

Study Four



Why Did Jesus Die?

Please write your name above and fill in the Bible references in the spaces provided.

He Died As Part Of God's Plan

The New Testament writers tell us that the death of Jesus was not some dreadful mistake, but part of God's plan and purpose. God was using the wickedness of men to provide a way of forgiveness for those who would turn from sin. Amazingly, those who crucified Jesus would find that forgiveness was available to them too! Their dreadful crime made a way by which even *their* sin could be forgiven! Later in this study we shall see *how* the death of Jesus makes forgiveness possible.



Working to a plan

GOD PREDETERMINED THAT JESUS SHOULD BE KILLED

God had decided beforehand that Jesus should die. Write out Acts 2:23

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God is Sovereign

GOD USED MAN'S HATRED IN HIS DIVINE PLAN

God never made people hate Jesus, but He used the hate that was in man to bring about His purposes. The perfect life of Jesus made the imperfections of others more obvious. So they hated Jesus, and preferred to kill Him rather than have their own sinful ways exposed by His light. Jesus was a light in a dark world. Men tried to extinguish the light, preferring the darkness of their sin. Write out John 3:19



Jesus was a great light

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GOD USED MAN'S ENVY IN HIS DIVINE PLAN

Although many people hated Jesus, there were many others who were attracted to Him. His popularity was envied by the rulers and was another reason why He was hated.¹ The Roman governor knew they envied Jesus, and so he wanted to release Him. Read Matthew 27:17-18 Write out v.18

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Historic Note
Crucifixion was a slow and painful death. The victim's hands and feet were nailed to a cross. Jesus was badly whipped before He was crucified.

¹ There were many other reasons why Jesus was hated. See John 5:18, Luke 19:45-48.

The death of Jesus was no accident, nor was it the end. God was permitting men to do evil in order to achieve the greatest possible good, as the New Testament writers explain in the sections that follow.



Punishment

He Died As A Punishment For Sin

God is just. As an earthly judge cannot ignore crime, so God cannot ignore the bad things we do. Therefore sin must be punished, and God's punishment for sin is death.²

But the perfection of Jesus not only makes Him the perfect judge (Studies 2 and 3), it also makes Him the perfect *substitute*. Because He had no sin of His own, He was able to bear the sin and punishment of others.

JESUS SUFFERED IN THE BELIEVER'S PLACE

The just and holy Jesus suffered for the unjust, to bring them back to God. Write out 1 Peter 3:18

The just
for the unjust

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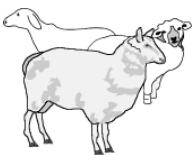
Failure to keep God's law brings the curse of God. Jesus bore this curse in the place of every believer. Write out Galatians 3:13

He bore
a curse

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JESUS WAS GOD'S LAMB

Before Jesus came, lambs and other animals were sacrificed. Sin was ceremonially transferred to them, and they were killed. They died in place of others – the innocent in place of the guilty. This was a picture of what Jesus would do. Jesus is called The Lamb of God because He died, like a lamb, in place of others. Animals can never take away sin, but the death of Jesus takes away sin once and for all.³ Write out John 1:29



Lambs were
sacrificed

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Lambs were also sacrificed at the Jewish Passover. The feast commemorated the day when God spared (passed over) the first-born son in every home painted with lamb's blood. The lamb died in place of the son. Jesus is the Passover Lamb who died in the place of every believer.⁴

² Romans 6:23.

³ Hebrews 10:11-12.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:7.

He Died To Reconcile Believers To God

The teaching of the New Testament is clear – sin angers a holy God, so that man is now God’s enemy. But Jesus died in the place of believers in order to reconcile them to God.⁵ They are no longer God’s enemy because their sin has been punished in Christ and removed.



Hostility towards God

JESUS’ DEATH RECONCILES

Now that believers have been put right with God they can rejoice. Read Romans 5:10-11. Write out verse 11

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NO CONDEMNATION REMAINS

There is no more condemnation for believers. God is now their friend. They have nothing to fear from the Day of Judgement. Write out Romans 8:1

Friends with God

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Only true believers are reconciled to God. We shall obtain a clearer understanding of what it means to believe when we come to Study 6.

RECONCILIATION AT A PRICE

It cost Jesus a great deal to reconcile believers to God. Jesus told us that His death was a “ransom for many”.⁶ A ransom is a sum of money that is paid to buy someone back. Kidnappers often demand a ransom. Jesus gave His life in place of sinners as a ransom to redeem believers back to God. Believers are no longer their own since they are bought by Jesus, and must now live for Him. Write out 1 Peter 1:18-19



The price of a ransom!

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He Died To Open Heaven To Believers

Believers from every land will be in Heaven. The New Testament describes Heaven as a holy place where God and His angels live. Nothing impure or sinful can ever enter it.⁷ Believers are reconciled to God through Christ’s death, and their sin has been taken away. Now there is nothing to prevent them entering Heaven when they die.



Heaven is multi-racial

⁵ Colossians 1:20.
⁶ Mark 10:45
⁷ Revelation 22:15

Advanced preparation

A RESERVED PLACE

Jesus often spoke of Heaven, and told His disciples that He was going ahead to prepare a place for them, and all believers.⁸ Write out John 14:2

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A LASTING POSSESSION

Everything in this world rusts or fades, but Heaven is the one thing that lasts forever. Christ's death and resurrection has bought this imperishable possession for every believer. Read 1 Peter 1:3-4. Write out verse 4

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Why cling to what we cannot keep?

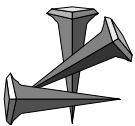
and FINALLY If Jesus is indeed God's Son (see earlier studies), then to die so cruel a death is remarkable, and requires an explanation. In fact, we should *expect*

God to give us one.

The New Testament writers claim to give us God's explanation. This study has been their account of why Jesus died. If we accept that they have given us a faithful record of His life, then we shall be open to what they say about the *purpose* of His death. Certainly, the high ethical tone of the New Testament suggests they are not out to deceive us.

There is something very awesome about the death of Jesus. While hanging on the cross He shouted "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me".⁹ The most obvious explanation of this cry is that God was punishing Jesus for the sin of others.¹⁰

Jesus willingly suffered for rebels like us. No one took His life from Him.¹¹ Heaven's eternal years will be too short to offer all the praise and adoration that is due to Him. Such amazing love is very compelling. It *demand*s our life, our soul, and our all!



Love, not nails, held Jesus

⁸ Consider John 17:20 and 24.

⁹ Matthew 27:46.

¹⁰ Compare the death of Jesus with the triumphant death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. What can account for the difference? (Acts 6:15 and 7:55-56).

¹¹ John 10:18.