



## We believe in Jesus' sacrifice

## Matthew 27:11 to 54

If you read the first 8 chapters of Mark's gospel, you will recall the frenetic activity described there. Jesus did many things to show that he was indeed the Son of God and had power to influence and change many aspects of his creation. In Mark 8 Jesus gathers his disciples at the centre of Roman worship called Caesarea Philippi and asks them a leading question – 'Who do people say I am?' (8:27). The disciples reply suggests many possibilities are on the street. Then Jesus makes it personal – 'but what about you; who do you say I am?' Peter's response is straight to the point. He has seen and heard enough to say – 'you are the Christ'.

For Peter the identity of Jesus is clear. But the next line must have shocked him. Mark 8:31 says

***'He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this ....'***

Once Jesus has established his identity, he immediately gets on to his purpose – to die. But what does his death mean? Is it just a noble death of a good man as some would say? Is it Jesus identifying with us in suffering – in other words, he suffered so he can understand our suffering.

**Imagine you met someone who knew nothing about Jesus. How would you explain to them the reason for Jesus' death?**

We need to be clear about this – this is the central truth of the Christian faith. Many wear crosses around their necks – many churches have the emblem of the cross displayed. If our main symbol is a means of execution there has to be real significance in the event. 1 Peter 2:24 & 25 puts it clearly

***'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed'***

To understand the cross – we must understand SIN. Not a popular word.

**How would you define SIN?**

**Is it series of wrong actions? Does it describe our very nature? Or is it both?**

***'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ'*** Romans 3:23 &24

So, sin is a problem for all of us. We are all sinners because we have a sinful nature that we were born with. God is holy and cannot look on sin so we cannot approach him. There is a problem here which we cannot solve. We cannot make ourselves 'holy enough' for God. In the Old Testament there was a highly complicated system of sacrifices designed to deal with sin (Read Leviticus if you want the full picture).

**Is it hard to admit that we have a sinful nature and that means we will do things that displease God?**

Once we understand this, we can begin to understand why the sacrifice of Jesus is crucial to our lives. It cannot be just a noble action or even helping us by seeing Jesus suffer so we can deal with our suffering. We must understand that

***'The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'***

Romans 6:23 and 24

***'For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy'***

Hebrews 10:14

Also read Hebrews 10:1 to 18 if you have time.

Jesus' death on the cross has many meanings

- All sin must be punished – Jesus takes the punishment for our sin
- It demonstrates the power of God to save us
- It guarantees our new and eternal life
- It means I can be free from guilt
- Jesus is the substitute for us

It might be appropriate to pause and spend some time in prayer thanking God for sending his Son to die for our sin.

Also thank God that, if you trust in him, you have the free gift of eternal life in him

It's always good to read the gospel accounts of Jesus' death. Read Matthew 27:11 to 54.

How would you describe the way Jesus dealt with the long and cruel death? How did he deal with the authorities?

An interesting question is, who was in control at this event?

Without the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, sin remains undealt with. We are still lost. You cannot underestimate the power of the cross. A verse from Psalm 32 is

***'Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered***

***Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him'***

Let's go forward rejoicing that we are delivered from the bondage of sin – so let's live as free people in the power of the Holy Spirit that many more may hear about this glorious salvation.

By the way – that's not the end. Death is beaten, sin is beaten. But that's next week's study.