

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

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[0:00] I'm starting this morning and really taking up about every preaching opportunity I have throughout this month to preach a series of messages entitled Discovering the Real Jesus.

We're going to do some of the sermons over the next six opportunities for worship, morning and evening. And so, we'll begin that this morning, Discovering the Real Jesus.

Several years ago, a movie was produced by Mel Gibson entitled The Passion of the Christ. And some of you may have seen it. I don't know. Some of you may have chosen not to see it.

Putting Mel Gibson aside and putting aside some of the Catholicism that was kind of woven into the movie itself. It portrayed, perhaps, I think, in my judgment, portrayed the cross, the passion, the Christ, His arrest and brutal beating and ultimate death.

It portrayed it probably better than any movie I've ever seen. But prior to its release, the producers of the movie invited numerous theologians and pastors and other religious leaders, invited them to a viewing of the movie prior to its release.

[1:52] And they wanted them to see it. And then they desired to get some feedback from these religious people, these, quote, Christians. And many of them were, I think, bonafide Christians, very serious theologians.

Some of them maybe not so serious. There were some pastors there. And so they wanted to get some feedback from these people and wanted to get their opinions.

Well, one particular man who was there, a so-called expert of some kind of sort, his concern was that the movie did not give enough of the story.

His concern was that there was not enough of background information for the viewers to see.

He said, he said, if I had been a Martian visiting the planet on that day and decided to attend this movie, I would ask, why are they doing this to this man?

[2:59] Why are they treating him this way? Why did they kill him? What did he do to deserve it?

Interesting, huh? Interesting question. And maybe those of us who are Christians and have been brought up in the church, maybe the question has never really occurred to us, though we hopefully know the answer to it.

And to the unbelieving world, not Martians, but unbelieving humans, that's a valid question. Why are they doing this to this man?

Or the ultimate question really is, why did he have to die? Let me see if I can help you with the answer. A certain man with a twisted religious belief, seething with bitterness and hate, alters the design of his car so that he can lie down unseen in the trunk, aim a high-powered rifle through a hole, and at random gun down innocent, unsuspecting people minding their own business, carrying their purchases from the store out to their car.

A couple of average boys who have been poisoned by a cultic obsession, gather together a collection of guns, and walk through their high school murdering students and teachers.

[4:34] A suicide team of men who have sold their souls to a religion of hate, board three airplanes filled with people, take control of the cockpit, and turn the planes into missiles, killing thousands of innocent people.

An angry mob kills some foreigners because some crazy pastor burned a Koran. A couple of hundred commuters are suddenly blown into eternity, and a thousand others are seriously injured when six backpacks loaded with powerful explosives, secretly placed on six separate trains, are simultaneously detonated.

A mother drowns her children because she can't cope with life. A father murders his family and then turns the gun on himself.

A deranged man rapes and kills women, then cooks and eats some of his victims. A wife and mother is sprawled out across the bed, soaking her pillow with tears because her husband is having an affair with another woman.

A father is on the phone talking to a police officer who has just informed him that his son has been booked for possession of illegal drugs. An entire family is dead when their car is sideswiped by a man who has had too much to drink.

[6:10] A once highly successful businessman is living on the streets of New Orleans because he has lost it all through alcoholism. A four-year-old takes a magic marker and scribbles all over his bedroom wall and when his mommy asks him about it, he says, I didn't do it.

A teenager steals a candy bar at Walmart. A high school student receives an F for cheating on an exam. A mother and her teenage daughter are walking into an abortion clinic to murder an unwanted baby.

Incest. Internet pornography addiction. Wars. Terrorism. Self-centeredness.

Sadness. Disease. Sickness. A rebellious son says to his father, I hate you. Pride.

Depression. A father can't cope with the pressures of life. Depression has set in and so he takes the garden hose, attaches one end to the exhaust pipe of his car, puts the other end through the window of the car and turning the engine on, he says goodbye to his world of woe.

[7:35] domestic violence. Child abuse. A father murders his infant son because he can't stop him from crying.

Murder. Lying. Stealing. Guilt. Death. Death. Why did Jesus have to die?

Well, Colossians chapter 2. Do you have it there? Verses 13 and 14. Paul writes, And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your heart, or your flesh rather, he, that's Jesus, has made alive together with him having forgiven you all trespasses.

How did he do it? having wiped out, blotted out, the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.

And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Why did Jesus have to die?

[9:15] Why did he? Well, the short answer is a small word, but a huge, huge subject. The answer is sin. S-I-N.

And so the short answer that we're looking for here is sin. Sin. Now, let's just consider sin this morning. In answer to the question, why did Jesus have to die?

And first, let's just consider, and I would urge you, consider seriously and soberly the problem of sin.

Not something that our culture wants to think about very much. In fact, if anything, our particular culture as it is today has done everything it can and has succeeded at many levels to minimize the importance or the problem of sin.

Sin is a huge problem. Paul spoke here in verse 13, he spoke of being dead in trespasses.

[10:32] That's the problem of sin. being dead in trespasses. Now, that's just another word for sin. There are several words in the Bible that are used to describe sin.

Or, you might have a translation that puts it this way, you were dead in trespasses Or sin! See, sin is the problem.

Sin is the problem. And it's a huge, huge problem. And few really would argue against the existence of a thing called sin. I really believe that.

I don't think anyone with any modicum of intelligence would argue against the existence of such a thing. And so, the question really, or the debate centers not on the existence of sin, but rather, it centers on what sin is.

and where it comes from. And more importantly, what is the best thing to do about it? How should we best deal with it?

[11:36] And let me just give you a few of the various philosophies about sin this morning. If we're going to think seriously and soberly about the problem of sin, let's just kind of consider what some say about sin.

Some argue that sin is just simply a violation of a society's laws or customs. That's really all sin is. It's kind of a violation of the cultural norms of a particular society. Now, if that's what sin is, then the answer? Well, law enforcement.

There's an answer for it. Because sin is just a violation of that particular society's laws and norms. That's all there is to it. And so the answer is law enforcement. More policemen.

More jails. Stiffer penalties for breaking the law. Three strikes and you're out. I'm not against those things. But if sin is just simply a breaking of the laws of a particular culture or civilization, which, by the way, vary from culture to culture, society to society, but if that's all there is to it, then the answer is more policemen, more enforcement.

[13:00] Or, better yet, let's just change the law. Maybe that would be the better way to go. I mean, if it's just simply a breaking of that particular society's laws or norms or cultural mores, then we just need to change that.

More specifically, change the law. Legalize the sin. Ever heard anything like that? Or maybe we should just change the customs of the society.

You know, kind of change the morals of the society. Think that's happening in our culture today? And so what was once clearly sin is now no longer sin because sin is just simply a violation of the cultural morals.

And since those are changing, then the sin changes. Back to the kind of the legal side, let's just find some judges to make drugs legal.

Or let's just, you know, find some activist judges to make homosexual marriage legal. And then it's no longer sin. Do you see the reasoning?

[14:17] Based upon the idea that sin is just simply a violation of a society's laws or customs. So we want to re-educate, work to desensitize the culture towards certain sins so that they're no longer sins.

We want to work to reorient our thinking as a culture about what sin is. In fact, you know, really in our day, our evangelism, our sharing the gospel, now because of our culture requires that we define sin.

Others would promote the idea that sin really is just ignorance. It's ignorance. That's all in the world that it is. And if that's what sin is, then the answer is education.

Right? Just education. You know, we've got to somehow through education and through the enlightening of the mind, the intellect, we need to free people from their, you know, their superstitions.

Kind of their superstitious, this superstitious nonsense about an all-holy judging God. We've got to remove that from our thinking.

[15:41] We educate that out, you know, because that's uneducation or the lack of education. And, you know, we need to remove this idea, this kind of superstitious idea about the Bible being actually God's word that he spoke and it was written down and it's all authoritative and so we just kind of educate sin out of our minds.

And by the same token, we want to teach our teens safe sex. Give out free contraceptives.

And since drugs are not really sin, not inherently, not in and themselves, really the sin is the damage it does to the user, let's give them sterile needles to use and teach them how to do it properly and safely.

because sin is just simply ignorance. Or, still others hold that sin is an illusion.

Just an illusion, it's not real. It's kind of, you know, just simply a violation of one's conscience. all that it is.

[17:07] And so, the actual sin itself is just simply, you know, the ramifications of a poor self-concept. That sound good?

That's all sin really is. And so, you know, if that's what it is, then the answer is psychology. It's psychology. We've got to change people's thinking.

And, you know, man just needs to conquer old-fashioned phobias and feelings of guilt. And so, we need to remove sin from the conversation.

Remove sin from our thinking. Because, really, the sin itself is how we think poorly of ourselves. That's really what the sin is. It's not the act itself. It's the damage it does to our emotion and our psychology. In fact, there have been some preachers over the years who have brought that to the pulpit.

[18:18] not sin, but the idea that we need to remove sin out of our thinking. And have a positive kind of attitude about life and a good self-concept.

I'm sorry if I offend some of you, but that's Norman Vincent Peale. Years ago. And one of his disciples was Robert Shuler.

And there are others who follow the same philosophy today in their preaching. And so they're not preachers preaching God's word and saying, thus saith the Lord.

Rather, they are kind of spiritual psychologists in the pulpit. And their desire is to make their congregants feel good about themselves and about life.

and remove this very divisive, very negative idea of sin. Remove that out of the conversation, out of their thinking, out of their mentality. If that's what sin is, it's just an illusion, a violation of one's conscience, then there's the answer.

[19 : 34] Others promote the idea that sin is a natural manifestation of the beast within us. It's just natural.

Now, if that's what sin is, then what's the answer? Evolution. The answer is evolution. I mean, man just needs time to evolve and get better, you know, and we are getting better, aren't we?

Aren't we? Are we? Are we? sin. Or how about this one? Sin is a result of poverty.

That if we did not have poverty, we would not have sin. We certainly wouldn't have crime, as the theory goes. And so, if that's what sin is, then what is the answer?

Well, it seems today the answer is politicians. Politicians. Taxes for the rich is the answer.

[20 : 50] Redistribution of wealth to this end, that everyone would be on the same socioeconomic level. And if you could do that, as the theory goes, then you would have no crime.

Because everybody would have the same thing. There would be no haves and have-nots. And so, you know, there would be no poverty. So the theory goes.

And so, no sin. Now, I'm sure you've noticed, as I've kind of listed these and described them briefly, you've noticed that there's one major glaring thing missing.

And that's God. God's not in any of these theories. A holy God is not a part of the equation here.

And that's why all these theories are wrong.

So you can't leave God out of this when it comes to sin. Sin, then, sin, and I would recommend this one to you, this definition.

[21 : 58] Sin is any violation of and failure to conform to the moral law of a holy God.

As communicated to us through His Word. sin is any violation of and failure to conform to the moral law of a holy God.

See, that's where all these other definitions go wrong. Because sin must be understood in light of God. Not man.

sin must be understood in light of God's unchanging standard and law. In our societies, there isn't anything that remains the same, it seems.

And from a human perspective, whatever man has anything to do with, there's always change, always moving away from or to something else. There is this kind of fluid kind of element in anything man has his hand in.

[23 : 15] But God never changes. And His standard has never changed. And His law does not change. And so, if that's what sin is, and since every one of us are guilty of it, and since all sin is committed against a holy God, then the one and only answer, the unavoidable answer, is condemnation.

I mean, we have to begin there. Putting aside other things God has told us and has done for us, and we'll get to that in a minute, but the first and ultimate answer, if all sin is against God, a holy God, then the result is condemnation, judgment, death, death.

Now, this is not good news, and there are some pulpits you would never hear this kind of thing spoken of, but this is the truth.

Death. Both physical and, more importantly, spiritual and eternal death. sin. You see, what a huge problem sin poses.

Huge problem. And so, with that, let's move to a second thing and deal next in our discussion.

We're trying to discover why did Jesus have to die? We have the problem of sin, and then second, I want you to consider very seriously and very soberly the power of sin.

[24 : 54] sin. It wields a tremendous power. Notice how Paul describes it here in our text.

You might just look there, verse 13, beginning there, he speaks of a spiritual deadness. Dead in your trespasses. Speaks of death.

Now, he doesn't use the word sin, he uses the word trespasses, but same thing. Violations of God's law, that's what the word trespass means.

We've trespassed upon God's law. And he says, the result is death. The power of that is death. He speaks of a deadness, spiritual deadness.

He also speaks of a corrupt nature. That's what is meant, I think, primarily by uncircumcision of your flesh. A corrupt nature, that is, every one of us, in our flesh, in our bodies, we have this pollution in us called sin that needs to be cut away.

[26 : 10] It's not cut away, it's there. It's a corrupt nature. And then in verse 14, even more interestingly or more to the point, in verse 14, he speaks of a debt, a sin debt.

Look at verse 14 again. Having wiped out the, what? Handwriting of requirements. What is, what is that? Some of you might have a translation that says record of debt.

Or still others might have one that says certificate of debt. debt. Well, we'll get to exactly what that is a little bit later, but it is against us. It's our debt, our crimes, against this holy God who created us and graced us.

And our response was to throw our fist in his face and violate his laws. laws. And we have a debt, a certificate of debt, all of our crimes against a holy God.

These things are against us. They're against us. This is serious. This is the power of sin.

[27 : 25] This is how Paul kind of describes it, though his main point is something more glorious, something wonderful. But we cannot miss the implications here about sin, the problem of sin, and the power of sin.

Now, how did all this begin, by the way? I think we know, don't we? It all started way back there in that one man gene pool by the name of Adam. It all started back there.

And you remember that God said to Adam and to Eve that they must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That is, God gave them one commandment.

Just one. Not ten. Just one. Everything here is here for you to enjoy, including my presence with you, and you walk with me, and be with me, and eternal life.

You have all these things. There's just one thing you must not do. One prohibition. One command. Do not eat of that tree. And Adam, the day you eat of it, you will what?

[28 : 28] die. Yeah, surely die. You will die. See, that's the power of sin. The power of sin is death.

And the power of that one sin, that one violation against that one prohibition that I've given you, Adam and Eve, the sin will kill you. It will bring death.

Well, you know, of course, the story. Adam and Eve did eat of that tree. They did eat that apple, whatever fruit it was.

And guess what happened? They died. They died that day. Both of them. They died spiritually first. And then later they died physically.

See the power of sin. And by the way, not only did Adam and Eve die, but so did all of their relatives after them.

[29 : 35] All of them. You and me. Because we're chips off the old block. We all have died. You see the power of sin?

It's death. Romans 5, 12. Wherefore, as by one man, that's Adam, sin entered into the world and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men.

How many? All. And women too, by the way, ladies. For that all have sinned.

How many? All. All. Romans 3, 23. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

How many? All. First Corinthians chapter 15, 22. In Adam, all die. Getting redundant, but how many?

[30 : 35] All. All. All. All. See, sin, sin is a violation of God's moral law and the punishment is what?

Death. Eternal death. For the wages of sin is death. Romans 6, 23. It's death.

That's what? The power of sin. It's death. The punishment is death. Unless, of course, God would find it in His heart to dismiss the sin and to simply forgive the violation.

But, of course, that can never happen. It can't happen that way. There's one problem with that idea. God is a holy God. And God's glory has been assaulted by our sin.

God's character, His honor, has been insulted by our sin. God's holy word has been violated by our sin and somebody has to pay.

[31 : 41] Well, all violators have to pay. Right? I have an idea. Maybe God would pay the price Himself.

You see, this is really so basic. How about that idea? God would just simply pay the price for my sin and pay it to Himself.

How about that? Kind of like a certain judge I once heard about. A young woman seems to have been picked up for speeding.

She'd been ticketed and then she had to stand before the judge. And so, the judge read the citation and he said, or he asked the woman, guilty or not guilty?

And she responded, guilty. Guilty judge. And so, the judge brought down his gavel and he fined her \$200.

[32:47] And then something quite amazing happened. Immediately, the judge stood up from his chair, took off his robe, walked down to the front of his bench and stood beside the woman, took out his billfold and \$200 and laid it there on the bench.

Paid the debt. Paid the fine. What's the answer? Well, it seems that the judge was the lady's, young lady's father. And, he loved his daughter and yet he was a just judge.

He wanted to continue to be a just and righteous judge. And his daughter had broken the law and he could not just simply say to her, I love you, honey, and so I forgive you, you are exonerated and you are released, you're free.

He couldn't do that. If he did that, he would cease to be a just judge and he would not uphold the law that he was duty bound to uphold.

But, at the same time, he loved his daughter. Loved her dearly. And so, the only way it could be done is to take off the judicial robe and go down and stand in his daughter's place and pay the fine.

[34:17] That's a simple story. And yet, that is exactly what God has done for us. Though it cost him more than two hundred dollars.

And so, finally, this morning, notice the payment for sin.

This is so simple you could remember without even writing it down. It begins with a problem and it's a huge problem. Consider that seriously, soberly, problem of sin.

Don't minimize it. Don't explain it away. Don't soften it. There's a problem because all that sin, any sin, even one half of one's sin, if you could split it apart, is an offense to the God who created us, who is holy.

There's the power of sin. That's death. Death. Death. And then there's the payment.

[35:25] Verse 14 is a tremendous verse of Scripture. Having wiped out, blotted out, I think the King James puts it.

You could write in there in the margin of your Bible the word canceled. Canceled out. the handwriting of requirements, the certificate of debt that was against us.

Against us. Contrary to us. And He has taken it. What? That certificate of debt.

Our crimes against God. Our sins. Taken that debt. out of the way.

That's tremendous. Think about this. Taking it out of the way. And how did He take it out of the way?

[36:35] Nailed it to the cross. Nailed it to His cross. death. This certificate of debt.

Interesting kind of concept. What is this talking about? I believe Paul is really borrowing here something that was very common in the Roman world of his day.

In the New Testament, in New Testament days, a Roman judge, when a Roman judge would find an accused guilty, guilty of the crime, he would have written on a parchment, a piece of parchment, he would have written on there the crime, the crime for which the accused was found guilty.

And then that parchment would be nailed to the door of that condemned criminal's prison door, and he would serve out his sentence.

And after the sentence was served, whatever it may be, for the crime, as printed on that parchment, after he served his time, his sentence, and it was paid for, then he was released and then they would stamp on that parchment the word tetelestai.

[38:05] Meaning, it is finished. It means it's done with, it's paid for, it's been done, it's finished.

Now you might remember that Jesus had such a parchment nailed on the cross above his head. Pilate had it affixed there. And it simply said Jesus, the king of the Jews.

Now the Jewish leaders, they complained about that and argued and they asked him to remove that or to at least change it to say that he claimed to be, professed to be the king of the Jews.

But Pilate said, what I've written is written, it's done. That stays. King of the Jews. Now far from Pilate validating who Jesus was, this really was in essence his crime.

A crime for which he was judged and condemned. Made himself to be king. Pilate couldn't allow that in the Roman world. There's just one king, that's Caesar. So this was insurrection.

[39 : 20] It tantamount to rebellion against the throne. That was his crime. And Pilate had it put up there on parchment. Which was a common practice of the day.

And people could come by and see this man hanging upon that cross being convicted and condemned and put to death and they could read the reason for it.

His crime. And then Jesus, before he dismissed his spirit, the Bible says, before Jesus died, he cried out, Tetelestai.

That's what the Bible records. That's what he said. Tetelestai. It is finished.

What is finished? Well, it was not for the piece of parchment hanging above his head.

[40 : 28] Now listen to me very carefully. It was not for that piece of parchment hanging above his head that Jesus could cry out and did cry out, Tetelestai. It's finished.

It was not for any crime. Matter of fact, any crime he committed that he could then testify, it is finished. There was another parchment hanging there on that cross.

Are you with me? Not the one Pilate had placed above Jesus' head, though it was a parchment Pilate did put on that cross.

What was it? It was his own body was nailed to that cross.

and it bore another list of crimes. Violations of God's moral and holy law.

[41 : 30] But it was not, again, his crimes. They were not his crimes. They were mine. Those crimes were on his body.

not his, mine. The certificate of debt. His debt? No, my debt. My crimes.

My crimes against God. My violations of God's law. They were on that parchment.

On Jesus. here they are. My sins. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Guilty. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Guilty.

[42 : 42] Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Guilty. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

Guilty. Honor thy father and thy mother. Guilty. Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not murder. Guilty. Guilty. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Guilty. Guilty. Thou shalt not steal.

Guilty. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Guilty. Thou shalt not covet. Guilty.

guilty. Guilty. Guilty. Guilty of all of these. God's law. Guilty letter and in spirit.

[43 : 51] Guilty. And these represent my certificate of debt. Not the laws themselves, but my violation of them.

And it's against me. Contrary to me. Contrary to me. But Jesus took them to the cross.

He took all of them there. In His body. In His body. And He said, Tetelestai.

He was finished. That's why Jesus had to die. He was finished.

He was finished. He was finished. He was finished.

[45 : 19]