane and unjust criminal possible.

Are you going to say the same thing about God the Father who is holy and just in all of his ways and that he sent his Son to die to pay a ransom price for the souls of men and yet some of them die and go to hell? Nay, no, no, no, not so. Everyone of those that Christ died for have been redeemed.

Which brings us to that other word: Redeemed. That means to be set free, delivered. Three Greek words that describe the death of Christ are used for redemption. They mean to pay the price, to set free, to loose from the chains of bondage. Christ paid the price of the redemption, for the deliverance of a person who had been in bondage to sin and then that person not be set free. Why all the powers of heaven would be moved against such injustice to think that Christ could die of an individual and yet that soul die and go to hell.

That is the reason the Lord can say:

“I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.”

Because he paid the price of our redemption.

Justification. God freely justifies. This is accomplished between God the Father and the Son. All the sins of all of God’s elect people were laid upon Christ and He satisfied the law concerning them. God now is satisfied and declares them to be justified, not because of any foreseen goodness or acts that they might do, but because of what Christ did on the cross of Calvary. Satisfied, therefore we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul described it again in Romans three, that we are justified freely by the grace of God. And so the death of Christ was a predetermined death from before the foundation of the world for a divine purpose which God had ordained that he would accomplish and which he did accomplish when he said:

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

The will of God was that he might accomplish and pay the price of redemption for all of his elect people and therefore it is propitiatory. God is satisfied.

Paul, I think, summarizes it in the fourth and fifth chapters of Romans where we have him saying:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”

Christ was raised for our justification, according to chapter four and verse 25:

“...raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is no peace for the unregenerated person. But for all of those whom God is pleased to make known to them that Christ has died for their sins, there is peace and that peace comes about because God imparts faith, not human faith, not just mental, intellectual faith, but divine faith, faith whereby we are made to believe God. Faith, whereby the Holy Spirit of God has worked in our hearts and we say, “I believe him. I trust him.”

I trust that God the Holy Spirit has to all of you imparted that faith that you can say with assurance, confidence, based upon the Word of God that Christ has died for my sins.

Our Father...