

WHY DID JESUS DIE ON THE CROSS?

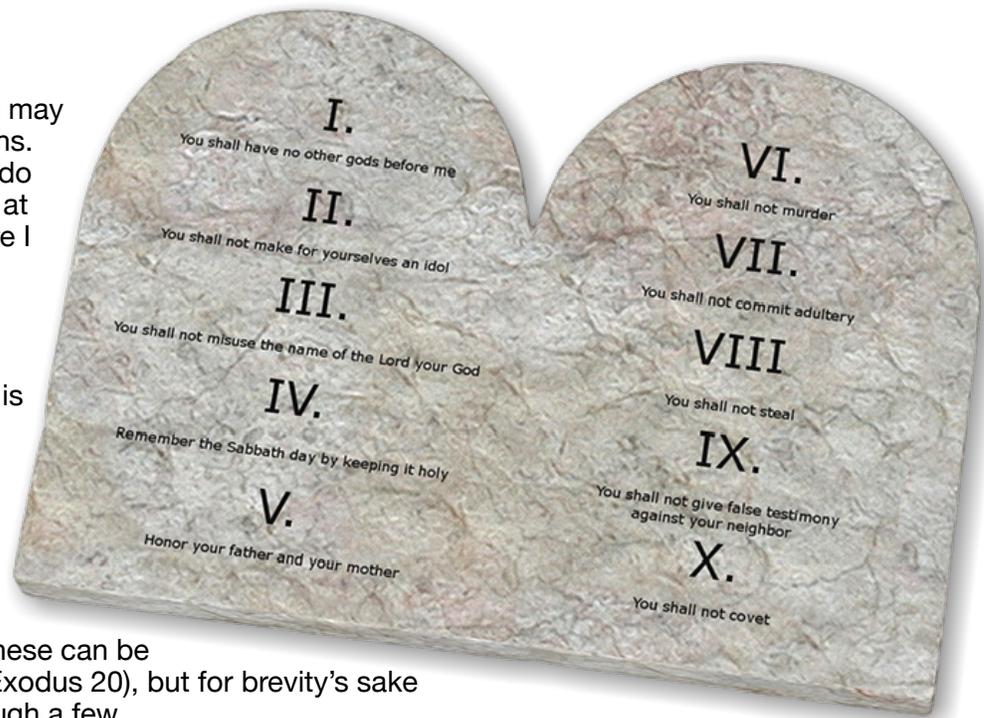
It is a known historical fact that a man named Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross some two-thousand years ago. We still see his image portrayed in paintings, sculptures, movies and on countless necklaces, perhaps you are wearing one now, but my question to you is: Do you know why he died? Perhaps you might be saying, “He was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, the Jews were jealous of his popularity, or the Romans saw him as a threat, so they got rid of him.” Or perhaps you would say, “He died as the ultimate example of love.”

Although there is some truth in both of these statements they do not adequately explain the meaning or reason behind the death of Jesus on the cross, a death that Jesus knew would happen and even forewarned his disciples about (Matthew 20:18). Let us start this journey by listening to Jesus’ own words to his followers concerning his own life and impending death. He said that he “came to seek and save the lost,” Luke 19:10 and on another occasion he said that he came to “give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28 Both of these statements imply a problem that needs solving. It implies that there is something lost, held captive, and in imminent danger. It is here that we must start.

THE PROBLEM

What is the problem? What is lost, held captive and in imminent danger? The answer to these questions, the short answer is: YOU! Now to the modern person this may provoke your anger or you may laugh at the notion that you are “lost” or in imminent danger, but I beg you to hear me out. You are, and have been since the moment you were born, in a condition of rebellion and hostility toward God your creator. Although God has given you your very life, the air you are breathing right now, and every good thing you have ever enjoyed and are presently enjoying, you have failed to give Him the proper thanks, worship and obedience that are due to Him as God.

At this point you may have many objections. You may say, “but I do give thanks to God, at every meal, or before I go to sleep, and I worship God at a church, synagogue, mosque or temple, and I try to do what is right. I am moral, I am a pretty good person.” Well, to see if your claim is true let us look at God’s standard of “good,” the Ten Commandments. These can be found in the Bible (Exodus 20), but for brevity’s sake we will only go through a few.



The eighth commandment tells us not to steal. Have you ever stolen anything? Anything at all, I am not just talking about a car, or robbing a bank, but taken anything from anyone that was not yours to take. The ninth commandment tells us not to lie, or bear false witness. Have you done that consistently all your life, even as a child or young adult? These are only two of the ten, and already we have failed. In fact, the Bible tells us that there is no one who is righteous before God and that we cannot even do good in his sight. (Romans 3) This failure to give God obedience, worship and thanks is not a light offense but an act of cosmic rebellion. God has charges against you! Charges that he will not overlook or drop, they demand satisfaction! There is no escape, you cannot run or hide from God, but instead you will stand before this God as your judge. And the sentence for our cosmic rebellion is an eternal punishment, shut out from the goodness of God and to be under His wrath forever in a place known as Hell. (Jude 7, 13; Revelation 20:14-15; Matthew 25:41)

Do you see the danger you are in? Does the reality of this terrify you, or are you still laughing and shrugging your shoulders?

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”
(Hebrews 10:31)

GOD’S WAY OF SALVATION

If you have not been convinced of the problem, that you have offended God, are separated from him and are in danger of never ending punishment in hell because of your sin, if you do not accept that, nothing else I say will really matter to you. If, however, you do feel the truth of these charges, there is hope.

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
(John 3:16)

God, in a display of his great love and mercy, has sent his Son, Jesus Christ as the savior of the world.

Jesus Christ is the God-Man. Fully God, Jesus is the eternal creator of all things, He has no beginning and no end, and He is the source of all life (John 1:1-4). Yet for our sake Jesus humbled himself and came to this earth and took on humanity; so Jesus is fully Man (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8). This unique identity as the God-Man qualifies Jesus to be the mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5), and to represent both parties perfectly.

As our representative, Jesus became our Substitute. According to God's plan, Jesus was arrested, falsely accused and executed on a cross at the hands of evil men (Acts 2:23). On the cross, Jesus, the sinless Savior, took upon himself the sin of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21), acting as if our sin was his and paying the divine penalty of God's wrath and judgment on our behalf (Isaiah 53, 1 John 2:1-2). Jesus stood in the place of our condemnation, and bore the punishment that rightfully belonged to us, He did this so that we could be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God and given eternal life.

After Jesus' death God raised him from the dead three days later, proving to the world that Jesus truly is "the Way the Truth and the Life" and that salvation is found ONLY in him. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12)



WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Have you been convinced of your crimes against your Creator? Does your heart break at the thought of your sin against Him? Do you know your condemnation is true and just? Now look at Jesus and what he has done for you, how he has taken your place and died for you. Is this gruesome picture of Christ on the cross somehow become irresistible and lovely to you? Does it fill you with love and joy towards Him "who spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all" Romans 8:32. If this change of heart has begun in you and you want to be made right with God, if you want your sins forgiven and the eternal life that is in Jesus Christ, then Scripture commands you to do two things: Repent and Believe.

To repent means to change, and to turn. Namely to change your mind about how you see your sin and rebellion against God, and to turn away from self and sin and turn toward the rule of God over your life. Repentance is commanded everywhere in scripture, especially alongside

the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus commanded it (Matthew 4:17). Peter also included it in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:38), and Paul said to the men of Athens:

“God commands all men everywhere to repent.”
(Acts 17:30)

Along with repentance, and inseparable from it, scripture commands you to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 16:31 Now this kind of belief is not just a mental assent to some historical facts about Jesus, rather it is a total trusting in, clinging to, and relying on the divine person of Jesus Christ and his work on the cross as the sole source and only hope of your salvation. It is not sufficient to believe in a god somewhere out there, nor is it sufficient to save your soul to believe that Jesus was a real man who was merely a good moral teacher. This is not the belief that saves (James 2:19). The faith that saves is based on a realization of the true identity of Jesus Christ as God the Son (Matthew 16:16), and a resting on Him as the all-sufficient Savior who has paid the full price of sin and offers forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift of his grace, not based on our performance of good works (Ephesians 2:4-10).

If God has worked in your heart and you acknowledge that you are guilty before God and in need of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ I invite you to pray and talk to God. There are no “magic words” to pray, but I encourage you to:

Repent and confess your sin to God : 1 John 1:8-10 Confess that Jesus is Lord, the absolute ruler of your life, and call on him in humility and ask him to save you. Romans 10:9-13.