



PATHWAY BIBLE GUIDES

THE CROSS

For Our Sins





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BY MATTHEW JENSEN



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Pathway Bible Guides

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Matthias Media

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Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

Matthias Media (USA)

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The death of Jesus on the cross is central to Christian faith. It is celebrated around the world on Good Friday, and is proclaimed regularly wherever Christians gather together. Each of the four gospels devotes an enormous amount of its account to describing the events surrounding the crucifixion. And the apostle Paul sums up the content of his message by saying simply, “we preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23). Almost all Christians would include it as one of the basic ideas that someone must believe in order to be saved.

But history shows that the meaning of Jesus’ death is easily misunderstood. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul says that Jewish people of his day saw Jesus’ death as “a stumbling block” because they wanted “signs” as proof that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. On the other hand, Greeks saw Jesus’ death as foolish because they wanted “wisdom”—that is, a message with intellectual appeal—and the death of God’s saviour on a cross certainly did not seem wise to them (1 Cor 1:22-23). Both the Jews and the Greeks of Paul’s day saw the event of Jesus’ death, but interpreted its meaning in light of their own expectations. How should we understand the cross so that we don’t simply interpret it in light of our own expectations and so miss its true meaning and importance?

Later in 1 Corinthians, Paul presents another summary of his gospel

message—a summary that includes an answer to this problem of rightly understanding Jesus’ death. At the heart of Paul’s gospel is the idea that “Christ died *for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures*” (15:3). The significance of Jesus’ death is that it was for our sins. This is Paul’s understanding of the event. But the verse says more than that. It also gives us the basis for interpreting the death of Jesus this way: *in accordance with the Scriptures*. If we want to understand Jesus’ death, we need to interpret it in light of the Old Testament Scriptures.

These studies examine seven ways in which Jesus’ death is interpreted in the New Testament in light of the Old Testament Scriptures. We start with one of the gospel records of Jesus’ death. The first study asks us to read through chapters 14-15 of Mark’s Gospel so that our memories of the death of Jesus are refreshed.

Each subsequent study examines one Old Testament image that is used to interpret the significance of Jesus’ death. These studies follow a consistent format:

- questions to get us thinking about the main image or idea of the study
- reading from the Old Testament, so that the image/idea is understood against its Old Testament background
- reading from the New Testament, where Jesus’ death is interpreted in light of the Old Testament
- application questions to help us think about what a right understanding of Jesus’ death means for us today.

I pray that these studies will give you a clearer, deeper understanding of this central aspect of Christian belief. May they help you to see what it means to “preach Christ crucified”, and may they deepen your love and trust for the one who “died for our sins”.

Matthew Jensen

September 2013

1. JESUS' DEATH IN MARK



Getting started

See if you can number the following events surrounding Jesus' death in chronological order:

- _____ Jesus is crucified
- _____ Jesus celebrates the Passover
- _____ The Roman ruler tries Jesus
- _____ Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane
- _____ Jesus is arrested
- _____ A woman anoints Jesus with perfume
- _____ Jesus is buried
- _____ The Jewish rulers try Jesus
- _____ Jesus is beaten
- _____ Peter denies knowing Jesus
- _____ Jesus dies



Light from the Word

Read Mark 14:1-25.

1. What does Jesus say about the significance of his death?

2. What does he base his understanding of this on?

Read Mark 14:26-52.

3. What is Jesus expecting to happen to:

- him?

- his disciples?

4. How would you describe Jesus' attitude towards his death?

Read Mark 14:53-15:15.

5. Who condemned Jesus as "deserving death"? On what basis did they condemn him?

6. Based on Mark's description of events, how would you characterize Jesus' trial and sentencing?

Read Mark 15:16-47.

7. What does this section tell us about the significance of Jesus' death?



To finish

What is the overall meaning and significance of Jesus' death, according to Mark?

What Old Testament passages and images are used throughout this section of Mark, and how do they help to convey the significance of Jesus' death?



Give thanks and pray

Thank God that Jesus willingly went to his death in accordance with God's plan, and that in so doing he paid the penalty for our sins.