

Lesson 4 – Why Did Jesus Die?

(Ask the student if they know why Christ died; and read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.) Here Paul talks about the gospel that he preached. In verses 3 and 4, he details the three historical facts that form the basis of the gospel. (Ask the student what the three facts are.) The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. And in a nutshell, Paul answers our original question: "Christ died for our sins." Today we are going to delve into this truth.

We Are Sinners

(Ask the student, "What is sin?" and read 1 John 3:4.) Simply stated, sin is doing something against the law. (Ask the student, "what law?") The law of God. (Ask the student where we find this law?) We have to study the Bible, as we are doing now. And the law of God that applies to us today is found in the New Testament.

Parents tell their children to do or not to do certain things. Our governments have laws, too, which we citizens must obey. But the most important law is the law of God. God is our Father, our Creator, our Judge, and the Owner of the universe. We sin when we disobey a command from Him and when we fail to do what He commands us to do.

The Wages of Sin

(Read Romans 6:23.) (Ask the student what the payment or result of sin is.) Death. We can think of spiritual death, physical death, and the second death. It is about separation from God. God is holy. He cannot accept sin. Sin has to be punished. We see this truth from Genesis to Revelation. We know the case of Adam and Eve. A simple commandment. God forbade them to eat of just one tree among all the trees in the Garden. However, like all human beings, telling them they can't have something makes them want it all the more. So it was with Adam and Eve. God gave them free will so they could choose to obey Him or not. But disobedience entailed a strong punishment. The result, among other things was pain, sweat, death, and being thrown out of the Garden. God does not tolerate sin.

The Bible ends with the same message. (Read Revelation 21:8.) (Ask the student which sins in the list they don't understand, and help them to understand them all.) (cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, liars) And it says "all liars." For God there is neither a black lie nor a white lie, neither a bad lie nor a good lie. It says that all liars will end up in "the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Paid with Death and Blood

Throughout the Bible we see that God does not tolerate sin. He can't ignore it. All sin is rebellion against God, it is a lack of respect for our Creator. There is a price to pay. As we saw in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." However, things do not end there. Our God is not only holy, but He is also a God of mercy, grace, and love. Therefore, God has provided a remedy for our sinful condition. We see the beginning of this remedy in the Old Testament. It is about the need for a sacrifice to remove the death penalty. This remedy involves death, but the death of an animal, rather than the death of the sinner.

In the book of Leviticus we see the importance of the death of animals and the shedding of their blood. Instead of the sinner's death, an animal dies. (Read Leviticus 17:11.) In this text we see that the blood (which was shed when the animal died) makes "atonement." The word "atonement" has a deep meaning, but in simple words it indicates paying the price to receive forgiveness.

The Lamb of God

When we come to the New Testament, we see a change when it tells us that "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). That is to say, that the death and blood of animals in the Old Testament are no longer valid. A better sacrifice is needed. One day when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). (Ask the student if he knows why he calls him "the Lamb of God.") It is because Christ was going to die and shed His blood like the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament. This truth brings us back to 1 Corinthians 15:3, "Christ died for our sins."

We have seen in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death," but thank God the verse doesn't end there. (Ask the student what the last part of the verse says.) "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Christ died in our place, and thus paid our debt, and at the same time offered us eternal life. This is expressed in one of the most famous verses in the Bible. (Ask the student they can quote John 3:16 from memory. If not, read it.) And as it says in Hebrews 9:29, "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many..."

Questions

1. What are the three historical events that form the basis of the gospel? (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ)
2. What is sin, and how can we know if something is sin? (it is doing something against God's law found in the New Testament)
3. Are you a sinner? (____) (most students would say "yes." If they don't accept that they personally are a sinner, stop studying and try to help them see themselves as God sees them)
4. Do we have to die for our sins? Explain your answer.) We do not have to die for our sins because Christ died in our place.
5. Did Christ die for you? (____) (Assuming the student answers "yes," tell them that in the next few studies we will study our part in the salvation of the soul.