



Jesus Christ – Suffered, Crucified,
Died, Buried, Descended
The Apostles' Creed [#5]
Selected Scriptures
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Theme: **Jesus Christ Died to Atone for Our Sins.**

Introduction

[Played video clip of people reciting the Apostles' Creed.]

This morning we return to looking into the Biblical truth expressed in the Apostles' Creed. This morning we are looking at the Biblical truth expressed in the creed, "We believe that Jesus Christ ... suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hades." There are many different reactions from people when you talk about the death of Jesus Christ. Many people have little knowledge of the facts, and don't care to have more. Then there are those who think it is a myth, it is not true. There are those who know and believe the facts, but who do not understand them accurately. Yet others, understanding something of the cost to Jesus Christ, are moved to humility, worship and service.

There is a great deal of ground to cover in this section, and so this morning we will be "flying at treetop level" rather than carefully "walking the ground." The core truth, what I want you to remember, which it emphasizes by its five-fold statement is the death of Jesus Christ, that *Jesus Christ died to atone for our sins.*

The Fact Of Jesus Christ's Death.

We need to start with the fact of Jesus' death. Let's begin with the fact of Jesus Christ's *suffering*. God spoke through the Old Testament prophets telling us that the Messiah would suffer. We read from Psalm 22 earlier. Historically it describes a difficult time of King David. Prophetically, the New Testament tells us, it speaks of Jesus Christ's suffering on the cross.

Isaiah 53 paints a picture of the Messiah as the *Suffering Servant*. The New Testament applies this to Jesus Christ, as we see details recorded in Isaiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Then, several verses of Isaiah 53 are applied directly to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Going on from there, each of the gospels records some of His agony and suffering. First, the Creed states He “suffered under Pontius Pilate.” The only other person named in the Creed is Mary. Why Pilate? The reason for Pilate the writers of the creed grounded it in history. It is not a reference to an idea, but was grounded to history and a particular time in history. Physically, Jesus was insulted, cursed, spat upon, slapped. He was severely beaten, and then crucified, one of the most cruel and painful forms of death ever conceived.

But greater than that was the personal, relational suffering. Before His arrest Jesus said to His disciples, “Now my soul has become troubled” — I am deeply distressed, troubled. He goes on, “and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.’” (John 14:27-28a). The prospect of what lay ahead of Him led Jesus to be deeply troubled. On the cross He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46b).

Far beyond the excruciating physical pain was the pain of taking all of our sin upon Himself, when God the Father made Jesus Christ “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Can you imagine the distress, the pain? *I can't*. Jesus suffered more than we will, can ever know. Jesus suffered and He died.

Now think about this fact that Jesus Christ *died*. Each of the gospels devote a great deal of their accounts to the death and resurrection of Christ. Each of them make the point that Jesus died. Matthew 27:50, “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.” Turn over to John 19:31-33,

“Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

And you may know that in crucifixion the way you kept yourself alive when on a cross was to push yourself up so you could breathe. When they wanted to hasten death they would break the legs of the crucified so they could no longer breathe. John continues,

”So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”

Now we come to the phrase in the creed, “He descended into hades.” You may have noticed that was omitted in the video as it is in some traditions. We don’t have the time to explore that in any depth this morning. Let’s simply note a few observations. The term *hades* (the Old Testament equivalent is *sheol*) refers to the place of the dead, i.e., where people go when they die. Jesus teaches us in His parable in Luke 16 that hades was divided into two parts: a place of torment for those who died apart from God and a place of blessedness which He referred to as “Abraham’s bosom.”

The New Testament teaches that the death and resurrection of Christ results in all those who believe in Him going directly to be with Him in heaven. “Hell,” the real and everlasting place of torment, will receive all those who did not come to God in this life after the final judgment. Because of the different uses of “hell” and “hades” and some disagreements, some traditions omit this phrase. Some false cults, and a few in the church, believe that when people die they cease conscious existence until either the return of Christ or the final judgment. That view is often referred to as “soul sleep.” We cannot explore that today. I will simply note that this error is easily and clearly refuted in the Bible.

“So, what’s the point of looking at the fact of Jesus’ death?” We know that since the first generation of the church there have been some who, for a variety of reasons, have suggested that Jesus Christ really did not die on the cross. The fact is, and God goes to length in the Bible to make the point that Jesus *did* die. If He did not die, and was not raised from the dead, our faith is worthless and, as Paul tells us, it is false faith. Jesus Christ died to atone for our sins.

Why Did Jesus Christ Have To Die?

Following that are some questions to pursue. One is “Why did Jesus Christ have to die? “Couldn’t there be some other way?” “Couldn’t God just forgive us and forget our sin?” “Why did Jesus Christ have to die?”

To understand something of that we start with the character of God: *God is holy*. God reminds us of this aspect of His character frequently. For example, Leviticus 11:44, “For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.” And chapter 19 verse 2, “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’” This truth is taught throughout the Bible.

What it means is that God is pure and without sin. He never has, never will ever contemplate doing anything other than that which is completely pure, righteous, just and honorable. In addition to this, being Almighty God, that is His standard. To be accepted by Him, to have a relationship with Him, we have to meet his standard.

Now, when we are at all honest with ourselves, we realize that we are not holy and righteous, but *we are sinful*. It goes back to our first parents Adam and Eve when they freely and willfully chose to disobey God, when they freely and willfully sinned, became sinners, and passed on that sinful human nature to their descendants and on to us.

Sin and sinners are excluded from a personal relationship with God—His character demands it, His directives in the Bible spell it out. Turn back to Genesis 2, verses 16-17,

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”

When Adam and Eve violated this command of God the process of physical death began in their bodies. Physical death, yes, but more significantly also spiritual death—separation from God—took place. To uphold His character and rule as the Sovereign holy and righteous God, He judges all that He is created. All that do not, all that does not meet His perfection are guilty. Ezekiel chapter 18 states it clearly, “The soul who sins will die” (verse 4). Moving to the New Testament, Romans chapter 5 verse 12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

The dilemma we are in is that we cannot atone for, we cannot pay for our sin because there is no way we as sinful people can offer a perfect, holy sacrifice. Only God could do

this, and He has in Jesus Christ taking our sin upon Himself and offering His life as the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. *Jesus Christ died to atone for our sins.* There is no other way.

Why Is Jesus Christ's Death Important?

A second question, "Why is Jesus Christ's death important?" There five descriptions the writers of the creed put here to emphasize that Christ died and that He died for us. How do you handle big, complex truths in just a few minutes? Let me assure you, neither easily nor in depth! There are a good number of key, big and complex truths that flow from and are related to Jesus Christ's death. And, yes, there are some *big words* for these truths. Big words can be humorous, intimidating, confusing and helpful, although not all at the same time. Most of have heard the word: *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* . If you haven't counted, there are 34 letters in that word.

If you think that is long, the longest word in any major English language dictionary is (let me get ready for this and take a deep breath):

amicroscopicssilicovolcanoconiosis .

One string of 45 letters. The interesting thing I'm told about this word, which is supposed to refer to a lung disease, was originally intended as a hoax. But you will still find it in some dictionaries. It is indeed a very big word that both confuses and amuses.

When it comes to the Christian faith and theology, the *big words* are not intended to amuse or confuse, although sometimes they do that. They are terms which are packed with meaning. In *a very brief manner*, we are going to unpack the meaning of just five big words that are related to Jesus Christ's death (if I leave out one of your favorites, forgive me). As much as possible, I will let Scripture speak for itself.

The first is *propitiation*. If you are following the outline sheet you don't see that word. Instead I've listed the descriptive phrase: In and by His death Jesus Christ *satisfied God's righteous and holy demands*. Because God is holy and judges sin, He cannot simply ignore sin or its rightful punishment. If He did that, He would not be righteous or true, and we could not depend on, know with certainty or trust Him in anything. He would be capricious.

Sin violates God's character and standards. Sin brings God's anger on it and the sinner. There must be a reckoning. That is where propitiation comes in.

In the Bible propitiation means to *satisfy God's righteous anger*. Romans 1:18, "For the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." You see, the Bible tells us God hates all sin. It tells us that God loves all sinners, but at the same time His righteous anger rests on each and every sinner.

- John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, *but the wrath of God abides on him.*"
- Romans chapter 3, beginning at verse 23, "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a *propitiation* in His blood through faith" (3:23-25a).
- Again, 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be *the propitiation* for our sins."

In and by His death Jesus Christ satisfied the righteous anger of God on your sin, my sin, all sin — and that is applied to every person who puts his/her faith in Him. *Aren't you glad that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for your sin?!*

The second big, key word, He is our *substitute*. It is seen in Old Testament prophecy and lived out in the New Testament. Turn back to Isa. 53, beginning at verse 4,

"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (verses 4-6).

He is our substitute.

In the New Testament picks up this truth. We go to Romans chapter where Paul writes,

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (verses 6-8).

Or we could turn over to 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” What a wonderful truth! When Jesus hung on that cross, when the sin of the world was placed upon Him, when He died in agony and pain, He took *my place*, He took *your place*. Yes, in and by His death Jesus Christ is *our substitute*.

Next, in Jesus’ death He *redeemed* us from sin. There are a cluster of New Testament words for *redeem*, which at some other time we will explore. The basic picture and truth is that Jesus Christ paid the price for our sin with His death, and purchased us out of slavery to sin to be forever free from its domination, and to serve Him. Listen to the Scripture:

- Galatians 3:13, “Christ *redeemed* us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’”
- Titus 2:14, “Christ Jesus gave Himself for us to *redeem* us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.”
- One more, 1 Peter 1:18-19, “you were not *redeemed* with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

Oh, yes, in and by His death Jesus Christ redeemed us from sin.

The fourth word, He *reconciled* us to God. We understand something about reconciliation. When a relationship is strained or broken, to be reconciled means the people are brought together; there now is harmony where there was a disjointedness and lack of harmony. Jesus Christ in and by His death reconciled us, brought us into harmony with God.

- Colossians 3:21-22, “[God] has now *reconciled* you in His [Jesus Christ’s] fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” He reconciles us, brings us into agreement with the character of God which is required for us to have a relationship with Him.
- Romans 5:10-11, “For if while we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been *reconciled*, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

We are no longer enemies, but in a personal relationship with almighty, eternal God.

One last word. In and by the death of Jesus Christ we have been *justified* before God. Justified is a legal term. It begins with one who is guilty, but then by intervention apart from himself is declared to be *right* or *righteous* before the judge; here, before God. The inter- vener here is Jesus Christ in His death makes us right or righteous before the Father. We can’t do it ourselves. Galatians 2:16, “... by the works of the Law [doing good, right things] no flesh will be justified.”

The Bible tells us,

- in Romans 3:24 that we are “*justified* as a gift by [God’s] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”
- Page over to chapter 5, “having been *justified* by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult [we rejoice] in hope of the glory of God” (verses 1-2).

Conclusion.

Jesus Christ died to atone for our sins.

Let’s wrap up. If you have not yet come to Jesus Christ and consciously asked Him to forgive your sins and give you life with Him today and forever, do that today. Jesus Christ died to atone for *your* sins. I and others here would be happy to talk with you and discuss any questions you have.

If you have come to God through Jesus, you are in that relationship, that standing with God through Jesus, thank God that Jesus Christ is the *propitiation*. He satisfied God's righteous anger with your sin, that Jesus Christ is your *substitute*, that Jesus Christ *redeemed* you from sin, that Jesus Christ *reconciled* you to God, that Jesus Christ *justified* you before God.

And then, remember and respond, going back to to 1 Peter 1:18-19 again,

“you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from you forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

Couple that with what the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6, “you have been bought with a price: *glorify God in your body*” (verse 20). Be *zealous*, be eager, be passionate to walk in the path of the good works which God has prepared just for you.

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