

Why did Christ Die?

Arno Clemens Gaebelein

Why did Christ Die?

DURING THIS WEEK many millions of people remember the death of one Man. It took place almost two thousand years ago. Only small groups witnessed His death, but since He died, His Name and what happened so long ago has been heralded throughout the world. Millions are living in every continent who hear and know that Name. The story of His Life and the death He died has been translated into hundreds of languages and is now read by the different races which compose humanity.

His Name is "Jesus Christ" or as His contemporaries called Him - "Jesus of Nazareth". We are in possession of the records of portions of the Life He lived on earth, and these records, the four Gospels, are historically fully trustworthy. Infidels of every description have tried to discredit them. They stand firm and unshaken. They reveal Him as the outstanding figure of history. He towers above the rest of humanity. No one like Him before and none after.

He was a wonderful Teacher. One of His followers, who listened to Him, said: "Thou hast the Words of eternal life." Great philosophers and religious leaders who lived before He was on earth also taught. They gave ethical precepts; they tried to explain the enigma of human existence and destiny, and uttered their speculations as to a higher being and the unseen. But none ever spoke words as He spoke; words of Life and Words of Wisdom, words which reveal God, His character, His love, His grace, His Fatherhood.

He made known the unknown; He flashed forth the unseen and the future. So deep are all His teachings that they transcend our human thinking, and yet so simple that a child can understand them.

The Life He lived was perfect. **There was no flaw in His character.** He exhibited a moral glory before which the lives of the best of men pale into significance. His moral glory is dazzling. It possesses a strange attracting power. **In one word - He was a perfect, a holy, a sinless Being.**

Furthermore, during the three years of public ministry He displayed astonishing power. He healed all manner of diseases instantaneously by His word. His "I will" cleansed the leper; the maimed were made whole. He commanded the demons to leave their prey, and the raving maniacs were delivered and became rational beings, taking their places at His feet. He raised the dead not once but several times. The wind and the waves had to obey His voice. They were hushed by His majestic, "Peace! Be still!"

Who was this wonderful man? That He was only a man is impossible. The Gospels tell us that He is the God-Man, God Himself manifest in the flesh. Such also is His self-witness. He spoke constantly of the fact that He came from above, came as the sent-One by the Father. He claimed equality with God, to work the same works, and to have the same power as He has. He also claimed worship for Himself. He said: "Before Abraham was, I am."

He is the preexisting One, Who was before all things. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is Creator, for "All things were made by Him." We listen again to His voice, "I and the Father are one"; "Whosoever seeth Me seeth the Father."

And this wonderful Man, that unique Being, the God-Man died. Before He ever died He predicted the manner of His death; He knew beforehand all the torture, the suffering, the shame which would be heaped upon Him. He knew they would nail Him to a Cross. But why did He die?

Why do human beings die? Why is it that human life is filled with pain, sickness, affliction, sorrow and finally there looms up the grave and the death of the body? Was this the eternal purpose of a loving Creator Who created a class of beings for His own pleasure and fellowship? No! We cannot believe this. Nor does the Bible teach it. **Death is in the world on account of sin. Men die because they have sinned. "The wages of sin is death." If there were no sin there would be no death.**

And this Man never sinned. He was not innocent but **holy**. No wrong word ever passed His gracious lips; no evil, unclean thought ever entered His mind. No guile was found in His mouth. He did not need to repent, nor to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." His challenge was: "Who of you can convince Me of sin?" It was never met. He did not sin for He had no sin; the fallen nature of man was not His nature. He was God in the form of Man and God cannot sin.

Why then did He die? Did death have a claim on His body? I turn to Death and ask - "O Death! Look at that Man, that holy Man, that sinless Man! Tell me, O Death, canst thou touch Him? Is He to be thy prey?" And Death answers - "No!"

His death was attempted a number of times. Three times the effort was made to stone Him. No stone ever struck Him; once they tried to cast Him down a precipice. He disappeared out of their midst. The ship in which He was asleep filled with water. He was undisturbed, for that ship could never sink. Death had no power over Him. He was sinless and therefore deathless. Yet, He died that cruel death by crucifixion. Why then did He die? Did He die as a martyr? Such is the answer that we hear today from thousands of religious teachers. "He died on account of the teachings He gave; His was the martyr's death."

The same men also tell us that "His body remained in the grave; that over that grave it must be written: 'Dust to dust and ashes to ashes.'" If that were true, we could charge God with being an unrighteous Being. We could impeach the throne of righteousness.

But how did the martyrs die? Hear them singing their hymns of praise! See them facing heroically the lions, the tigers, the torture and the stake. They counted it honor and glory to lay down their lives. They rejoiced as cruel death approached.

But listen to the Lord Jesus, the Holy One, the sinless One, when death loomed up before Him. Listen- **"Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour."** See Him in Gethsemane. Hear that bitter wail- **"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done."** Behold His agony - "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Why this trembling, why this soul agony, why this terror? Was it produced by the fear of physical death? Was the Lord Jesus Christ a coward? **Certainly not!**

But this agony, this soul trouble, as He looked toward the Cross, answers the question: "Why did Christ die?" He did not die, as we die, because He had sinned, **but He died for our sins, the Just for the unjust.** He died as the Lamb of God, the holy, spotless Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world. He knew, going to that Cross, there would come, while hanging there, three hours during which the sun would hide his face, and in that awful darkness He Who knew no sin would be made sin. Sin, that horrible, hateful thing, would be put then upon Him, not by man, but by God Himself. What it meant - **"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"** is only known to Him. We cannot understand it, but we can believe it and worship.

And when that sin-bearing, that sin atoning Work was done, then no one took His Life from Him - He gave that Life. And that He yielded it is evidenced by that marvelous, victorious shout- **"It is finished!"**

Christ died for our sins! Here is our salvation; here is our peace; here is our hope of eternal glory! Christ crucified is still for the Jew the stumblingblock. For the Greek, the Gentile world with its boasted culture, learning and progress, it is foolishness. But to all who believe God, who believe His Word, Christ, the Christ Who died for our sins, is the Wisdom and the Power of God. The Wisdom of God, for He displays in the sacrificial death of His Son His infinite wisdom. The world by wisdom did not know God.

It could not find its way back to God. **The wisdom of the world could not bridge the gulf between the holy God and unholy, lost humanity. Then God stepped in and laid across that gulf a Cross and upon that Cross His Son.**

And the Christ Who died for our sins, Who took sin upon Himself, Who satisfied God's righteousness, is the Power of God. The sin-bearing Work of the Lord Jesus Christ gives God power to save man from the horrible pit of sin, to cleanse and forgive him, as he grasps in faith the pierced hand of the Lord Jesus, and then that power lifts him out of his lost condition into the glorious place of a child of God.

Friend, do you believe that Christ died for your sins? Do you believe He bore your sins in His own body on the tree? Have you looked to that Cross on which the Prince of Glory died, and looking there, have said in faith: "He loved me, He gave Himself for me"? Have you cast yourself upon Him and accepted Him? Have you done what is written - "**If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved**"? Then you are saved.

Then rejoice and be glad. Rejoice! For you are acquitted of all your guilt. Rejoice! For Jesus paid it all. Rejoice! You are born again and have become a true child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Rejoice! You are accepted in the Beloved One. Rejoice! You have passed from death unto Life. Rejoice! God is your loving Father. Rejoice! There is no condemnation. Rejoice! You are an heir of God and fellow-heir with Christ, and the Father's House will be your eternal and glorious Home.

But oh! Remember it again, the price He paid to make this possible. Look once more to that Cross and see how He was smitten and afflicted of God as your Substitute. What is your answer to His sacrificial love? How often Christians sing it in sacred song, and how little they practice it .

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 'Twould be a present far too small;
 Love so amazing, so divine
 Demands my soul, my life, my all. "

Only then can we enjoy fully our blood-bought redemption when we live for Him, Who died for us.

And you who never have believed that Christ died for your sins and have never accepted Him - you, who trust in your own works, your own righteousness, which in the sight of God are nothing but filthy rags - you who reject His sin-bearing, His finished Work, let me say to you there is but one Way to God - the Way of the Cross. **He who died for our sins is that Way, and there never can be any other way.** "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" is an eternal, never-changing Truth. The greater part of the religious world rejects that Truth. It puts into its place another Gospel. Instead of preaching "Christ crucified" they speak of the leadership of Jesus and claim that the teachings of Jesus, practically applied, will save the world.

That is a delusion! And because the religious world turns away from the cross of Christ, from the true

heart of Christianity – that Christ died for our sins, that salvation for a lost world is offered and found alone beneath the Cross of Jesus—the night of sin becomes darker, and the manifestation of the power of darkness becomes greater, till an apostate Christendom worships the coming "Man of Sin," whose shadow lengthens in our day.

O friend without Christ—take the Way of the Cross this very moment! Beneath that Cross, and there alone, you can have peace with God, righteousness and glory.

And that Christ Who died for your sins loves you. He wants you! He is now waiting for you. He will welcome you, for He still assures you – **"Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."** Repeat it now, and do it .

Just as I am – without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!