

## Why did Jesus die?



Jesus, more than any other person, has changed the world for good. Yet he is remembered more for his death than for his amazing life.

Why was he killed? What did it achieve? Why does the death of Jesus matter so much?

Jesus matters to us precisely because he died!

Just a few weeks after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the Apostle Peter spoke to a huge crowd of people in Jerusalem and talked to them about Jesus' death:

*"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."* (Acts 2:22-24)

So, why did Jesus die?

### 1. People sent Jesus to die

- *Judas*: Because of greed he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (\$600 in today's money).
- *The religious leaders*: Because they were jealous of Jesus' growing influence with the people and hated how he exposed their hypocrisy they presented him to Pilate for crucifixion.
- *Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor)*: A combination of ambition and cowardice caused him to back down from his declaration of Jesus' innocence when the people questioned his loyalty to Caesar. He sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

### 2. The love and justice of God sent Jesus to die

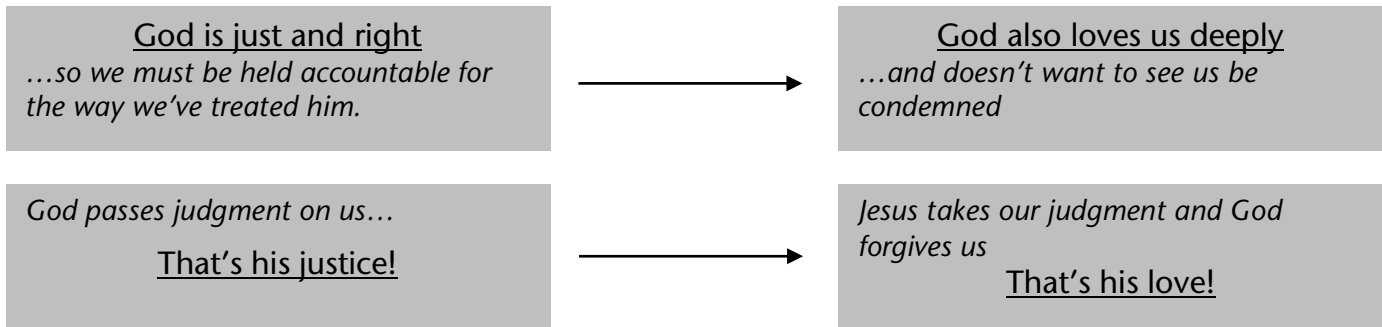
Did you notice what Peter said in the passage we read earlier? *"This man [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge."*

God's love and justice don't battle with each other until love wins. His love is just and his justice is loving. God loves us deeply and doesn't want us to be condemned for our sins, and he is also a good and just judge who cannot simply overlook our guilt. But how can these two things fit together?

Jesus became a human being, which gave him the right to represent us to God. He lived his life as a man without sin, which means he didn't deserve to be condemned. Then he took our place facing God's judgment, took our guilt in exchange for his innocence. God found him guilty and carried out the penalty of death. That means that God can now extend his loving welcome to us and his justice is satisfied by Jesus' death on the cross!



# Topic 7 – Why did Jesus die?



Here are two statements from the Bible that express this beautiful truth:

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)*

*"You see, at just the right time, when we were powerless, Jesus died for us. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)*

All other religions can be spelled D-O, because they are all about what we have to DO to become acceptable to God. But the Christian message is spelled D-O-N-E, because it's all about what God has already DONE for us. When we could do nothing to make ourselves right with God, God did what only love would do. He paid the terrible price for our forgiveness.

## 3. Jesus chose to die

Jesus said, *"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."* (John 10:17-18)

## 4. Our sins sent Jesus to die

Peter said to that crowd in Jerusalem (the first quote we looked at today): *"This man [Jesus] ...you, with the help of wicked men, put to death by nailing him to the cross."* The people didn't reject what Peter said, but rather they felt it deeply and said, *"Brothers, what should we do?"*

Like that crowd, we need to realise that we personally are involved in why Jesus died. Just like those people in Peter's day we need to recognise our personal need for God's forgiveness. Although we were not physically involved in the crucifixion of Jesus, our sins made it necessary for Jesus to die on the cross. Yet Jesus offers forgiveness to the very people who crucified him!

Do you see what an amazing thing God has done for us? *That's real love.*

*There is one thing you can always count on in life—God loves you. Jesus died for you.*

## Discussion questions (pick some to discuss)

- Out of all the people involved in Jesus' death, who do you think was most responsible?
- What do you think is the central issue of the death of Jesus?
- Do you think Jesus had to die? Could God have mended the split between himself and humanity in any other way?
- The video points out that most religious activity can be spelled D-O, but that the Christian message is spelled D-O-N-E. How does this make you feel?
- What do you think of the people's response when Peter told them they had been responsible for the death of Jesus? Acts 2:37 in the Bible says *'they were cut to the heart.'*