



WHY DID JESUS DIE?

The Alpha Course week 2

WHY IS THE CROSS THE SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY?

The cross is the symbol of Christianity. It's kind of like the 'logo' of Christianity.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (*Galatians 2.20*)

It's as personal as that. If you had been the only person in the world, Jesus would have died for *you*. He loves *you* that much.

1. THE PROBLEM

We've all done things that we know are wrong - the Bible calls this sin. Compared to Jesus, who lived a perfect life, we all fall a long way short.

St Paul says: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (*Romans 3.23*). It matters for these four reasons:

- **Pollution** of sin (*Mark 7.20-23*)
 - The things we do wrong spoil our lives and relationships
- **Power** of sin (*John 8.34*)
 - Jesus says 'Whoever sins is a slave of sin.'
- **Penalty** for sin (*Romans 6.23*)
 - There's something within us that cries out for justice.
- **Partition** of sin (*Isaiah 59.2*)
 - The wrong things we do cause a partition between us and God.

2. THE SOLUTION

- The self-substitution of God
 - The apostle Peter put it like this:
'He himself - *that is, Jesus* - 'bore our sins' - *that's your sins and my sins* - 'in his body on the tree' - *that's on the cross so that* - '...by his wounds you have been healed' (*1 Peter 2.24*)

- Agony of the cross
 - The prophet Isaiah foretold:
'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned - every one - to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.'
(*Isaiah 53.6*)

3. THE RESULT

The cross shows:

- You are infinitely valuable to God
- Jesus is the supreme example of love (*John 15.13*)
- God is not aloof from suffering
- The powers of evil have been defeated: the resurrection wasn't the reversal of a defeat; it was the manifestation of a victory

The **partition** has been removed (*2 Corinthians 5.19*)

- Reconciliation with God and in other relationships

The **penalty** has been paid

- Justified ("Just-as-if-I'd never sinned")

The **power** of sin has been broken

- "If the Son sets you free, you are truly free" (*John 8.36, NLT*)

The **pollution** has been removed

- "... the blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin" (*1 John 1.7*)
- When you are forgiven, you want to forgive

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

1. What does the word 'forgiveness' mean to you?
2. Have you ever had to forgive anyone? How did you do it?
3. What does the word 'sin' mean to you?
4. What is your reaction to Jesus' death?
5. What aspects of the evidence presented today did you find convincing/not convincing?



WHY DID PETER RECOGNISE THAT JESUS'S DEATH ON A CROSS WAS GOD'S PLAN?

Peter was one of Jesus' closest friends and earliest disciples. He became one of the most influential leaders of the first followers of Jesus, most of whom like Peter were Jewish. He was an impulsive character who certainly wore his heart on his sleeve. He followed Jesus for three years and even tried to stop him going to die on a cross. Later in life, in a letter written to many Christians he wrote:

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.' For 'you were like sheep going astray,' but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. *1 Peter 2.21-25 (NIV)*

Peter saw at first hand how Jesus lived; this is why he can say 'he committed no sin'. He also saw this uniquely perfect man crucified following trial by a kangaroo court on trumped up charges. But Peter had understood that this was no random happening. Instead, it was central for God's plan for the world.

In his letter, Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (Chapter 53), who many centuries previously wrote about a man sent by God who would be punished and die in order to 'bear the sins of many'. This is a remarkable chapter that you can read here: www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53&version=NIVUK

Peter is convinced that Jesus is the Christ (a Greek word that means the 'anointed

one' or 'chosen one') and God's own son, who came to fulfil God's plan to sort out sin once and for all. Could this man from Nazareth actually save the world?



Watch this week's video at <https://vimeo.com/250767723>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does Peter mean when he writes '*Christ suffered for you*'? What would have been the result of Jesus not dying on the cross?
2. What does Peter mean by "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.*" Does this change anything?
3. What is the significance of Peter quoting Isaiah's ancient prophecy? What might this tell us about how Peter sees Jesus' place in history?
4. Has your view on why Jesus died changed following this week's Alpha? If so how, and what impact might this have on your life?

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to this earth to die in my place to forgive me for all the wrong things I have done. Forgive me for all my sin and help me to live in ways that follow in your steps. Amen.

You might like to read...

Mud, Sweat and Tears

by Bear Grylls

The Hiding Place

by Corrie Ten Boom

Unreachable

by Darrel Tunningley

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

by Nicky Gumbel

The Cross of Christ

by John Stott

Why Jesus?

by Nicky Gumbel

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