

## Bible Insights

### Why Jesus Went to the Cross

Two very important things happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth six months before he arrived in Jerusalem for the last Passover with his Twelve appointed apostles. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record these happenings. Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was. “A prophet,” they said. But Peter, speaking for all the disciples, uttered the great confession – “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus then began to predict his upcoming suffering and death. We read in Matthew 16:21, ***From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day.***

The first event, Peter’s confession, **the disciples’ confession**, is that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. And Jesus begins to tell them that the Messiah will suffer and be killed.

The second event was 6 days later when Jesus took Peter, James and John, three of his closet disciples, up on a high mountain and he was **transfigured** before them. There the glory of Christ’s own person shone forth from his very body and clothes. Luke gives us the most detailed account of that, and he writes:

“And as he was praying, the appearance of his face became different, and his clothing *became* white, gleaming like lightning. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two men were talking with him, who were Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory *and* were speaking *about his departure (his exodus) which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.* <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and those with him were *very sleepy*, but *when they* became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who were standing with him. <sup>33</sup> And it happened that as they were going away from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good *for* us to be here. And let us make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,” not knowing what he was saying. <sup>34</sup> And *while* he was saying these *things*, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered into the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a voice came from the cloud, saying, “**This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!**” <sup>36</sup> And after the voice had occurred, Jesus was found alone” (Luke 9:29-36).

We call this “the transfiguration.” But what’s so important here is the conversation that Moses and Elijah have with Jesus on the mountain.

They’re discussing with him his upcoming “exodus,” that is, his departure from earth back to heaven. Remember, he is the incarnate Lord of glory.

But the way back to the Father is by means of the cross, where he will suffer for the sins of humanity. He'll be crucified, killed, die, and buried. He will be offering himself as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

*So Jesus from that time on began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised on the third day (Matt. 16:21).* Jesus predicts three times his upcoming suffering, crucifixion, his death, and burial, and subsequent resurrection.

So Jesus "sets his face," Luke tells us, "to go to Jerusalem." This expression, "sets his face," is likely based on Isaiah 50:7:

*The Lord God will help me; therefore, I have not been humiliated; therefore I have **set my face like flint**, and I know I will not be put to shame.*

The expression "set my face like flint," captures *Jesus' mindset of steadfast determination to go to Jerusalem for what awaited him there.* In his garden prayer he will refer to this as **the cup**.

For the next six months Jesus makes this long journey through Israel all the way down to Jerusalem. On what we call "Palm Sunday," he enters the beginning of the week in which the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread would be done. He came to the Passover festival and there became in actuality the true "Lamb slain from the creation of the world" who spares his people from judgment and gains for them forgiveness of sin and a loving relationship with the Father.

So Luke writes, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." So, here's the question: "**Why did Jesus go to the cross?**"

Now there are many reasons that we can give from the scriptures, but I only want to mention a few.

**The first reason** is that Jesus always did those things that pleased the Father. So Jesus goes to the cross to fulfill the Father's will. In his obedience to the Father, he will bring him glory.

Jesus says, "I have come down from heaven, *not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me*" (v. 38, emphasis added - John 6:38).

<sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd," says Jesus. "I know My own sheep, and they know Me, <sup>15</sup> as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. ... <sup>17</sup> This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I

may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father.” John 10:14ff

Jesus told his disciples in John 12:23, *“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

<sup>24</sup> *“I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop. ”*

<sup>27</sup> *“Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify Your name!”*

*Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!”*

<sup>31</sup> *Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die.*

Now Jesus talked about bringing glory to the Father in his prayer in John 17. At the end of what we call “The Lord’s Supper” – Jesus prayed what we call his high priestly prayer. In many ways this is the true Lord’s prayer. He says, *“Father, I have glorified your name on earth. I glorified it by doing what which you have assigned for me to do. And so I am coming to you, and I pray on behalf of these.”* John 17:4-5

Now Jesus was fully aware after he finished this prayer and went to the garden to pray that it was the Father’s will that he go to the cross. He had come into the world to make propitiation for the sins of his people. That is, he had come to stand in their place and absorb the wrath of God that they, not he, deserved. By doing what the Father willed, what God in his triune being had willed, Jesus brings God glory, and Jesus also receives glory.

Secondly, Jesus came into the world and went to the cross **in order to fulfill prophecy**. The prophecies were given in accordance with God’s predetermined plan and purpose. We read about this in Acts, chapter 2. On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter is preaching to the crowds, he tells them that Jesus came to fulfill the Father’s will. “This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him. Though he was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him” (Acts 2:22-23).

In Acts 4, after the church had suffered their first martyrdom, they gathered together to pray. As they prayed, they made a very interesting statement, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our Father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “Why do the Gentiles rage, and the people plot in vain? The kings of earth set themselves and the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Anointed. For truly in this city, they

were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, *to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place*" (Acts 4:24-28 ).

So Christ came in accordance with the eternal will and decree of the almighty, triune God, and gave himself a ransom for his people.

Jesus came in order to fulfill prophecy and thus do the eternal will of the Father, that he would be the Lamb slain in behalf of God's chosen people. By doing this willingly out of his love for the Father and those whom the Father had given him, he brings glory to the Father.

**A third reason** why Jesus went to the cross is that he came into the world to save sinners. This is his own declaration. And in Mark 10:45 he says specifically that *"the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many."* A ransom is a price that's paid for the purchase of something.

So Jesus must pay the price of giving his life as a ransom payment. He dies in order to free sinners from their bondage to Satan and sin, and the consequences of sin, which is death.

Hebrews 2:14 and following relates this for us. It says that "since the children shared in flesh and blood..." (he's talking about humans...) "...he, " that's Jesus himself, "partook of the same things," that is, he became a human, "...that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and in so doing, deliver all those who through fear of death, were subject to life-long slavery." He also does this, "being made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation, that is, an atoning sacrifice, for the sins of the people."

So Jesus came into the world to save sinners by the sacrifice of himself on the cross by being the substitute for the death, the hell, that they deserved. On the cross, Jesus, in a way, was led right into the very throes of the chief enemy of humanity, of God, and his own chief enemy, that is, the devil, or Satan. The devil, or Satan, was the source of the temptation to which Adam and Eve succumbed. The penalty for sin is death in all of its dimensions and ultimately eternal hell. On the cross Christ Jesus entered into death, he entered into our hell, and he won the victory over the devil by enduring death, and then emerging victorious in his glorious resurrection on the third day.

By his death, he destroyed death, and freed from Satan's enslavement the people that the devil held in bondage. He offered himself to the Father as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people, and thus has become a faithful high priest for them. As our high priest he takes us into the very presence of God, who grants us acceptance because

he's paid the debt that we owed. He's endured the punishment that we deserved, that we might go free, and he does this out of a heart of love, that is, the heart of love that the Father has, for him, and for all the people he chose, in him, before the foundation of the world.

Why did Jesus go to the cross? He went to the cross in order to bring us near to God, to reconcile us to God, to bring us into relationship of sons and daughters of God, through faith in his name.

*Hebrews 12:2, let us keep looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So this is **a fourth reason** he went to the cross. Jesus went to the cross for the joy, for the joy of having a people - a people that his Father had given him before the creation of the world, a people that he purchased by his own blood, a people that belong to him. So for the joy that lay before him, of having his people, he endured the cross, despising the shame. After making purification for sins, he was raised from the dead. After forty days he ascended into heaven and has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

There he is, waiting for the moment when the Father shall say, "Go...", and he shall return in glory to bring all of us who are his by faith alone into the everlasting kingdom he's won for us by his blood.

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights. Until next time, remember Christ, the only Savior of sinners.

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