

# Why Did Christ Die?

## FINGER POST No. 16

MANY difficulties concerning the death of Christ have been due to the idea that he died instead of the sinner, like an innocent man going to the gallows, and letting the murderer go free. This is obviously unjust, and raises the question how God can be shown to be righteous by such a means. Further, if the penalty due to men has been paid, why do men still suffer it by dying?

A more modern view has seen in Christ's death the supreme act of love which wins men's hearts by its example. While this is less repugnant to one's sense of justice, it is by no means the whole truth set forth in the Bible. What that truth is we may begin to discover by asking a few questions, and answering them in the words of the Scripture.

### **1. Why did Christ die?**

**ANSWER:** "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:10). "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). "One died for all" (2 Cor. 5:14).

**2. But what does this mean? Does "die for" mean "die instead of" or "die on account of"? This is answered by the following citations, in which the original word translated "for" is the same.**

**ANSWER:** "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "He gave himself for our sins" (Gal. 1:4). "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10:12). "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25).

**3. But then comes the question, Why was it necessary that Christ should die on account of our sins?**

**ANSWER:** "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25).

Sin is "remitted" or forgiven through the "forbearance" of God, and God exercises this forbearance because His righteousness has been "declared" by means of Christ's death: He can therefore forgive erring men while His own righteousness is upheld, and He does not appear to condone the sin.

**4. Why should God require the declaration of His righteousness before He will exercise His kindness in pardoning our offences with a view to granting eternal life?**

**ANSWER:** "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts; and my name is dreadful" (Mal. 1:14). He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15); He is "clothed with honour and majesty" (Psa. 104 :1); "Holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9); "Let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

**5. In what way was the righteousness of God, in His dealings with mankind, declared in the sacrifice of Jesus?**

**ANSWER:** Death came upon all men through Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21). Sentence of death was passed on Adam because of his disobedience (Gen. 3:19). All who came from him suffered the consequence, although they had not taken part in the original offence (Rom. 5:14). This is not unjust: it is as inevitable as that a blackbird will breed blackbirds. A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean (Job 14:4); and Adam's nature being corrupted as the result of sin, those who are propagated from him necessarily share in the corruption. So babes are mortal, though they never sinned. Yet God cannot accept the "unclean thing", and give such a being eternal life. Jesus, though Son of God, was also son of man, sharing in human nature in all points. (Read carefully Heb. 2:9-18; 4:15; Rom. 8:3; 1:3; 1 Tim.2:3-6; Matt. 1:1).

Being one of the human race, Jesus could represent all men. He could submit to death on their behalf in order to declare publicly that death is due to them all.

**6. But why could not the same declaration of righteousness have taken place in the death of any other son of Adam?**

**ANSWER:** Because, in the case of any other son of Adam, the result would have been abortive. The righteousness of God is declared in the death of every sinner, but stops short at the grave. The object in the case of Christ was to go beyond the grave -- to abolish death, through or by means of death, and this could only be done in one who was without sin, for only such a one could rise from the dead to immortality.

"He hath abolished death" (2 Tim. 1:10). He took part in flesh and blood "that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the devil", that is sin for he "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 2:14; 9:26). "He died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). "Death hath no more dominion over him" (verse 9).

**7. Would the sacrificial declaration of the righteousness of God in the death of Christ have availed anything if Christ had not risen from the dead?**

**ANSWER:** "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14). "Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (verse 18). "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again" (Rom. 8:34).

If Christ died merely as a substitute for men, and so paid the price due from them, it would not be necessary for their salvation that he should rise from the dead. Nor would it be if the only object of his death was to influence them by a sublime example of love.

**8. Why was the resurrection of Christ necessary in order that his sacrifice might bring life?**

**ANSWER:** Because the plan was to make one perfect, and give him power as head, captain, and judge over all who come unto God by him (Heb. 2:10; 5:7-9; 7:25; John 5:22-27; 17:2).

**9. Have we to be brought into contact with the sacrificial declaration of the righteousness of God in the death of Christ before we can approach God acceptably?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, in baptism. God has appointed baptism as a taking part in the death of Christ on the part of those who are baptized.

"We are baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3). "Buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12).

Remission of sins is offered through the risen and glorified Christ to all who believe the gospel, and associate themselves with his death through baptism (Acts 2:38; 13:38; Rom. 6:4-5). Such put on the name of Christ in the act of baptism (Gal. 3:27) and stand covered by him to whom God has given power to forgive sins, and to bestow immortal life when he returns from heaven