

Why Did Jesus Die?

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Well, in this class, we are studying, exploring Christianity, and so far we've seen that Christianity is all about Christ and really is our response to who Jesus is.

Anyone? What did we find about this Jesus of the gospel? He is man and God at the same time. Someone say something else. He's the Savior. It's another one of his titles that was foretold in the Old Testament that he's coming. He's coming. The Messiah.

The New Testament word in Greek is the Christos, the Christ. And so he is this anointed one, this anointed king that God has sent. And he showed that divine authority that he exercises the authority of God on earth by his power over demons, diseases, death, even the power to forgive sins and to command people to follow him.

That's who he is. Why did Jesus come? We finished up last week. What was the answer to that? To save sinners. He came to rescue. To rescue sinners. Who are sinners?

What is a sinner? One who sins. One who breaks the law. Sin is breaking the law. 1 John 3, 4. And so how many of us is that?

[1 : 50] We saw Jesus commands and that we've all come short of what he requires. So Jesus came to save sinners from what? What is there that we need to be rescued from?

The punishment that sin brings with it. Which Jesus spoke of more than anyone else. The reality of everlasting torments in a place called hell.

This is what the Bible teaches. This is what the gospel teaches us. So we come to the question, how does he do that? How does he save sinners from their sin and its penalty?

Well, that leads us into the third study question, which more than hints at the answer. Why did Jesus die? Why did Jesus die? So that's the question we're looking at this morning.

And as we come to this question, we learn that there are both divine reasons and human reasons. Or I should reverse that. We'll begin with the human reasons and divine reasons.

[2 : 53] Not that those are absolutely separate, but they're two perspectives from which to look at the cross of Christ and his death. Why did Jesus die? Well, from man's perspective, we see certain causes for his death.

And then we'll look at it from God's perspective. So we begin with human reasons for Jesus' death. The leaders of the Jews and eventually the people as a populace rejected Jesus as their long-promised Messiah King.

And that because he did not fit their expectations of the Savior, their expectations of this coming Messiah King. They were looking for earthly deliverance from the Romans who had subjugated Israel.

And Jesus came to save them from a far worse enemy, as we saw last week, to save them from their sins and the penalty that sin brings. And that was a message that they were not interested in. He came to save from sins, but they love their sins. That's the nature of sinners. They sin because they love to sin. And so his message was that I'm here to rescue you from your sins and from its punishment.

[4 : 17] They didn't like that message. Furthermore, he was hated because Jesus condemned the religious leaders for their hypocrisy, for their false teaching that was leading the people astray.

He called these leaders of the Jews, these religious teachers and priests, he called them blind leaders of the blind. And said that they're both falling into the ditch.

Well, they didn't like that. And so it early aroused their animosity toward the Christ. They were also envious of his popularity because Jesus did have a popularity as he went everywhere, healing, doing miracles, feeding the multitudes, raising the dead and so on.

And so this was all a shift, you see, in the popularity, a shift away from the chief priests and the Pharisees and the scribes to this Jesus of Nazareth.

It made them jealous. And even the governor Pilate knew that it was out of envy that they turned Jesus over to him to have him crucified. So why did Jesus die?

[5 : 29] Well, because the leaders of the Jews were were dead set against him and wanted him dead because he didn't fit their ideas of the Savior.

And they didn't believe his claim, his ultimate claim, which goes back to question one. Who is Jesus? They didn't believe that he was God, that he was God's divine son.

And so they said that claim is a false claim. And it means that that you being a man are claiming what's only true of God.

And that's blasphemy. And blasphemy carried the death sentence for Jews. And so that's why Jesus died. He was claiming to be God.

And they denied that claim, saying he was a false Messiah deceiving the people. Now, because of his miracles and healings, as I said, he remained popular with much of the crowd right up to the last week of his life on earth.

[6 : 37] No, they didn't like his message about sin. But they did like his food that he provided. And they liked his miracles. And they were caught up in the hype of all of that.

You remember when Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the last time. If you read that in the chapter 19 and verse 38. What kind of reception did Jesus receive as he came into Jerusalem the last time? Remember? Did they boo him and hiss him? It was a celebration. And what did they cry? Hosanna to Christ the King.

Christ the King who comes to us in the name of God. So they shouted for joy the praises of Jesus as being Christ the King.

All along, they wanted him to be their King. Earlier, you can read in John's Gospel how they almost forced him to become their King as he was doing all these wonderful things.

[7 : 45] And Jesus would have nothing of it because it was all for the wrong reasons that they wanted him to be King. And that's still what's driving this mob as they shout, Hosanna, Hallelujah, praise the Lord for the King of Israel is here.

Later in that same week when the people saw this Jesus, arrested, bound, whipped, condemned, beaten, bloodied, standing before them, apparently helpless over the Roman soldiers that held him, they changed their minds about Jesus.

And they who shouted Hosanna to Christ the King would now be found shouting crucify him as the religious leaders persuaded them to cry for his crucifixion.

And so the whole nation rejects his claim as God as Christ the King and called on Governor Pilate to crucify him.

Now, we saw the reasons that the Jewish court, Jesus was tried in two courts, the Jewish courts first and then the Roman court. There's a reason for that. The Jews were subjugated to the Romans.

[9 : 02] And though they found a man guilty of death, they had no authority to put a man to death. For that, they needed to appeal to the Romans. And so that's what they did.

But they first tried him themselves and said he's guilty of blasphemy. He deserves to die. Well, the Roman court doesn't care anything about what these Jews believe, their religious ideas.

Whether this guy claims to be God or not, that has nothing. We're not concerned with such religious jargon. You guys settle that. So they say, but we don't have the authority to put a man to death.

And this man deserves to die. Well, why? What has he done? And now these Jews changed their accusations. They don't come before the Romans and say he claims to be God.

What did they claim? Read chapter 23, 1 and 2. Chapter 23, 1 and 2. And verse 5 as well.

[10 : 06] And then tell me, what was their charge against Jesus in the Roman court? Forbidding homage to Caesar.

Caesar the king, the emperor over all the Roman Empire. So what are they accusing him of being? A rebel. A subversive.

Trying to overthrow the Roman government. Now that was a common problem with these Jews.

They constantly were troublesome people. And they had people rising up and trying to overthrow by swords and fighting against the Roman government.

So it was not something that, oh, we don't have that sort of thing happening. It was happening all the time. And that's what Jesus is. He's just another one of these troublemakers trying to throw away, to break away from the Roman rule.

Well, Pilate says, okay, we'll try him on that charge. And he found no basis, no truth to their accusation and declared him innocent.

[11 : 11] But Pilate wanted to please the Jews. He was a man pleaser. And so because they cried for his crucifixion, he pleased the Jews and had Jesus whipped and handed over to be crucified.

The notice board above his cross that showed the crime that he had committed, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. He claims to be a king opposing Caesar.

That's the charge for which they crucified him. So the Jewish nation rejected Jesus' claim to be the king, Christ, God's anointed king.

And in his trial and in his death, we see everyone mocking that claim. Soldiers put a purple robe on him because, after all, that's royalty.

So they dress him up like a king. And a king needs a crown, so they put a crown of thorns on his head. And a king needs a scepter with which to rule, so they put a stick in his hand.

[12 : 17] And then they took the stick and beat him in the head with the stick. And fell down at his feet and said, Hail, king of the Jews, mocking his claim. And then the board above his head as well mocked his claim.

This is the king of the Jews. And there was some delight in Pilate wanting to get some revenge on these Jewish leaders. This is a king that fits you Jews. Look at him.

This is the kind of king you guys deserve. And they wanted him to change the notice board, saying, not that he is the king of the Jews, but he claimed to be the king of the Jews. And Pilate says, What I've written, I've written.

And he gets a jab back at these Jews, even through the notice board. But Jesus is being mocked as king. Now, that's the human reason for Christ's death.

He was rejected by his people as being this long-promised king that God would send, who is both God and man. They would not believe it, and so he was put to death.

[13 : 24] Any questions as to the human reason? Looking at things from a human perspective, why Jesus died? Does it make sense as we look back in history and try to understand what were the ideas and the movements going on among these Jews that would call for Jesus' death?

Okay? Well, Luke and the other three gospel accounts primarily give us the human reasons, the perspective from man. They tell us more what happened.

And it's only the epistles that follow in the New Testament that reflect back upon that death and tell us why it happened. So we see a lot more truth about why Jesus died in the letters that follow the gospels.

But even in the gospels, it's not just about what happened, and we see from human eyes the crucifixion, but there are hints and there are drops of truth that even in the gospels point out why it is that Jesus died.

So let's consider the divine reasons for Jesus dying. The short answer is that there was no other way to save sinners from God's judgment for their sin than for Christ, the perfect God-man, to take their punishment upon himself and to die under God's wrath in their stead, in their place.

[14 : 55] So we must learn from the subsequent letters of the New Testament that there was more wrath on the cross than just the wrath of the Jews who were rejecting him, the wrath of the Roman soldiers and the Roman government that was killing him.

There was the wrath of God being poured out on his own divine son. That's the divine reason for Jesus dying. He was bearing the punishment for sin.

But whose sin? Well, the Bible says that Jesus had no sin. Indeed, his own enemies could not convict him of sin.

And therefore, as a sinless sacrifice, he is qualified to die in the place of others, for him to take the punishment that others deserve.

If he's a sinner, he's just getting what he deserves. That doesn't help me at all. But if he's perfect, then his death can substitute for the death of those who are guilty.

[16 : 02] Now, there is, in Luke's gospel, account of what everyone was shouting and sneering at Jesus while he was hanging on the cross.

If you're in chapter 23, look at verse 35. Read verse 35 and tell me who was it that mocked Jesus in verse 35.

The rulers. These are the rulers of the Jews. They mocked Jesus. What did they say? Someone tell me what they said. He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the chosen one.

Hmm. Okay. Verse 36 and 37. Who is mocking Jesus here? The soldiers. And what are they saying?

If you're the king of the Jews, save yourself. Hmm. Save yourself. Verse 39. Who's mocking him here? One of the criminals.

[17:07] And what is he saying? If you're the Christ, save yourself and us. So what do all of them assume? All these mockers. What do they all assume about Jesus?

Sorry? He's a savior. And if he really is. I mean, that's what he's claiming to be. But what are they saying about his claim? If he's a savior, why is he on the cross?

He's helpless. He ought to save himself. So if you are the Christ, the savior, prove it. Prove it by saving yourself.

Surely a savior would not succumb to death at the hands of the Romans, apparently helpless. What did they fail to realize? As they're saying that.

His whole purpose in coming was not to save himself. But who? Sinners. So what an ironic situation. You have the savior of sinners hanging on a cross.

[18:15] And they're saying, if you really are the savior, Christ the king, then prove it by saving yourself. But if he saves himself, he cannot save his people.

And so he will prove that he is the Christ, the savior of sinners, not by saving himself, as they all assume, but exactly in the opposite way, by dying.

And in such and in so doing, he will save an innumerable amount of sinners from their sins.

Well, this is how he saves sinners. He dies for them. And this is the divine perspective.

He's dying in the place of as a substitute for sinners by suffering the punishment they deserve.

Now, this death was no surprise to Jesus.

[19:12] It wasn't like, oh, he was just caught off guard and got arrested. And just in a matter of hours, he finds himself falsely accused, condemned. And now he's hanging on the cross and he's saying, what happened?

I sure wasn't expecting this. How do we know that's not true? If we've read Luke's gospel. He told his disciples ahead of time that he was going to die three times, at least three times.

Look at chapter nine and verses 20 and 22. Chapter nine, fairly earlier in his days with his disciples. Carol, go ahead and read that for us, please. The seventh man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law. And he must be killed on the third day he raised the law.

All right, over to chapter 17. Later on, he draws the 12 aside and he has a word with them as well.

[20:20] Verse 24 and 25. Who's got that? Aaron, you got it? Read that. 24 and 25 of chapter 17.

For the sovereign man in his day will be like the lightning which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. The first man must suffer many things and be rejected by his generation.

Okay. Did you hear the word we're hearing? He must. He must. He must. This is a divine necessity. Why? Because he's here to save sinners.

And there's no other way to save them. He must be rejected and suffer and die. And then the last time is found in chapter 18, 31 and 30 through 34.

Chapter 18, 31 to 34. Who will read that real quickly for us? Thank you, Jeff. Thank you.

[21:47] The Lord are not something that catch Jesus by surprise. It's the very reason he left heaven in the first place. And it's the reason he came. It was to die and thereby save his people from their sins.

And he kept telling the disciples so that they wouldn't be shocked when it happened. But they just can't even imagine, like the crowd couldn't imagine, that the Christ, that this Son of God could actually die.

How could that be? They didn't understand. They thought he would save by living and conquering the enemy, not by dying. And we'll see how that resolves later on in Luke's gospel.

So here's the divine perspective. It's been planned. It's on purpose. And it's all in order to save people by the death of Jesus.

Now, the death of Jesus, the meaning of it, can be explained in four ways. Many ways. But I want to point out four ways that we see why Jesus had to die.

[22 : 55] First of all, Israel's calendar was punctuated by religious festivals and feasts all year long that would remind them of events in their past history where God acted on their behalf.

And Jesus died during one of those festivals. Do you remember which one it was? I give you some scripture passages. Chapter 22, 1, 7, 11, 13.

What festival was being celebrated the week that Jesus died? The Passover. The Passover. It's also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It was a week-long celebration. Do you know when the religious leaders who wanted to kill him said to Judas, but we don't want to kill him during Passover?

They didn't say that to Judas. They just said it to themselves as they planned his death. They said, we want to kill him, but not during Passover. They said that.

[23 : 55] You can read about it in Mark's gospel, chapter 14, 1 and 2. So you have a collision course. God has decreed that Jesus die on Passover.

His enemies won him dead, but not on Passover. Well, whose calendar wins? God does, doesn't it? He dies during Passover. Now, why might that be?

Why might God have his son die? Of all the weeks of the year, Why does he choose this week? Passover. What are some of your thoughts, Jim?

Well, the Passover, the lamb was slain in the household and the blood put over the doorway. Okay. And the Passover, they were passed over. Passed over with blessing? Yeah. It was blessing for them to be passed over, But it was God's judgment passing over them.

[24 : 58] So, in other words, Jim is saying that the very reason for the Passover being celebrated Was a picture that gave the meaning of Jesus' death.

And we'll look more at that. There's another reason it happened during Passover. Scott? I'm assuming there was a lot of people there, And the Jews didn't want to be publicized.

Okay. So, if this is the most important event in human history, God doesn't want it happening in a corner where no one sees it.

But he rather puts it out on display, up on a cross, in a city that is now teeming with festival keepers, Jews that have come from all over the world, because three times a year they needed to appear before God at the temple in Jerusalem.

Passover is one of those. So, the population in Jerusalem, we're told, could swell well over ten times its usual population. The streets were filled with people.

[25 : 59] And God would have his son die, so that many would see it, and have this testimony of his giving his son in place of sinners.

So, let's get back to what Jim's talking about. The original Passover, it happened 1,500 years earlier in Israel's history. The people of the Jews were chosen by God for a special purpose, to bring forth the Messiah.

And they were taken down into Egypt, and were slaves under the Pharaoh there. He used them with bitter labor, built his storehouses, perhaps his pyramids, and was killing their newborns.

And God sent Moses to say to that Pharaoh king, God, Jehovah, says, let my people go. Now, Pharaoh's response was, I don't know your God, so I will not let his people go.

Well, God introduced himself to Pharaoh by way of ten plagues that he brought on the land. And in that way, Pharaoh could learn, who is this God of the Jews?

[27 : 12] And in each of these supernatural plagues that were destroying Egypt, God gave Pharaoh a chance to change his mind, and to let his people go.

And Pharaoh often said, yes, I will let his people go. And then his heart was hardened, and he would not let the Israelites go. So God had the final plague, the tenth plague, and that would persuade Pharaoh to let his people go.

At midnight, God was going to come in wrath and cut down the firstborn in every home. And he made a provision of mercy for the Israelites living in Egypt if they would just believe his word and do what he said.

If they would take an innocent lamb and slay it, shed its blood, take its blood, and put it over the doorpost of their home, and then get into that home and stay there all night, then God says, when I come with wrath to destroy the firstborns, I will see the blood and will pass over you.

And that's where this name came for this annual Passover thereafter. I will pass over you in wrath. Now these Jews, they deserve God's wrath as much as the Egyptians did.

[28 : 40] They had been unfaithful to their God. They were worshiping idols. They were sinners. They had broken God's commands. And yet God, in mercy, provided a way of escape, a way of rescue.

And it would be by a substitute dying in their place, a spotless lamb, speaking of innocence, receiving what they deserved, a bloody, violent death, for the wages of sin is death.

And so that lamb was a symbol that stood in for them. And the lamb got what they deserved, and they got to go free because another died in their place.

And as long as they took refuge under that blood, trusting in what God had said, then his wrath would pass over them. So this Passover was an annual reminder of what God had done that day so long ago when his wrath passed over them.

Well, it's 1,500 years later now, and Jesus, at age 30, begins his public ministry, and John the Baptist, who was sent ahead to prepare the way, points at him and says, look, there is the Lamb of God.

[29 : 59] God has provided a lamb just as he promised throughout the Old Testament. Three years later, during the Passover week, this spotless, sinless Jesus is with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion the next day, and they're celebrating the Passover.

The Passover. And during, they're celebrating it for the last time. And during this celebration, the Lord instituted a new meal of remembrance.

We call it communion, the Lord's Supper. And so we have these two meals, the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper. But the meaning of the two meals is the same, that sinners are saved from God's judgment, his wrath, by a substitute sacrifice that would endure God's wrath in their place that they might go free.

What is new is the sacrifice. In the Passover, it was an innocent lamb. In the Lord's Supper, it is the innocent lamb of God.

It is Jesus Christ himself who dies as the lamb of God for his people. And being perfect, he's able to stand in for his people. And God's wrath falls upon him so that whoever trusts in this Savior and hides under his blood by faith, saying, there's my hope for salvation, God's wrath will pass over them.

[31 : 27] So we have these two meals, and they speak volumes about what is about to happen, just hours later on the middle cross at Calvary. Here on the evening before his death, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper.

And in verse 19, he takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, gives it to them, saying, this is my body given for you, given for you.

So, they are to know that when they see Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, that body of his is being given for them, just like that lamb was given that God's wrath might pass over.

And then he takes the cup as they ate together, and he says, this is my blood which is poured out for you. Again, the idea of substitution. This is the body and blood of Jesus for you, instead of you, in your place, receiving God's wrath that you might go free.

So, that's a huge explanation of the death of Jesus. What is this death of Jesus? What does it mean? Well, without God's word explaining it, we would miss it.

[32 : 46] All we would see is a man being put to death by his fellow Jews and the Romans who carried it out. We wouldn't understand anything about the divine transaction that's going on.

God punishing sin, the sins of his people in their substitute. The Lord's Supper also explains Jesus' death to be substitutionary.

Jesus' blood and body instead of them, for them. And then, one of Jesus' disciples was Peter. And I just want you to turn. This is outside of the Gospel of Luke, but I want you to see what he said about this death, writing later about it.

1 Peter, it's found toward the back end of your New Testament, 1 Peter 3 and verse 18.

1 Peter 3 and verse 18. Chuck, do you have that for us? Christ died for sin once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

[34 : 08] It tells us what happened. What happened? Christ died. Right? Christ died. An unrepeatable death.

Once. Once. He died once for all. There's no more repetition of this death. Who died? What does Peter tell us about him?

Christ, who is the righteous one. How many are righteous? Peter says only one. There's none righteous but him. Every one of us have become unrighteous by our sin.

And so, there's a death. A once for all death for sin. And who? The righteous sinless Jesus dying in the place of and instead of unrighteous sinners.

Why? To bring you to God. Because your sin had separated you from God. Remember we saw that last time we met. That's what we needed to be rescued from.

[35 : 10] Being separated from God for all eternity. And so, Jesus dies. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring us back to God by dealing with our sin.

Taking its punishment. I want you to consider one more thing that explains the death of Jesus. It's found in chapter 23 and verse 45 of our gospel of Luke. 23 and 45.

23, 45. We see in verse 43, well, verse 44, it was now about the sixth hour and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour for the sun stopped shining and the curtain of the temple was torn in two as Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And when he had said this, he breathed his last. So, in one place outside of Jerusalem, we have Jesus dying on a cross and when he breathes his last, something happens in the temple in Jerusalem.

The veil that separated the very most holy place where only the high priest could go and only once a year and never without blood he would go in and confess the sins of the people.

[36 : 27] And there was a veil, a thick veil that separated that most holy place where God was dwelling in the midst of his people separated from the rest of the people.

The veil was saying stay out. God is too holy. You are too sinful. If you come in contact with God you will be destroyed. So the veil said stay out because of your sin.

And when Jesus died for sin what happened to the veil? It was torn miraculously, supernaturally torn in two and that itself you see gives us an understanding of the death of Jesus.

When he died he then took care of the problem of sin. He cleansed sinners from sin so that they now can be brought to God. They can now come into his presence and now the gospel message is not stay out but come to me Jesus says.

All you are weary and heavy laden. So this curtain in the temple as well teaches us about the meaning of Jesus death.

[37 : 31] Because he died sinners are able to dwell with God. Well there's only two places then where sin is punished by the holy God either in hell forever we saw that last week or on the cross where the substitute dies for all who trust in him.

And this is why the cross has become the universal symbol of Christianity. That is an amazing fact because the cross was the instrument the gory instrument of the death penalty.

And that gory instrument becomes the celebrated symbol that every week Christians gather together to hear the preaching of the cross and they gather together regularly to take the Lord's Supper and to hear again about the cross of Jesus.

Why? Why would they choose such an ugly gory it would be like us making our symbol a hangman's noose or a firing squad or an electric chair that will symbolize us as a people.

Why choose an instrument of execution? Well it's because of what happened on that cross. That God was punishing sin upon his own son and any sinner who takes refuge in that savior is saved from their sin and can dwell with God forever and ever.

[39 : 06] No wonder Christians everywhere rejoice in the cross, sing of the cross, delight in the cross. God will have to be to Christ's death and it helps us answer the third question from Luke's gospel, why did Jesus die?

Any questions tonight on why Jesus died? Then as you leave, think about that in personal terms. What have you done with this substitute? will you trust in him and be saved from God's wrath or will you continue to live without him and have only destruction ahead of you?

We're dismissed.