

THE DOCTRINE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Part VII: The Death of Jesus Christ

I. Introduction

- A. We Christians believe that the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is the pivotal event in human history.
- B. However, theological divisions and questions exist on this matter: (1) Some in Liberal Theology circles question if Jesus actually **died** to explain His coming out of the tomb, cf. Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 153. (2) Some wonder just what was accomplished in Christ's death, or **why** He died: Did God pay Satan a ransom for believers through the cross? Did He die as a martyr? Did He die as an example? **Or did He die in man's place as a "propitiation" (1 John 2:2) to appease God's wrath against sin to free God who loved man to save those who believe in Christ?**
- C. We study the doctrine of Christ's death for answers to these questions as follows:

II. The Death of Jesus Christ

- A. The death of Christ was actual; He did not swoon or go into a coma. Proof of this fact in John's gospel, chapter 19, verse 34 resides in the event of the piercing of Christ's side by the Roman spear. John saw what he recorded was "blood and water" issuing from the spear wound. Dr. Truman Davis, M.D., concluded from this account that "We, therefore, have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that (Christ) died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium." (Davis, "The Crucifixion of Jesus," Arizona Medicine, March, 1965, p. 186, as quoted in Josh McDowell's A Ready Defense, p. 224)
- B. What Christ accomplished in His death is stated in Scripture and counters errant views as follows:
 1. As Ryrie notes, almost all errant views of the atonement are listed in the following four major categories and corrected as follows: (Ryrie Study Bible, King James Version, p. 1841)
 - a. Moral Influence (Example) Theory Of The Atonement - Those holding this view believe that Christ died only to exert a good moral influence on man. Almost all Liberal Theology proponents adopt this view as they cannot accept the belief that God's **wrath** needs propitiating regarding our sin!
 - b. Governmental Theory - This view asserts that God's government of the universe necessitated His making an example of Christ to show His displeasure against our sin. However, the nature of God cannot tolerate the existence of sin, and a penal requirement must be met for an atonement to occur.
 - c. Neoorthodox View - Karl Barth held that Christ died to reveal God's love and man's sinfulness without necessarily making an atonement for sin to satisfy God's wrath against it in any penal way.
 - d. The Ransom To Satan Theory - Origen and Augustine felt that God paid Satan a ransom to remove man from satanic claims since the Fall in the Garden of Eden. However, this view does not address the wrath of Almighty God against sin itself, and it is not biblically supported.
 2. Correcting all of these views is The Substitutionary Atonement View. It holds that the atonement of Christ on the cross "is **objectively** directed toward **God** and the satisfaction of **His holy character** and **demands upon the sinner** . . . Christ is the **Substitute** who bears the punishment **rightly due sinners**, their **guilt** being **imputed** to Him in such a way that He **representatively bore their punishment**," Ibid., Walvoord, p. 157. John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24.
 - a. John calls Jesus the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," Jn. 1:29. O.T. pictures of lamb sacrifices for sin reveal a **substitution** of the **lamb's** life for the human **sinner's** life!
 - b. 2 Cor. 5:21 portrays **Christ** as our **Substitute** that we might be made God's righteousness **in** Him.
 - c. Heb. 9:24-28 tells of Christ being sacrificed **once-for-all** to take away our **sin**, a reference to a penal code being addressed to satisfy divine requirements for the death of the sinner.
 - d. 1 Peter 2:24 tells of Christ bearing our **SIN** in His body on the cross -- that's far more than His being a mere moral influence! He died **in our place** to **appease** God's **wrath** against our sin, 1 John 2:1-2!

Lesson: (1) We know from the post-mortem evidence given by John that Jesus really died! (2) He had to die BECAUSE (a) God's RIGHTEOUSNESS demands death for sinners, (b) yet the LOVE of God demands that man not HAVE to face hell: (c) accordingly, Christ died as man's Substitute to absorb all of God's just wrath against man's sin, satisfying BOTH God's righteousness AND love! (3) ALL that man must now DO to be forgiven and have eternal life is to believe in Christ's death for sin, John 3:16!