

# Understanding the Gospel – Part I

## *Why Did Jesus Die?*

### Understanding the Consequences of our Sin:

1. Watch these few movie clips from the movie The “Passion of The Christ” and see if you can **identify the enormous price that was paid at Calvary** for our sin. You can also read the passages of Scripture found in Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23, John 18-19, List some of your thoughts in the space below:
2. From those same movie clips or Scripture passages; **identify the results from Christ’s death on the cross:**

## Understanding the significance of the death of Jesus Christ:

1. **Christianity** is a “religion” based upon **atonement**
  - Let’s first eliminate the fear of the word religion for it is simply defined as; “A set of beliefs and practices held by a human community”.
  - **Atonement** is a doctrine contained in both the Old Testament and New Testament, or through the religions of Judaism and Christianity.
    - 1) It is the process by which sins are forgiven or pardoned
    - 2) When you see the word atonement; try seeing it as being reconciled to God or at-one-ment with Him.
2. ***This “redemption story” (the death of Christ) distinguishes Christianity from all other religions and places it, along with the resurrection of Christ, as the primary dividing line between the other two monotheistic religions known to mankind:***
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why is it impossible to reconcile Christianity with these other monotheistic religions? (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, John 1:1-5, 9-12, John 3:10-18, Philippians 2:1-11)
4. ***As much as the death of Christ is directly related to the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-19), the birth of Jesus is equally significant and inseparable. Thus if you prove one to be false then all are false.*** (Luke 2:10-20, John 1:29-34, Matthew 20:28, Hebrews 2:14-15)

5. Is atonement for sins necessary or is it just a “Christian” thing?

- **Islam** teaches that humans are basically good, but fallible and in need of guidance. *Our eternal destiny is determined by weighing our good deeds from our bad.* In the end it is up to Allah and his mercy which (**if he chooses**) will tip the scales in favor of heaven for his will is supreme.
  - 1) To the **Muslim**; *Jesus* is one of the most respected of the over 124,000 prophets whom Allah has sent. They even believe Jesus was sinless, born of a virgin and a great miracle worker but *not the Son of God*.
  - 2) **Muslim's** believe in God (*Allah*) and claim He is One. They do not affirm the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit) and see that belief as false and condemn it. **They openly deny that Jesus is God.**
  - 3) **Islam denies that Jesus was crucified and therefore in no way made atonement for man's sins.**
- **Judaism** is basically split in their beliefs on salvation. Some believe that prayer, repentance and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the result of an improved society.
  - 1) The Orthodox Jew (basically non-Messianic Jews or non-Hebrew Christians) teaches that Jesus was either an extremely false messiah or a good but martyred Jewish rabbi or teacher. *Therefore there is no provision for Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross for man's sins.*
  - 2) ***Orthodox Judaism does not embrace Jesus as the Son of God nor do they accept Him as their messiah.*** In addition they do not teach that Jesus rose from the dead and do not accept the Trinity.

- **Hinduism** teaches that *salvation is achieved when one is finally released from the cycles of reincarnation* and therefore sort of absorbed or united with Brahman (God).
  - 1) They teach that God is “The Absolute”, a universal spirit. Everyone is part of God (Brahman) but most people are not aware of it. Thus as we cycle through the various stages of reincarnation we eventually find salvation through improved status.
  - 2) They believe in Jesus Christ and consider Him a teacher, a guru, or an avatar (a bodily manifestation of a higher being - an incarnation of Vishnu). They teach he is the son of God but they don't limit that status to only Jesus. **To the Hindu Jesus' death does not atone for mans sin.** They also do not affirm Jesus' resurrection.
  
- **Buddhism** teaches that *salvation is achieved when all fleshly cravings and desires are eliminated*. This occurs in the state known to them as Nirvana and that state is the ultimate goal of life and where suffering ceases. To the true Buddhist this is the Eightfold Path which when completed frees us from desiring anything.
  - 1) *Jesus does not fit into their historic world view* with the exception of western Buddhists who teach that Jesus was an enlightened teacher.
  - 2) In either case ***there is no provision for an atoning sacrifice in the Buddhist belief system.*** In fact Buddha himself does not believe in the existence of God although he is spoken of as a universal enlightened consciousness or a god.

- Since **Scientology** (founded by L. Ron Hubbard who wrote *Dianetics; The Modern Science of Mental Health*) has somewhat permeating the Hollywood scene - I figured we should get an understanding of what they teach.
  - 1) There is a blend here of Hinduism, TM, Buddhism and other religions but ***they basically teach there is no need for salvation or atonement.***
  - 2) Sin does not exist and therefore does not need to be repented of. *Salvation (like Hinduism) is obtained when one is released from reincarnation.*
  - 3) Total freedom is achieved through the assistance of an auditor who helps the person get rid of his/her “engrams” (hang-ups) and moves the person toward a “clear” state and then progressing to the “bridge of total freedom”
  - 4) **They have no real provision for God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. They deny that Jesus died for mans sin.**
- **Mormonism** teaches that Jesus' death on the cross ***does not provide full atonement for all sin***, but it does provide a means to be resurrected.
  - 1) Salvation (being exalted to the godhead) to the Mormon is achieved by works and resurrection occurs by grace. Some of the works that would bring us into the “godhead” are; faithfulness to the church and its leadership, Mormon baptism, tithing, marriage and participating in secret temple rituals. Eternal life can only be obtained through Mormon membership.
  - 2) To the Mormon; Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim) and was a created being (a spiritual child) by the Father and Mother in heaven. His physical body was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary.

- **Jehovah's Witnesses** do not really have a provision of atonement but they do teach that salvation is only possible through being baptized as a Jehovah Witness. Theirs is a system of works where one must earn their way towards everlasting life.
  - 1) One of their primary means of works is door to door witnessing to attempt to make converts. Ironically though; salvation in heaven is limited to 144,000 and that number is already reached!
  - 2) They do not believe that Jesus is God and prior to his coming to earth He was Michael the archangel. They do teach that Jehovah made the earth through Him.
  - 3) They further teach that while on the earth (as a man) Jesus led a perfect life, died on a stake (not a cross), and resurrected as a spirit though His body was destroyed.
  - 4) They do not believe that Jesus is coming again as king, though He did return (invisibly) in 1914 as a spirit. At some point (very soon), Jesus and the angels will come and destroy all non-Jehovah Witnesses.
- You can see that atonement (with the exception of Judaism) is primarily found in the teachings of Christianity and the atoning death of Christ continues to divide us from these belief systems.
  - 1) Does that cause you any pause to think that there is so much differing views on salvation?
  - 2) Can any or all of these systems be reconciled or blended with Christianity? (Why or why not?)
  - 3) What can we do to change these differences?

## Understanding the Scriptural Definition of Christ's Death

1. Jesus was our \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 20:28, I Peter 1:18-19, I Timothy 2:1-6, Galatians 3:13)
  - This is best defined as delivering someone by paying a price, or to buy back (redeem) a person by paying the price for which he/she is held captive.
  - Sin is our captor and the price for our release is beyond our payment. (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 7:14, Ezekiel 18:4)
  - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of a broken law by Himself being made a curse for us. His death was the ransom price paid for our deliverance” (*The Great Doctrines of the Bible*; by William Evans page 71)
2. Jesus was our \_\_\_\_\_ (I John 2:2, Rom. 3:25, Hebrews 2:17)
  - This is best understood to mean that Jesus was our covering
  - Borrowing again from William Evans in the book (*Great Doctrines of the Bible* page 72); “The death of Jesus Christ is set forth as the ground on which a righteous God can pardon a guilty and sinful race without in any way compromising His righteousness”.
3. Jesus was our \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 53:6, I Peter 2:24-25, 3:18, II Corinthians 5:21)
  - He became the “Passover Lamb” in which “the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all”.
  - Only Jesus could be the proper substitute because He knew no\_\_\_\_\_.
4. It was Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary that \_\_\_\_\_ us to God. (Romans 5:10, II Corinthians 5:18-19, Colossians 1:20)

## **Understanding the Necessity of Christ's Death**

1. The initial subtitle of this lesson; "Why did Jesus die" can be answered by recognizing it was necessary because of the condition that existed between God and man. Our relationship to God was broken for two very important reasons:
  - God's \_\_\_\_\_ which requires those who come before Him are also \_\_\_\_\_. (I Peter 1:16)
  - Man's \_\_\_\_\_ which is more than a mere weakness or offense against humanity. It is in fact complete rebellion against a perfect, holy and righteous God of which if left unredeemed will utterly condemn a person to hell. (Romans 3:10, 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, John 3:16-18)
2. Because these two irreconcilable differences between man and God; the only means by which we could be reconciled to Him was through the atoning death on the cross by the perfect sacrifice which was Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-18)

## **Concluding Thoughts:**

1. In order to understand the Resurrection of Jesus we need to understand He had to die first or why would He need to resurrect?
2. Once we see that He actually died then the ultimate question of; "Why did He die?" needs to be answered.
3. Since there is more evidence that He did actually live and died then where is He?