

# **“Why Christ “Had” to Die: Making Sense of the Cross”**

*The Mysteries of Easter #3*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The scriptures record seven brief but powerful statements made by Jesus while he hung on the cross. They all point to why Christ had to die. We will examine each in this study, asking what it reveals to us about God and his redemptive purposes, and how it applies to us personally.

### ***Ice Breaker (Optional):***

What movie dramas of the crucifixion have you found most moving?

## **STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)**

### **Q1 Read Luke 23:34; Matthew 5:44; Romans 8:34**

[Forgiveness] There is no sin too great for God to forgive if we are willing to ask Him. What does Jesus’ statement from the cross (and Rom 8:34) reveal to you about how much he wants us to find forgiveness? Knowing this, what does it free us to request of God?

### **Q2 Read Luke 23:39-43**

[Salvation] What is it that differentiated the thief who received salvation from the other thief? Upon what do you base your salvation? Is there anyone you can encourage with the fact that it is never too late to receive salvation?

### **Q3 Read John 19:26**

[Compassion] What do you think motivated Jesus to create this new relationship between John and Mary? What are some relationships God has provided for you in this way within His family of believers?

### **Q4 Read Mark 15:34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 6:23**

[Justice] Jesus “became” sin for us and experienced what consequence according to Romans 6:23? God can’t betray his attribute of justice and excuse himself the penalty of our sin that He took onto himself. Physical death separates the soul from the body, and spiritual death is conscious existence in separation from God. Jesus felt the separation from God for the first time when He became sin for us. Which death do you think caused him greater pain? Why?

### **Q5 Read John 19:28; John 4:14**

[Understanding] In the physical sense, at this point of crucifixion, Jesus experienced an intense thirst. Without Jesus in our lives, we are spiritually dry and thirsty. What does Jesus offer us to quench our spiritual thirst?

### **Q6 Read John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 1:18**

[Grace] Jesus willingly gave up his spirit – it was not taken from him. Jesus declaration that “It is finished” signified a great many things that he accomplished over his earthly life culminated on the cross. How would you summarize the “message of the cross” in a sentence?

### **Q7 Read Luke 23:44-46; Philippians 4:12-13; Luke 9:23**

[Strength] How does Jesus willing surrender of his spirit into His father’s keeping demonstrate the strength of Jesus’ trust in God the Father? What further step of faith can you take knowing He is faithfully with you to the end?

## **WRAP-UP**

Despite the agony of crucifixion, Jesus made seven statements as He hung upon the cross. These statements are powerful declarations on God’s forgiveness, salvation, compassion, justice, understanding, grace and strength. Together they are an invitation to receive the love of Christ demonstrated on the cross and to live in a way that reflects that love to the world.

### ***Memory Verse***

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

## **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

*Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Pray for your group members’ needs: See other side to take notes.*

### ***Challenge:***

1) Invite someone new to Easter services. 2) Read all four of the gospel accounts of the crucifixion this week (Mat 27, Mk 15, Lk 23 and Jh 19).

**Q1**

*Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

Matthew 5:44 ESV - 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Romans 8:34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

**Q2**

*43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

Luke 23:39-43 Read in your Bible

**Q3**

*John 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home*

**Q4**

*Mark 15:34 And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").*

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV - 21 For our sake he[God] made him[Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 6:23 ESV - 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Q5**

*John 19:28 NIV Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."*

John 4:14 ESV - 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

**Q6**

John 19:30 NIV - 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

1 Co 1:18 NIV - For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

**Q7**

*Luke 23:44-46 NIV - 44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

Luke 9:23 Read in your Bible

Prayers for Group Members:

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