

The Passion of Christ

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon explores the profound significance of the Passion of Christ as a fulfillment of prophecy and an expression of God's love for humanity.

Duration: 40:46

Scripture: Psalm 68:21, Proverbs 27:1, Isaiah 50:6, Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12, Luke 22:22, Luke 22:37

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus and the immense love that God has shown through it. The sermon then addresses the questions raised by the film 'The Passion of Christ,' including who was responsible for Jesus' death and why God allowed him to die. The preacher turns to Isaiah 53 to shed light on these questions, emphasizing that Jesus willingly endured suffering and rejection for the sake of humanity's sins. The sermon concludes by pointing to the significance of Jesus' sacrifice and the need for forgiveness.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to Isaiah chapter 53 for our scripture reading today. Isaiah 53. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verses and Pastor Brian is coming to lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses and shall we stand as we read God's Word.

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him.

He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shears is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, and neither was there any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

He hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoiled with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. And he bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Let's pray. Father, when we read Isaiah's account of the death and the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, all of a sudden we realize, Lord, that this business of the cross, the passion of Christ, is something, Lord, that you had planned long before you ever sent your Son into the world. We ask, Father, that as we see your portion and your part in the suffering and the death of our Savior, that we might see your love, your love for us.

That love, Lord, that prompted you to send your Son to take our sin, to die in our place, and to provide for us the hope of salvation and eternal life. Lord, speak to us today through the Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Normally my Sunday morning message comes out of the reading that we've done the previous week. And this week we are reading Proverbs 25 through 27. And I was well on my way with a message from Proverbs 27.1, where Solomon tells us, don't boast yourself of tomorrow, for none of us know what a day might bring forth.

And last night as I was putting sort of the finishing touches on the message, I thought, you know, so many this past week have seen the passion of Christ. And there is so much talk about the passion of Christ. I thought that this morning I would speak on the passion of Christ.

Tonight we will be studying Proverbs 25 through 27. But this morning I'd like to talk to you concerning the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The film, of course, has raised many questions.

Questions as to who was really responsible for the death of Christ. Questions of why would God allow him to die. And then the question of what sin is so heinous that there is no forgiveness for man, neither in this world or the world to come.

But the first question, who was responsible for the death of Christ? The Jewish community has raised great concern concerning this movie, The Passion of Christ. They were fearful that it might raise anti-Semitic sentiment among a lot of people. And thus they were decrying, many of them, the film before it was ever released.

It is true that in the film it does show that it was the high priest that had ordered the arrest of Jesus. And the reactions of the high priest and his ilk as they had brought Jesus to Pilate to be crucified. And how though Pilate was wanting to release him, they were insisting that Jesus be crucified.

The Bible tells us of the mistreatment that Jesus received when he stood before the high priest. Luke's Gospel, chapter 22, verse 63 said, And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and they smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And they spoke many other things blasphemously against him.

And so we saw the mistreatment of Jesus as he stood in the court of the high priest. It is true that they were the ones that did arrest him. It is true that they did demand that Pilate sentence him to death by crucifixion.

It was obvious that the Jewish leaders were pressing that when Pilate was striving to set him free. And thus, the Romans have blamed the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus. However, as we watched the film, we saw the complete brutality of the Roman soldiers.

And here is the biblical account, Mark 15, 15. Pilate, willing to appease the people, released Barabbas unto them and delivered Jesus after he had scourged him to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into a hall called the Praetorium.

And they called together the whole band of soldiers, and they clothed him with a purple robe, and they wove a crown of thorns. They put it on his head, and they began to mock him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed or a cane, and they did spit upon him. And bowing before him, they pretended to worship him.

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put on his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him. That scourging that Mark speaks of was a very brutal type of beating by the Roman guard. Thirty-nine stripes across the back of the prisoner, with what was known as the cat-of-nine-tails whip.

A whip that had little bits of glass and lead embedded in it, that were designed to rip off the flesh. And the person being scourged would be bent over, where the back would be stretched, and the flesh would be peeled off with the whipping. And we do know from history that many times prisoners would never survive that whipping.

So many of them died as the result of the scourging. Died by the suffering, or died by the loss of blood that took place during that process. And so, he was scourged by the Romans, and then tortured, and then crucified.

But who was responsible for the death of Christ? It's interesting to me that the Bible does not seek to place the blame on the Jews, nor does the Bible seek to place the blame on the Romans. But if you will read the Bible carefully, you will find that the Bible places the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus on none other than God Himself. God was the one that was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

The fact that the Messiah was to die by crucifixion was predicted in the Bible over a thousand years before Jesus was born. David, in Psalm 22, prophesied the death of the Messiah by crucifixion, giving a very interesting account of death by crucifixion, long before it was ever devised as a means of executing a felon. David begins that 22nd Psalm with familiar words that we heard Jesus crying from the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But as David goes on to write in the 22nd Psalm, All they that see me laugh me to scorn.

They shoot out their lip, they shake their heads, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him, seeing He delights in Him. And then the words of the Messiah I'm poured out like water.

All of my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melted in the midst of my body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws.

Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and they cast lots upon my vesture. And then in Psalm 68, in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.

All of these things written a thousand years before Jesus hung on the cross and His body by hanging just went out of joint. Long before they pierced His hands and His feet, God declared this was going to happen. As we read in Isaiah today, chapter 53, I'd like to go back just a few chapters to chapter 50, where Isaiah said, I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to them that plucked out the hair.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting. And then in the last couple of verses of chapter 52, God said, behold, my servant shall be lifted up. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, known as the Septuagint.

That word lifted up in Hebrew translated into Greek in the Greek in the New Testament, where Jesus said, and I, if I be lifted up, uses the same Greek word. But we read when Jesus said that, He was signifying to them the fact that He was to die upon a cross, lifted up upon a cross. And thus Isaiah said, my servant shall be lifted up.

And all that see Him were astonished at Him. His face was so marred, you would not recognize Him as a human being. He had no facial beauty or handsomeness that would attract us to Him.

In fact, He was so disfigured that we could not bear to look at Him. He is despised and rejected of men. He's a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He was despised and we esteemed Him not. But surely He has borne our griefs. He's carried our sorrows.

Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We turned every one of us to our own way, but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shears is done, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment.

And who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living. Then God declared, for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death.

Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Now Isaiah wrote this over 700 years before he was born. And thus we see that it was something that God had designed and planned years before it ever took place.

This was no fluke of history. This was a part of God's determinate plan. In fact, in the New Testament, as we read of it, there in Acts chapter 2 verse 22, as Peter was addressing the multitude that gathered on the day of Pentecost, he said to them, Ye men of Israel, hear my words.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man who proved to be of God by the miracles and the wonders and the signs which God did by Him among you, as you very well know, Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and the foreknowledge of God, you with your wicked hands have crucified and slain. But he says he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. It was something that God had already planned out.

In Luke 22 verse 22, Jesus said to His disciples, the Son of Man is going to die as it has been determined. In verse 37 of Luke 22, Jesus said, For that which was written must be accomplished by me, that he was numbered with the transgressors. And thus he's quoting from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, tying that chapter to his cross.

Thus it was written and thus it is necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise again the third day. When they arrested Jesus in the garden and Peter drew his sword and began to swing away and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Malchus, Jesus said to Peter, put your sword away. Do you not realize that I could now pray to my father and he would presently give me legions, twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scripture be fulfilled that say that this must be? Peter, don't defend me.

Don't try to defend me. How could the scriptures be fulfilled? Peter, I'm in control. I could call upon my father right now.

He would send twelve legions of angels to defend me. But then if I did that, how could the scriptures be fulfilled that say that this must be? Peter said in Acts 3.18 to the crowd that had gathered with the healing of the lame man, but those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all of his prophets that the Messiah should suffer, he has fulfilled. Again in Acts 4.27, as the disciples were gathered together in prayer, in their prayer they said, Of a truth, Lord, against your holy child, Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel had determined before to be done.

Lord, this was your plan. This was your counsel. They were only doing what you said they were going to do.

According to the writings of Peter, God had planned the death of Jesus before he ever laid the foundations of this earth. First Peter 1.18, For as much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from the vain empty life that you were living, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who was slain as a lamb without spot or blemish, as was foreordained before the foundation of the world. Finally, Paul wrote to the Romans, You have been justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.

Notice, whom God has set forth. God was the one that ordained that He should be there on that cross. Jesus plainly said, No man takes my life from me, I give my life.

Thus, it was not the Jews who crucified Jesus, nor was it the Romans who crucified Jesus, but it was God who ordained and sent him to the cross. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. John wrote, Herein is love.

Not that we love God, but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Paul wrote, But God has manifested His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. It was God's love for me that nailed Him to that tree.

It was because of God's great love for you and for me that Jesus had to die upon the cross. Because God loves you so much, He doesn't want you to perish, but He wants to have a loving, meaningful relationship with you. He wants you to have such a relationship that you become one, joined together with God in perfect union and harmony.

The Greek word is koinonia. It is a communion with God. It is a oneness with God.

It's a fellowship with God that He longs for and desires. That's why He made man in the beginning. But when God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, there was that beautiful communion between God and man until man rebelled against the commandment of God, ate of that tree of which God said He was not to eat, and God warned that in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.

And yet Adam did eat of it and he died spiritually. He lost that wonderful communion with God, that fellowship with God. He became alienated from that communion, living now an empty life without meaning, without purpose.

Because the purpose of your existence is that you might know God and live in fellowship with Him. Now God provided, during the times of the Old Testament, a means whereby a man's sins might be covered, that there might be moments of opportunity open for that man to know what it was to have the joy of having sins forgiven and having fellowship with God. After David had sinned, you remember, when God said, your sin is forgiven, David cried, oh, how happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Oh, how happy is the man to whom God does not impute his iniquity. God provided a way for the covering of sin. You had to take an animal and bring it to the priest, put your hands on the head of the animal and confess your sins, in a sense transferring it over to the animal, and the animal then would be slain, the blood put upon the horns of the altar, and there would be a atonement or covering, the Hebrew word is kofar, a covering for your sin.

But then, you had to bring a second offering, known as a burnt offering. This was an offering of complete consecration to God, where you are saying, Lord, I want to consecrate my life to You. And then you would bring the third offering, the peace offering.

Now, this offering, another animal, it was slain, but then part of it was roasted, the fat was taken and put, and the sweet smelling savor arising to God, but then the meat was roasted and you and your family would sit down and fellowship with God. The sin offering had been made, sins covered, the commitment to God is made, and now I can have fellowship with God, and I sit and eat of it, and the idea is, I'm eating with God and becoming one with God, and this idea of fellowship with God through the Old Testament. And that would work until I go out and sin again.

Then I had to go through the whole process over and over to maintain this fellowship with God. Because it was impossible that the blood of bulls or goats could put away our sin. It took the sacrifice of God's Son to put away our sin.

And thus, in the New Covenant, Jesus said, this is a new covenant God is making with man. It's in my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins. You see, God had to have a righteous means of forgiving the guilty.

God had announced the sentence of death for those that sinned. The soul that sinneth, God said, shall surely die. So, God provided the means whereby an animal could become a substitute for the covering of sin, but it couldn't put away sin.

But what Jesus Christ did, the Son of God, in His coming, He put away our sins. Interesting that when Jesus first appeared on the public scene, at the baptism where John was baptizing the people. As John looked up and saw Jesus coming, you remember His words, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Doesn't cover them. He takes away the sins of the world. Jesus said that He came to give His life as a ransom for many.

Jesus said to His disciples, greater love has no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends. When Jesus was in the garden facing the imminent death on the cross that next morning, we find Him praying, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. If what is possible? If redemption from sin, the forgiveness of sin, the opening of the door for a man to fellowship with God.

If it is possible that it can be accomplished any other way. If man can have fellowship with God by his good works. If a man can have fellowship with God by being religious.

If man can have fellowship with God by keeping certain rules. Then Lord, let this cup pass from me. The fact that the cup did not pass indicates that it is not possible for man to be saved by being religious.

It isn't possible for a man to be saved by doing good works. The cross tells you that there is only one way by which a man can know fellowship with God. And that's the way of the cross.

Jesus had said to His disciples that night before His crucifixion, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no man comes to the Father but by me. No other way.

That is why the cross offends people today. And of course you are going to get a mixed reaction from especially our liberal news media for the most part. You are going to get this mixed reaction and they are going to speak against the cross.

They are going to speak against the death of Jesus and they are going to have their words to say against it. Because you see, the cross offends people. Why does it offend people? Because the cross says there is only one way that you can come to God.

There is no other way. There is no other path. There is no other way that you can fellowship or know God.

There is no other way that you can have the forgiveness of your sins. What can wash away my sin? We sang it. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

And the cross tells you that that is so. Otherwise He would not have died. If it were possible, the Father would have allowed the cup to pass from Him.

So, what then is the greatest sin? The only sin that cannot be forgiven? That is the sin of rejecting the provision for the forgiveness of your sin that God has made. You see, there is no other provisions. So, if you reject the provision that God has made, there is no forgiveness for your sin, neither in this world or in the world to come.

The unpardonable sin is the rejection of God's love for you that was manifested when Jesus died on the cross for your sins. Jesus said, The Father did not send me into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved. And he that believes is not condemned, but he that believes not is already condemned, seeing he has not believed on the only begotten of the Father.

This is the condemnation. Light has come into the world, but men will not come to the light, because men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. The words of Jesus.

You're already condemned, because you've rejected the light. Now, in a secondary sense, yes, primarily, God is the one that planned that Christ should go to the cross to redeem us from our sins, that God might show us just the depth of his love for us. How much God does love us.

He wanted to show you that, and thus, he planned the cross as a demonstration to you of how much he loves you. But in a secondary sense, you can say that we are the ones who nailed Jesus to the cross. We are the ones that are responsible for his crucifixion, because he died for our sins.

It was our sins that precipitated the death of Jesus upon the cross. It was his love for me that nailed him to the tree to die in agony for all my sin. For my own guilt and blame, the great redeemer came, willing to bear the shame of all my sin.

Oh, what a savior is mine. In him, God's mercies combine, and his love will never decline, for he loves me. Up Calvary's hill one day, my Lord was led away.

None else the price could pay for all my sin. He saw my greatest need, became my friend indeed, and through him, I have been freed from all my sin. Oh, what a savior is mine.

In him, God's mercies combine, and his love will never decline. He loves me. Your sins, my sins are responsible for him dying.

God's love for you and for me prompted him to send his son to die. But the whole purpose of God in freeing you from your sin and making fellowship with God possible, by sending his son to die on the cross, the whole purpose of God is nullified if you do not receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. He died in vain, as far as many people are concerned, because they've rejected him.

But the scripture says, as many as received him, he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to those who believed upon his name, who were born not by the will of the flesh, but by the Spirit of God. And so today, God is giving to you an invitation to accept his love and to receive the forgiveness of all of your sins that you might live in the joy and in the peace of fellowship with God. The kind of life that God wanted us to live, the kind of life that God intended us to live, a life in fellowship with him.

And you can know the beauty, the glory, the wonder, the awe of knowing God and fellowshiping with him. Jesus made it possible through his passion. Let's pray.

Father, as we have been reminded through the graphics of the suffering that our Savior endured for our sakes, Lord, we thank you that you were willing to send him, willing to allow him to go through such brutal affliction by man that you might show us the immensity of your love. And we pray, Father, for those here today perhaps have seen the film and wonder in their mind just really what is the story all about. Help them to realize, Lord, it's the greatest love story ever known.

The love of God for sinful man. The love of Jesus for us. As he said, greater love has no man than this, than a man will lay down his life for his friends.

And then he laid down his life for us. Lord, with grateful hearts, we receive your love. We receive the forgiveness and the cleansing today.

And Lord, we thank you for the opportunity of fellowshiping with you. Being able to call upon you, Lord, at any time, at all times. For knowing your presence and seeing, Lord, your power demonstrated upon us and through our lives in so many ways.

Thank you, Lord, for what you have done. Help us, Lord, to respond by giving our hearts and lives to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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