

## **The Death of Christ**

### **The Death of Christ:**

#### **The Death of Christ is foretold in the Old Testament**

There are many places in the Old Testament that mention the death of Christ or the events surrounding His death.

- Psalm 22:14-18, "*I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.*"

While this Psalm is an anguished prayer of David as a godly sufferer, it came to be applied by the gospel writers as a prophecy of the Messiah's death on the cross. In fact Jesus quotes the first verse on the cross while in agony Himself, "*My God My God Why have You forsaken Me?*"

Here in these verses is the prediction of the death of Christ as He is nailed to the cross. Verse 16, "*They have pierced my hands and my feet.*" Here also is a mention of the soldiers casting lots for His garments, which we find recorded in Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; and John 19:24.

- Psalm 69:20-21, "*Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*"

Psalm 69 is a prayer of desperation as David realizes, because he is hated by others, he may shortly be killed. The New Testament writers apply much of this psalm to Christ. Matthew alludes to gall being offered to Christ, while He was on the cross (Matthew 27:34).

- Isaiah 53:4-9, READ.

This passage depicts the Messiah as a suffering servant and in verse 8 it is said that He was *cut off*. *Cut off* is a term that speaks of death. This passage predicts both the suffering and death of Christ.

- Daniel 9:26 uses similar terminology as it speaks of Messiah's death. "*Then after 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off.*"

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- Zechariah 13:7, is also a reference to the death of Christ, "*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate, Declares the Lord of hosts. Strike the Shepherd that the Sheep may be scattered.*"

In Matthew 26:31, Jesus applies this verse to Himself and the defection of His disciples at His arrest. He says, "*You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, "I will strike down the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock shall be scattered."*"

- What do these Old Testament verses reveal concerning the death of Christ?
  - It was no accident!
  - It was a planned event!
  - Christ was not a victim of circumstances!

### The Death of Christ is foretold by Jesus Himself

There are many times during the ministry of our Lord on the earth that he warned the disciples of His impending death and resurrection.

- **WARNING #1**-Jesus' first distinct prophecy of His soon rejection, trial, death and resurrection occurs just prior to the Transfiguration (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; and Luke 9:22)
- Matthew 16:21, "*From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*"
- **WARNING #2**-A second prediction of His death occurs as the disciples are returning through Galilee shortly after the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45)
- Matthew 17:22-23, "*And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."*"
- **WARNING #3**-Jesus again privately tells His disciples of His coming death and resurrection on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover (Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34).
- Matthew 20:17-19, "*And Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."*"

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- **WARNING #4**-A fourth prediction occurs on Monday of Passover week after the second cleansing of the temple.
- John 12:32-33, "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.*" *But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death b which He was to die.*"
- **WARNING #5**-Jesus warns the disciples of His impending death a fifth time on Tuesday of Passover week following His Olivet Discourse.
- Matthew 26:1-2, "*And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion.*"
- **WARNING #6**-Jesus gives a final warning to the disciples on Thursday evening after the Passover Meal as they went out to the Mount of Olives. He warned them of their desertion of Him as He is arrested and crucified.
- Matthew 26:31, "*Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, "I will strike down the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered."*"

### The Death of Christ was appointed by God.

- God appointed that Christ should die on the cross.
- Isaiah 53:6 says, "*All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us have turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*"

God has caused our iniquity to fall on Christ. God ordained that Christ, although He was innocent pay the penalty for our sin. What is the penalty for sin? Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death.*"

- God not only purposed that Christ die the way He did, but was pleased to appoint the death of Christ.
- Isaiah 53:10 goes on to say, "*But the LORD was pleased to crush Him.*"
- It was God's predetermined plan that godless men crucify Christ.
- Peter says in Acts 2:23, "*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*"
- This is reiterated in Acts 4:27-28, "*For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*"

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It was indeed no surprise to God! It was no surprise to Christ! He was not a victim of circumstances, but it was predetermined and appointed by God that He was to die on the cross, that He was to die at the hands of godless men.

### The Death of Christ was voluntary obedience.

Not only was the death of Christ by predetermined design, but also by obedience. It was voluntary. Jesus embraced the pain. He chose it!

- In Philippians 2:8 Paul says of Christ, that He was *obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
- Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Jesus lived for this hour. He lived in order to die (John 12:27).
- Jesus says in John 10:17-18, "*For this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.*"

He freely chose to join the Father's design for His own suffering and death. He was not surprised by the events that took place. He was not a victim of circumstances. He was an active participant. He freely chose to give His life as a ransom for many!

### The Death of Christ was undeserved.

The death of Christ on the cross was completely undeserved. He lived a perfect sinless life. He was without sin. John Piper in His book, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ* says in this regard, "No one ever deserved suffering less, yet received so much. The stamp of God on this perfect life is found in two words: "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). The only person in history, who did not deserve to suffer, suffered most.

- In 1 Peter 2:22 Peter says of Christ, "*Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.*"

Peter is quoting Isaiah 53:9 as he applies it to Christ. None of Jesus pain on the cross was a penalty for His sin. He had no sin! Clearly His death was undeserved!

### The Death of Christ was for the redemption of man.

- **First, Remember that Mankind is totally depraved! We are sinners!**
- Isaiah 53:6 says of mankind, "*all of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us have turned to his won way.*"
- Romans 3:10 says of mankind, "*For there is none righteous, not even one.*"
- Ephesians 2:1-3 says of mankind, "*that we are dead in our trespasses and sins.*"
- **Second, Remember that the penalty of sin is death!**

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- Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death.*" The sin of mankind must be paid by death.
- **Third, Christ paid the penalty in our behalf on the cross.**

Ephesians 1:7, "*In Him we have redemption through His blood.*" It is in Christ! It is through His death, the shedding of His own blood on the cross!

- 1 Peter 3:18, "*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God.*"
- 1 Peter 2:24, "*and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His wounds you were healed.*"

We are sinners! Sin has a penalty of death. In order that we might be redeemed Christ paid that penalty. He was our substitute. He took our place by dying on the cross. He gave His life a ransom for many. The death of Christ on the cross was for our redemption.

The Death of Christ was one of extreme anguish and incomparable suffering.

The agonies of God's Son were incomparable. No one ever suffered like this man.

- Before the high priest, Matthew 26:67 says, "*Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists, and others slapped Him.*"
- Before the Roman governor, Matthew 27:26 tells us that they scourged Him. Eusebius (about A.D. 300) described Roman scourging like this: "At one time they were torn by scourges down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed to sight."
- The soldiers mocked him and dressed him up. They blindfolded Him, and beat Him with their fists according to Mark 14:65.
- A crown of thorns was pressed down upon his head, and driven down into his skull with blows according to Mark 15:16-18.
- The torture continued as He was stripped, nailed to a cross in order to experience the hideous death of crucifixion.
- F. W. Farrar in his book, *The Life of Christ* describes the anguish and ever increasing trauma of crucifixion:

"The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries--especially at the head and stomach--became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of burning and raging thirst."

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- Death normally came from slow suffocation. The victim's body would hang in such a way that the diaphragm was severely constricted. In order to exhale, he would have to push up with the feet so that the diaphragm would have room to move.
- Truman Davis a medical doctor who studied the physical effects of crucifixion described Jesus' crucifixion this way:

"As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostals muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in life giving oxygen...

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against rough timber; then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

It is now almost over--the loss of tissue fluid has reached a critical level--the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues--the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to grasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain."

This is the incomparable suffering of our Lord Jesus as He died on the cross, a death of extreme anguish.