

CHURCH.

LESSON 3

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| 1 | PRAYER |
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

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| 2 | SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> MARK 8:1 – 11:19 |
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Mark 8:1 – 11:19). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

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| 3 | MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[CHRISTIAN CHARACTER]</i> (3) MARK 12:30-31 |
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Review two by two.

(3) Love: Mark 12:30-31. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

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| 4 | TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[CHURCH FESTIVAL]</i> GOOD FRIDAY: COMMEMORATING THE DEATH OF CHRIST |
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Introduce. Good Friday is the Christian festival in which we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. We will learn what the Bible teaches about the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world. We will learn how his death has been prophesied in the Old Testament, what happened when he died on the cross, and why his death on the cross is important for us.

In the Jewish calendar, the Friday began at sunset on Thursday and ended at sunset on Friday. Jesus Christ was betrayed, tried, crucified, died and buried on a Friday. Historically, we Christians call that Friday “good”, because the death of Jesus Christ as a punishment in our place and the resulting salvation for us is *the best thing* that could ever have happened to us! Although that Friday was a very sad day for the disciples, that day has become a day of joy after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus Christ was a part of the most important event in human history, namely, the first coming of Jesus Christ, his life, his death and his resurrection!

Nothing that ever happened in history, nothing that books, magazines or newspapers record, nothing that radio, television and any other mass media communicate, is more crucial, more influential and more decisive than the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

A. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

1. Numbers 21 is a type (illustration) in the Old Testament of the death of Jesus Christ.

(1) Numbers 21:4-9.

More than 1400 years B.C., we read that the Israelites got impatient and spoke against God and against Moses. They complained about their hardships, especially about the food they had to eat in the desert. The Lord heard their complaints and saw the attitude of their hearts and he punished them by sending poisonous snakes among the people. After Moses had interceded for them, God commanded Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole where everybody could see it. God said that when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he would not die, but live. However, if anyone refused to believe God’s word and refused to look at the bronze snake, he would surely die. God demanded that the sinful people should *believe and obey* his word.

(2) John 3:14-16.

In the New Testament, Jesus explained the meaning of this illustration (type). The bronze snake, which was lifted on a pole, was an *illustration* pointing forward to Jesus Christ, who was lifted on the cross. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the fulfilment (antitype) of that Old Testament prophecy (type). Everyone who *believes* in Jesus Christ will not perish, but have eternal life!

2. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 is an important prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the death of Jesus Christ.

A prophecy about the Christ in the Old Testament. Cf. Manual 5, supplement 1.

3. Other important prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the death of Jesus Christ.

(1) Zechariah 11:12-13.

This is a prophecy in 520 B.C. about the price for the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, what Judas did with the money and what the money was eventually used for (Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10).

(2) Zechariah 12:10.

This is a prophecy about a soldier piercing the side of Jesus with a spear. John saw how Jesus was “pierced” (John 19:34-37).

(3) Psalm 22 and Psalm 69:20-21.

These are prophecies in about 1000 B.C. about the many sufferings of Jesus on the cross. Evil people would crucify him (Psalm 22:16; John 19:16-18). People would divide his garments and cast lots for his clothing (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24). Evil people would surround him and scorn, despise, mock and insult him (Psalm 22:6-7; Matthew 27:39-44). He would have terrible thirst (Psalm 22:15; John 19:28). And he would have an agonising experience of being forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46).

(4) Psalm 31:5.

This is a prophecy about the last words of Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:46).

(5) Psalm 40:6-8.

This is a prophecy about the once for all time sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ according to the will of God that replaced and fulfilled all animal sacrifices, the only sacrifice that enables believers to be sanctified (Hebrews 10:5-10).

B. THE EVENTS AROUND THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. The prophecies in the New Testament concerning the death of Christ.

(1) Jesus Christ predicted his death (and resurrection) at least three times.

Read Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22-23; Matthew 20:18-19.

At least three times before his death, Jesus Christ prophesied that he would die and be resurrected on the third day. *Thus it is written* in the Gospel of Mark (44-46 B.C.) that has been written at least 14 years before the Gospel of Luke (60-61 B.C.). He clearly prophesied in specific details *what* would happen to him, *who* would do it to him, *when* this would happen and *where* this would happen. He would be betrayed to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (the chief priests and teachers of the law) and they would condemn him to death and deliver him to the Roman authorities. These would mock him, torture him, spit on him and kill him; but on the third day he would be resurrected. Jesus Christ prophesied that everything that has been written about him in the Old Testament (his death and resurrection) *must* be fulfilled, because it was part of God’s eternal *plan of salvation*, because it was *written* in the Old Testament and because it was *the only way* to make atonement for sins!

Everything happened exactly as the prophets recorded in the Old Testament and as Jesus Christ himself had prophesied! No other person that calls himself “a prophet” can equal Jesus Christ! No other “prophet” in human history has ever made such accurate predictions! Jesus was really killed by means of crucifixion and he was literally raised from the dead. No other prophet that ever lived in history or that made a claim to be a prophet has been resurrected from the dead! All the prophets of other religions still lie in their graves. Jesus Christ is the only human being who has ever been resurrected from the dead. Jesus Christ is the only prophet from the past who is still alive today! These facts prove that Jesus Christ is not only the Greatest Prophet of all times, but that he is much more than a Prophet!

2. The betrayal, arrest and trials of Jesus.

In the four Gospels we read how Judas for thirty pieces of silver betrayed Jesus. After his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, temple guards arrested Jesus.

(1) Three trials before the Jews.

Read John 18:12-14, 19-24; Matthew 26:57-68; Luke 22:66-71.

Between midnight and the early morning of Friday, Jesus was first tried by Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Then Caiaphas, the high priest that year, tried him. Finally the whole Jewish leadership assembled in the Sanhedrin tried him.

(2) Three trials before the Gentiles.

Read Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-40.

Very early on Friday morning, Pilate, the Roman ruler of Judea, first tried Jesus. Then king Herod, the Roman ruler of Galilee, tried him. Finally Pilate tried him again and handed him over to be killed.

Jesus was tried, condemned and rejected by both the Jews and the non-Jews. He was condemned and killed by both the religious and the civil authorities in the world. And yet he was completely innocent!

3. The crucifixion of Jesus.

Read Luke 23:26-56; John 19:16-42.

About 9 a.m. on Friday morning the 15th Nisan (about April), Jesus was crucified on a hill, called “the skull”. The soldiers hammered long iron nails through his hands and feet (Psalm 22:16; Luke 24:39-40; John 20:25) into the wood of the cross. Then they hoisted the cross up and dropped its bottom end with a bang into a hole to keep it erect. For hours he hanged with his full body weight on the nails. Crucifixion was of the most horrific ways of executing someone and one of the most painful ways of suffering. With every breath he had to pull himself up on the nails in order not to suffocate. Crucifixion kills a person through pain, exhaustion and slow suffocation. But Jesus Christ did not die due to his wounds or because he was murdered. He died because he gave his life completely *willingly* (John 10:18)!

The Roman custom was to write the crime of the crucified person on a board and hammer it to the top of the cross. Because Pilate could not find any guilt in him, he made up the words: “This is Jesus, the king of the Jews”. The soldiers divided his clothes by casting lots. The Jews and other people passing by mocked him and challenged him to come down from the cross and save himself. Two robbers were crucified together with him, one on each side with Jesus in the middle (John 19:18).

From the cross, Jesus forgave the people who crucified him (Luke 23:34). From 12 noon to 3 p.m. darkness came over the whole land. Finally he gave his human spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father (Luke 23:46). When Jesus died, the curtain inside the temple tore from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This symbolised that with his death, Jesus Christ terminated the significance of worship in temples (or other religious buildings) and that all the offerings people bring have lost their meaning! No religious building or religious ceremony can save people from their sins!

4. The various responses to the death of Jesus.

Many people were involved in the events around the death of Jesus Christ on that Friday. Many kinds of people stood around the cross. But everyone had a different personal response to Christ.

Discover and discuss. How did the different people respond to Jesus and his death?

Notes.

(1) Judas had pretended to be a disciple of Jesus, but *betrayed* him. Afterwards he had *no remorse, that led to repentance* (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11). He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the temple and then hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5; Hebrews 6:5-6)

(2) Peter had boasted that he would follow Jesus everywhere and die with Jesus, but *denied* him three times! (John 13:36-38; John 18:15-18,25-27)

(3) John fled out of fear, yet later *followed Jesus* out of love, but *at a distance* to the trial (Matthew 26:56; John 18:15)

(4) Annas, his first judge, conducted a trial without producing honest witnesses, which the Old Testament law required (Deuteronomy 17:6). He *avoided the truth*. He was more interested in “the success” of Jesus than in “the truth”. That is why he questioned Jesus with respect to his disciples and teaching, as if these were unknown. But Jesus declined to be a witness against himself. Jesus said that he had always spoken openly and everybody had been welcome to hear his teachings. This stood in stark contrast to the secret plotting of the Sanhedrin (John 18:12-14,19-24)!

(5) Caiaphas, his second judge, conducted a hurried preliminary trial with false witnesses in order to pretend that he upheld the law. He *pretended to be a just judge, but the outcome of the trial had already been determined beforehand!* The chief priests and Pharisees had already decided to kill Jesus! But in order to get him killed, the Jewish Sanhedrin first had to pronounce him guilty (Matthew 12:14; Luke 22:2; John 11:49-53,57; John 18:14; Matthew 26:57-68).

(6) The Sanhedrin, his third judge, was composed of the political and religious leaders of Israel and they conducted a fake official trial. They *were envious of the great influence Jesus had on the people*. In this official meeting, they simply ratified the decision which they had already made during their secret plotting (Matthew 12:14). They camouflaged the real reason why they wanted to kill Jesus (jealousy, Matthew 27:18). In the Sanhedrin they accused him of blasphemy, but before the Roman governor they would accuse him of political subversion of the nation (Luke 22:66-71; Luke 23:1-2).

(7) Pilate, his fourth judge, also conducted an unjust trial. Although he was absolutely convinced that Jesus was innocent, he nevertheless handed him over to be crucified. He *acted out of self-interest, because he feared to lose his leadership position* (Matthew 27:11-26; John 18:28 - 19:16).

(8) King Herod, his fifth judge, *only wanted to be entertained by Jesus*. He was hoping to see Jesus perform some miracle. When Jesus remained absolutely silent, he could only ridicule and mock Jesus together with his soldiers (Luke 23:5-12).

(9) The women of Jerusalem, some of who had followed him, mourned and wailed aloud for him. They *pitied him without realising their own peril*. They did not realise that Jesus’ future was secure, and that, unless they

repented, their own future and that of their children would not be secure. By and large, the population of Jerusalem consisted of unregenerate people. God would not permit their impenitent attitude to go unpunished. Therefore, unless the people of Jerusalem repented, they would perish (Luke 23:27-31).

(10) The soldiers, who crucified him, followed orders and thought that they were just doing their job. They *overstepped their responsibility* by mercilessly mocking and maltreating Jesus (Matthew 27:27-31).

(11) The ordinary people, the Jews and other ordinary passersby *hurled insults* at Jesus (Matthew 27:39).

(12) One robber hurled insults at Jesus, but the other robber *confessed his guilt and submitted himself to Christ* (Luke 23:39-43).

(13) The centurion, who was the military commander of the Roman soldiers, was one of *the first to confess Jesus as the Son of God* (Matthew 27:54).

(14) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who were secret followers of Christ, *now openly served Jesus*. They took his body down from the cross and buried him in an empty tomb (John 19: 38-42).

(15) Today, every person in the world stands at the cross of Jesus. He died to atone for sins and to forgive those who believe in him. God demands of everybody a response with regard to who Jesus Christ is and what he has done.

You and I also stand at the cross of Jesus. What will your response be to Jesus and his death on the cross? Will you flee away or will you follow Jesus? Will you pretend to be self-righteous or will you confess your sins? Do you fake ignorance and say you don't know or do you realise that Jesus died on the cross in your place? Will you continue to persecute Jesus Christ and Christians or will you turn and openly serve him in love? Will you reject him in unbelief or will you accept him by faith?

What will your response be?

C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR US.

1. 1st reason: Jesus Christ died to make atonement for sins.

Read Romans 3:23-25; Romans 8:7-10; John 6:35-44.

The first reason why Christ died for us and in our place was to make atonement for our sins. He justifies us completely in the eyes of God and reconciles us to God. In his natural state, no human being pleases God, submits to God or comes to God.

While all people were still in their natural state, God provided the way of salvation. He *once for all* publicly displayed (openly presented, offered, designed) (Greek: protithémi) Jesus Christ in his death on the cross (literally: in his blood) as a sacrifice of atonement¹ that had to be accepted through faith (Romans 3:25).² [To demonstrate his justice by leaving unpunished (Greek: paresis) the sins committed beforehand (Greek: proginomai) in the forbearance of God.] Jesus Christ died as a punishment for our sins, that is, his sacrifice of atonement on the cross became the means to justify us in the eyes of God. Jesus Christ turned God's holy and righteous indignation against our sins away and reconciled us to God. "Reconciliation"³ here means restoring the broken relationship with God.

2. 2nd reason: Jesus Christ died to redeem from the curse of the law.

Read Exodus 20:1-2; Galatians 2:21; Galatians 3:10-29.

The second reason why Christ died for us in our place was to redeem us from the curse of the law. He set us free from God's righteous requirement (law) against us and from any law and all laws (also those designed by men) as a means of justification. In the Old Testament "the law" was never a means of justification (salvation). Only after God had saved his people (out of their slavery in Egypt), he gave them the Ten Commandments as the Law for his saved people. He gave the Ten Commandments not as a means whereby people could justify themselves, but as the way in which previously justified people (the believers) should live. The moral law (the Ten Commandments) teaches people how they must and can live as God's saved people in the world (Exodus 20:1-2). The moral law is confirmed in the New Testament (Matthew 22:36-40).

The ceremonial law taught God's Old Testament people how they had to approach God in worship and in service. The ceremonial laws (with respect to priests and Levites, the tabernacle and temple, the Sabbath and festivals the circumcisions and the sacrifices, the purification rites and gifts) were "shadows of the realities" that later came in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). Christ has come and has *fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated* the ceremonial law.

¹ Greek: hilastérion, atonement

² Translation of verse 25-26. "God designed (publicly presented) Jesus Christ by the shedding of his blood to be a wrath-removing sacrifice, effective through faith.

³ Greek: katallagé, reconciliation

Unfortunately, since the Babylonian Exile the Jewish religious leaders and teachers changed the purpose of the law and made the law a means to atonement and salvation (cf. Acts 15:1). Since then, many “people of the Book” (e.g. Jews, Muslims and legalistic Christians), have tried to save themselves (justify themselves) by keeping the law.

However, the Bible warns, “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law. Clearly no one is justified before God by the law” (Galatians 3:10-11). Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’ (Galatians 3:13). We are saved from the curse of the law. We no longer live “under law”, but “under grace” (Romans 6:14)!

3. 3rd reason: Jesus Christ died to destroy division between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Read Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:13-18; Colossians 2:14.

The third reason why Christ died for us and in our place was to destroy the separation (division) between Israel and the Gentile believers. He formed the two groups of believers into one new people of God (the Church) and in this way made peace between believers from every nation on earth! Long before the existence of the nation of Israel, God promised to bless all the nations in the world through “the seed” of Abraham, that is, through the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ (Genesis 22:18). However, up to the first coming of the Messiah, “the law stood as a barrier, a dividing wall of hostility between the nation of Israel and the other Gentile nations”. Particularly the ceremonial law with its many religious regulations about holy people, holy places, holy times and holy actions, distinguished Israel from the Gentile nations.

God’s special purpose for the nation of Israel was not to turn all the Gentile nations into nations “under the yoke of the law”, but rather to bring forth the Saviour of all the nations. When the Saviour Jesus Christ came, he (Jesus Christ) *fulfilled* all the righteous demands of the law by his life and death (Matthew 5:17). Therefore he *cancelled* (Colossians 2:14) and *abolished* (Ephesians 2:14-15) the ceremonial law as a means of approaching and serving God. And he *replaced* the civil law of Israel by his teachings about the kingdom of God.

The death of Jesus Christ removed “the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” and reconciled Jewish believers and Gentile believers with God and with one another. He made the Jewish and Gentile believers:

- into *one* kingdom of God (Matthew 21:42-44)
- into *one* flock with one Shepherd (John 10:16)
- into *one* Body (the Church) (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- into *one* new man that has access to the Father by one Spirit (Ephesians 2:15-18)
- into *one* household of God in which God lives (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- and into God’s *one* chosen people (nation) (1 Peter 2:9-10)!

God made no distinction between us (the believers from the Jews) and them (the believers from the Gentiles) (Acts 15:9)! “Therefore there is no difference between Jew and non-Jew (Gentile) – the same Lord (Jesus Christ) is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him” (Romans 10:12)!

4. 4th reason: Jesus Christ died to give purpose to life.

Read Romans 14:8; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 2:1-8.

The fourth reason why Christ died for us and in our place was to give to Christians a new purpose in life. Christians no longer live for themselves, but for the God of the Bible and serve other people unselfishly.

5. 5th reason: Jesus Christ died to remove all fear.

Read Hebrews 2:14-15; Romans 8:31-39.

The fifth reason why Christ died for us and in our place was to remove all fear and give Christians assurance of eternal salvation in spite of their difficult circumstances. God is *for* us and nobody and no circumstance can really be *against* us (Romans 8:31)! Nothing can separate us from God’s love for us (Romans 8:38-39)! Jesus Christ died to remove the fear of people, the fear of circumstances, the fear of the devil and the fear of death once for all time from Christians!

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| 5 | PRAYER (8 minutes) | [REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD |
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Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two’s or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

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| 6 | PREPARATION (2 minutes) | [ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON |
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(**Group leader.** Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ’s Church.

2. Preach, teach or study the teaching of “Good Friday - commemorating the death of Christ” together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Mark 11:20 - 14:72 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. (4) Faith: Romans 4:20-21. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 1:1-18. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on building Christ’s Church. Include your notes on quiet time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.