

What is the gospel? #4: The Death of Christ

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We are continuing our series looking at ‘what is the gospel?’ and in the last few weeks we have seen who Jesus is, his claims and his character – this has laid the foundation for us to begin to look at what did he come for, what was his destiny?

If you were to ask anyone something they thought Christians believed, they would all answer that Jesus died on a cross; [the cross is central](#) to the gospels: Matthew 2/5, Mark 3/5, Luke 1/3, John ½ are given over to the events between the triumphal entry and the ascension! It is impossible to separate the work of the cross from the subsequent resurrection and ascension.

So what I would like to do this morning is to explore the significance of what happened on the cross, and how it relates to the gospel we believe.

Firstly, from before his birth, it was apparent that the Son of God was coming with a divine purpose;
[Immanuel, God with us](#) (Matthew 1.23)
[Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins](#) (Matthew 1.21)
So how would Jesus - God with us – save his people from their sins?

John the Baptist gives us the first clue: [behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world](#) (John 1.29)

The obvious question to ask is ‘[how does a lamb take away sin?](#)’ We will go into what the Bible teaches about sin and its consequences later in the series, but let’s see what we can learn from the OT to answer this question

[Sacrifice:](#)

[Abel](#): one lamb for one man (Genesis 4)

[Passover](#): one lamb for one family (Exodus 12)

[Day of Atonement](#): one lamb for one nation (Leviticus 16) the scapegoat had to have no imperfections: Jesus was the only man to be completely without sin, both from the virgin birth and from his sinless life.

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Jesus: behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world

How? Sacrifice – the Son of man came to serve not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10.45)

Heb 9.22 without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin – the OT prefigured the cross of Christ

Heb 9.26-28 ...now **he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

It is this idea of a lamb being **a substitute, taking the punishment of another** which is central to our understanding of the cross. In theological terms it is called “Penal substitution”. Justice isn’t blind like the statue, but nor is love – God saw the fix we were in, and found a way for justice and love to be satisfied.

A straightforward illustration of this greater truth is found in the gospel account Matthew 27

Cp **Barabbas** was a murderer and a rebel, he was destined for crucifixion, and Jesus took the rebels place (substitution), the rebel went free and Jesus died. This is important for us, because if Jesus has paid the penalty for our sin, then we don’t have to.

‘Tetelestai’ paid in full John 19.30

Gal 2.20 **‘The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me’**

The **great exchange:** on the cross Jesus took on himself all the bad which we deserved as our substitute, and he also made available to us all the good which he deserved.

Notice these word pairings of what he did:

Isa 53:4-7 Surely he took up **our** infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he

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was crushed for **our** iniquities; the **punishment** that brought us **peace** was upon him, and by his **wounds** we are **healed**. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has **laid on him the iniquity of us all**. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

2Co 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be **sin^[1]** for us, so that in him we might become the **righteousness** of God.

1Pe 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the **righteous** for the **unrighteous**, to bring you to God. He was put to **death** in the body but made **alive** by the Spirit

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^[6] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Rom 6:23 For the **wages of sin is death**, but the **gift of God is eternal life in^[2] Christ Jesus our Lord**.

So the death of Jesus is where sin was dealt with by God, but remember, especially as we are about to share communion together, this was not just some business transaction – it was the **love** of the Father in sending his only Son, and the love of the Son to give himself for us paying the ultimate price so we might know him and love him – the final word goes to Jesus who said “greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends” John 15.13, how much he loves us.

Let us sing together number 67 ‘come and see’.