

Why Did Jesus Christ Die -

seeing He was not a sinner?

Part of this question can be answered in a very simple way; He died to save me from my sins. A person that makes this statement at least acknowledges the fact that they need saving from sin. This is the first essential truth; it is quite likely that God will save many whose only explanation is that they need a personal Saviour because they know that they are sinners, yet wish to be something different.

On the other hand, if we gather together all the sayings of Jesus concerning His death, we can discover why He died as a sacrifice; the outstanding reason is seen in His saying "He came to give Himself a ransom for many." Ransom means far more than deliverance - it is a Price paid for deliverance we are told that we were all sold under sin (sold to sin as a master), and it came about by disobedience.

When Adam was created in a mortal, or earthy body, he was given a chance to choose between good and evil, obedience would be for his good, disobedience to God's command would mean death. I think we could all admit Adam and Eve could have obeyed without any hardship to themselves; they had all they needed for an enjoyable natural life, but they desired more and began to doubt whether God really meant what He said - and eventually decided they knew best.

On the other hand. God who created them "knew what was in man." We are also told it was never in man "to direct his ways;" God knew he would need guidance and it would be for his good that he should be obedient to law. He put them to a test of obedience by placing before them desirable fruit - with a command not to take and eat of it; they failed, giving way to natural desire.

It should be quite clear man's desire to please himself was there before he was condemned to death for disobedience. It is also true these desires can become very perverted. We cannot live in a family, a community, or a world free from sin if we do not consider one another. God, knowing this saw how necessary it was for us to be obedient to His will; it is not because He wants to show His authority because He is all powerful; He is also just and good, loving and long-suffering. He wants us to recognise this as well as his greatness.

We make a mistake if we think He has made man with only an *animal mind*; *there is a spiritual side to man's make-up - we are not just* like animal creation, for they were not made in the image of God as we are. They cannot reason as we can; they have no aspirations towards good and lovely things as we have. Man often does things quite against the mind of the flesh - the spiritual nature in man may cause him to rush to save another at the expense of his own life, but even this has not saved him from sin because the selfish part of him so often has the upper hand.

Paul was quite right when he said "in the flesh (or fleshly mind) dwells no good thing." Man, pleasing himself with his animal desires cannot do any good thing, but man desiring to become more spiritually minded can accomplish wonderful things; he has already in him the God-given capacity. Paul say in Romans "the Gentiles had altogether turned aside; there was none that understood" - they had forsaken God and His guidance, their natural desires had become perverted. A man who professes to be a Christian should see to it that his mind is not like this

The world to-day is learning to its sorrow its neglect of God's guidance and it should be quite clear from the Bible and things in the world, man needs redeeming and reconciling to God, and He has done it through Jesus. When God brought into existence His only begotten Son, He was made of our flesh with all its natural desires. He was to live in a world already cursed by Adam's, and other men's sins, and yet He was obedient in all things, even resisting sin when He naturally desired to live and not suffer such a terrible death. In doing this He more than declared God's righteousness in asking Adam to obey so simple a trial.

Previous to His death, Jesus had obeyed God's law in all its detail where every other man had failed. In doing so He honoured God. For *three and a half years* "He suffered the contradiction of sinners against Himself" without sin in thought, word or deed; and when we note carefully all the things He said in the last hour of His bitter trial, we see Him carrying out His new law of love in hope of saving men - He was doing good to those that hated Him, praying for those who spitefully used Him, then dying to save them. Truly He was God manifested in flesh; holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners - and so He was not allowed to see corruption. As He died he said "It is finished" for He had finished the work God had given Him to do - redeem the world - He had done it by obedience to a law of Love. Men can now come to Him under Grace (i.e. unmerited love) instead of the law of sin and death.

This was no blind obedience on the part of Jesus; He had understood His God - "The Father hath shown Me all things that He Himself doeth." The Things the Father desired Him to do He desired to do - it was this co-operation with

the Father in the salvation of the world that made Him one with God. Now all men must "honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" He is our Lord and our God.

We may wonder how He was able to do all this. He certainly had a highly developed spiritual mind, full of compassion and sensitive to the evil He saw others suffering. This would give Him the desire to save; and God gave Him some wonderful promises - exclusive to Jesus - "All power is given to me both in heaven and in earth;" He would be the "Judge of the living and the dead;" He would have "life in Himself even as the Father hath life in Himself," in fact "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23)

In His agony of mind just before He was about to suffer. He prayed that if it were possible the cup should pass from Him. Angels came to strengthen Him and there is no doubt they would remind Him in some way of the joy of being the Saviour of those He loved. If He were to be their Saviour the cup could not pass. He had previously told His disciples that the time had come that He might be glorified, but if a corn of wheat fall not into the ground and die it remains alone, but if it die it will bring forth much fruit.

There is one thing that I'm quite sure the angels did not say - that He was "sinful flesh" and "the flesh must be utterly destroyed" nor did they tell him "You must hang upon the Cross to show men what is due to sinful flesh," and many other such reasons given us as to why Christ died.

Fortunately, Jesus Himself tells us why He hung upon the Cross; "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto myself." God had said of Himself long before that He would draw sinners with the cords and bands of love. Surely this is what Jesus was doing when He hung upon the Cross although it was not very evident at the time because He had not risen from the dead, but Jesus was quite certain it would happen; and having "loved His own He loved them to the end." "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down His life for His friends." "I lay it down of myself, therefore doth my Father love me." "I have power to lay it down of myself, therefore doth my Father love me." "I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again, and no man taketh it from me."

God allowed this sacrifice for sin (or sinners) with the express purpose of "converting sinners from the error of their ways," and Jesus was "cut off, but not for himself" He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied" and said, "Behold me and the children that God hath given me."

After a lifetime of doing good among the people, men through envy and lust of power, put Him to death. "They saw no beauty that they desired" and the leaders of the Jews had utterly failed in their understanding of God; and when Jesus came as God manifested in the flesh they did not recognise Him; their eyes were blinded by their own traditions. Paul says of them, "They had a zeal for God but it was not according to knowledge" so they delivered Jesus up demanding that He should be crucified, hung upon a tree; thus having Him cursed by their own law. Jesus having borne this penalty not due to Him is said to have redeemed them from the law which was given them to make sin manifest, bringing sinners to repentance.

Jesus, having honoured the law, having fulfilled it through perfect obedience, took it away, nailing it to the Cross and replacing it with Grace and Truth that came through His sacrifice.

The taking away of the law of sin and death rendered sin powerless and it delivered those "who through fear of death where all their lives subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14,15).

Grace demands love in return for love shown but the law demands obedience or death. Grace forgives - law condemns. Love and pity is shown in all this action for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh - that is justify men - God has done for us by allowing Jesus to be made a sacrifice for sin, and we are freely justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The same death that redeemed the Jew and the transgressions under the law, redeemed the Gentiles also from their sins and condemnation in Adam. Here again the death of Jesus was brought about by sinners of the Gentiles. It is true that Pilate found no cause of death in Him yet fearing he would lose authority as a ruler, he delivered Jesus up to be crucified. The condemned thief crucified with Christ, confessed condemnation was due to him and then he said "This man hath done nothing amiss." This confession of his own guilt and seeing Jesus bearing unmerited condemnation, saved the thief who had faith in Jesus.

The prince of this world came and found nothing in Him. We should see in these men who brought about the death of a perfectly innocent man a warning to us against uncontrolled selfish desires, and yet Jesus said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The centurion beholding all that was done confessed, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Son of God "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross" for "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister" and knowing the time had come for Him to

manifest in Himself the doctrine He had been preaching, went deliberately up to Jerusalem knowing they would condemn Him. In doing so He fulfilled His Father's will that He should be the Saviour of the world - "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" which saved Adam from dying in the day he ate the fruit; for no sooner had God condemned Adam to death, mercy was shown and a promise of life after death if men would turn to God and live as His children, and a promise of life after death if men would turn to God and live as His children.

We may ask, what has the Cross of Christ done for us? Do we reap any benefit today? We most certainly do. If we have seen the need to put to death all our natural desires when they are in conflict with the way of Love (1 Corinthians 13). In mercy we are allowed to die with Christ a figurative death, in baptism, and we rise from the waters a justified creation - sanctified and clothed with His righteousness; not under condemnation in Adam's race even though we die naturally. "Behold, says Paul, all things are new, old things have passed away" "Christ has redeemed us. It is God who has justified us, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died for us and will present us faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy.

Maud Warre

Post script: There is not a passage in the whole of the New Testament that cannot be fitted into Christ's own testimony as to why He died, and I am convinced all who add to His explanation are doing wrong.

Maud Warre

