

(T) Welcome to Discipleship training On The Air. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about the Christian festivals. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: GOOD FRIDAY, 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 is important for you.

(S) **POINT 1. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.**

First, Numbers 21 in the Old Testament is a type or illustration of the death of Jesus Christ. More than 1405 years before the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, we read in Numbers 21:4-9 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 interceded for them, God commanded Moses to make a bronze snake and to put it on a pole where everybody could see it. God said that if people would look at the snake when they were bitten, they would not die, but live. However, if they refused to believe God's word and refused to look at the bronze snake, then they would surely die. God demands that all sinful people should believe and obey his word.

In the New Testament, in John 3:14-16, Jesus says, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The bronze snake, which was lifted on a pole was "a type" (illustration) pointing forward to Jesus Christ, who was lifted on the cross. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will not die, but have everlasting life.

(T) Second, Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament is a prophecy concerning the death of Jesus Christ. This is the clearest prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the death of Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah recorded this prophecy more than 700 years before the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

Isaiah 53:1-3 describes the humiliation of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. He would be doubted, despised and abused. *Verse 1 says that Jesus was religiously doubted.* Although God revealed himself and his message through his servant, Jesus Christ, yet there were many who did not believe. *Verse 2 says that Jesus was socially despised.* His ancestors were not great saints, but great sinners instead. For example, Rahab was a harlot and king David was a murderer. He was raised in Nazareth, a town in the despised region of Galilee. He lived at a time in history when Israel, as God's people, was spiritually dry and dead. His own family and nation did not give him any power or greatness. He had no particular physical beauty, nor did his outward appearance cause people to feel naturally attracted to him. *Verse 3 says that Jesus was physically abused.* The Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin spat in his face and struck him with their fists. The Roman soldiers stripped him naked, set a crown of thorns on his head, and struck him on his head again and again with a staff. He must have been so marred, that people could not look at his disfigured face!

Isaiah 53:4-6 foretells God's plan of salvation through the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. He would suffer in the place of people. The contrast in Isaiah 53 is between "our" sins and "his" suffering. *Verse 4 says that Jesus carried our sicknesses and sorrows.* He healed the sick, set demon-possessed people free, raised the dead and accepted the rejected. The words "infirmities" and "sorrows" together describe all kinds of human suffering, which he willingly carried on himself. However, the Jews regarded his suffering as his deserved punishment by God. *Verse 5 says that Jesus was "pierced" for our sins.* Psalm 22:16 shows that he died by being crucified. This prophecy is extraordinary, because crucifixion as a means of punishing criminals was only introduced by the Romans 600 years after Isaiah!

Why did Jesus Christ have to die? The prophet Isaiah says that he was crucified for *our* transgressions. That is, his death was the punishment for *our* deliberate disobedience of God's commands. He was crushed for *our* iniquities. That is, he was brought to a violent death because *we* are guilty of violating God's truths! He was punished, not to better us, but to pay for *our* guilt. Jesus Christ not only died *for* us but he died *in our place!* By his death, he took *our* sins onto himself onto the cross and suffered the condemnation of *our* sins *in our place!* Therefore, we who believe in Jesus Christ, will not be condemned anymore, but are declared righteous in God's eyes and are reconciled to God. The "substitutional death" of Jesus Christ gives us "God's peace", that is, gives us his complete salvation, blessings and happiness. The wounds caused by humans bring us "God's healing", that is, bring us his salvation from all the distress, misery and suffering, which our sins brought into our lives. *Verse 6 says that Jesus was punished for our wilful independence.* We have refused to follow God. Each one of us has turned to a different way, a way which we devised for ourselves and

which we chose for ourselves. All these ways have one thing in common: they are independent from God! It was for these sins that Jesus Christ died.

(S) **POINT 2. THE EVENTS AROUND THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.**

First. The prophecies in the New Testament concerning the death of Christ. At least three times before his death, Jesus Christ prophesied that he would die and be resurrected. In Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34 he clearly prophesied *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. They would reject him as Messiah, condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentile Romans. The Gentile soldiers would mock him, spit on him, flog him and finally kill him. Three days later he would be resurrected! He prophesied that all these things *must* happen, because this was part of God's eternal plan, was recorded in the Old Testament and is the only way to make atonement for sins!

He not only prophesied his death and resurrection, but everything happened exactly as the prophets in the Old Testament as well as Jesus himself prophesied! No other prophet who ever lived can equal Jesus Christ! No other prophet ever predicted such accurate prophecies! Moreover, Jesus was actually crucified and actually resurrected from the dead. No other prophet who ever lived in history or 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 and still lives! This fact proves that Jesus Christ was the Greatest Prophet of all times!

(T) Second. The betrayal, arrest and trial of Jesus. Christians all over the world call the day that Jesus was crucified "Good Friday", because he was betrayed, tried, crucified, died and buried on a Friday. This day is called "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! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in human history! Nothing that ever happened in history, nothing books, magazines or newspapers record, nothing that radio, television or any other mass media communicate, is more crucial, more influential and more decisive than the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

In the four Gospels we read how Jesus was betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces of silver. After his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, he was arrested by temple guards. Between midnight and the early morning of Friday, he was tried first by Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, then by Caiaphas, the high priest that year, then by the whole Jewish leadership assembled in the Sanhedrin, and finally by Pilate, who represented the Roman civil authorities. Jesus was tried and rejected by both the Jews and the Gentiles! He was condemned and killed by both the religious and the political authorities in the world. And yet he was completely innocent!

(S) Third. The crucifixion of Jesus. About 9 a.m. on that Friday morning, Jesus was crucified on a hill, called "the skull". The soldiers hammered long iron nails through his hands and feet into the wood of the cross. Then they hoisted the cross up and let its bottom end fall into a hole to keep it erect. The hammering of the nails through his hands and feet, the erecting of the cross and hanging on these nails for many hours, was an extremely painful way of suffering. The crime of a crucified person was written on a board and hammered to the top of the cross. Because his judges could not find any guilt in him, they wrote, "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. From the cross, Jesus forgave the people who crucified him.

From 12 noon to 3 p.m. darkness came over the whole land. Finally he gave his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. When Jesus died, the curtain inside the temple tore from top to bottom, symbolising that with his death, all temples and all sacrifices had lost their meaning. No religious building of any kind or religious ceremonies of any kind can save people from their sins. From now on, only Jesus Christ can and will save people.

(T) Fourth. The various responses to the death of Jesus. During that Friday, many people were involved in the events around his death. Many stood around the cross. Everyone had a different response to Christ. How did different people respond to Jesus and his death?

Judas, who betrayed him, had *remorse, but no repentance*. He returned the thirty pieces of silver and then hanged himself (Mt.27:1-10).

Peter, who had boasted that he would die with Jesus anywhere, *denied* him three times.

John fled out of fear, yet later *followed Jesus at a distance* out of love.

Annas, his first judge, conducted a fake trial, questioning Jesus about things Jesus had publicly taught and were known everywhere. He *pretended ignorance*.

Caiaphas, his second judge, conducted another fake trial with false witnesses. He *pretended to be a just judge*.

Pilate, his third judge, conducted another fake 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*.

The women of Jerusalem, some of whom had followed him, mourned and wailed aloud for him. They *pitied him without realising the significance of his death*.

The soldiers, who crucified him, followed orders and thought that they were just doing their duty. They *mercilessly mocked and maltreated Jesus*.

The Jews hurled insults.

One robber *confessed his guilt and submitted himself to Christ*.

The centurion, who was the commandant of the Roman soldiers, was *the first to confess Jesus as the Son of God*.

Joseph and Nicodemus, who were secret followers of Christ, *now openly served him* and took his body down from the cross and buried him.

(S) Today, everybody in the world stand at the cross of Jesus. Jesus Christ died to atone sins and to forgive those who believe in him. God demands of everybody a response with regard to 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? Do you realise why Jesus died on the cross? Will you continue to persecute Jesus Christ and Christians or will you turn and openly serve him in love? Will you reject him or will you accept him by faith? *What will your response be?*

(T) **POINT 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR US.**

First, Jesus Christ died to make atonement for sins committed against the holy God. *The bad news* is that not a single person in the world stands neutral before the righteous and holy God. Romans 3:23 says that all people have sinned and therefore stand guilty before God. Not a single person in the world can keep all God's laws. Romans 8:7-8 says that the natural man or non-Christian *does not* submit to God's commands and *cannot* submit to God's commands, because he is not born-again. The natural man cannot please God. Therefore, unless God himself saves people, nobody will be saved! John 6:44 says that unless God draws people to Jesus Christ, no one will come to Jesus Christ and no one can be saved.

The good news is that God provided the way of salvation. In Romans 3:24-25 we read that God designed Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice of atonement. Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin and to remove God's righteous and holy anger against our sin. Because God's holy righteousness has been satisfied, his unmerited grace and love can freely justify everyone who believes. *The first reason why Jesus Christ died for us is to justify us before God and to reconcile us to God.*

(S) Second, Jesus Christ died to redeem us from the curse of the Law. In the Old Testament, God never gave the law as a means of justification or salvation. All the laws in the Old Testament were given to Israel *in the context of grace*. In Exodus 20:1-2, God first showed grace, mercy and love by setting Israel free from their slavery, and then he gave them the Ten Commandments as the guideline how his saved people should live. However, the Jewish religious teachers misinterpreted the law and made the law a means to be saved instead of a map and compass how to live. The religious teachers of the Jews taught the Jews that whoever did not keep the ceremonial law, the civil law and the moral law of Israel, could not be saved. And so the Jews for many generations tried to save themselves by keeping the law. But because no one can keep the law, the law became a curse to people rather than a blessing. The law became a burden. Galatians 2:21 teaches, "If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" But Galatians 3:13 teaches, "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.'" We are saved, not by our limited obedience, but by God's unlimited grace. *The second reason why Jesus Christ died for us is to set us free from any law and all laws as a means of salvation.*

(T) Third, Jesus Christ died to destroy the division between Israel and the Gentile nations. In the Old Testament, even before the existence of Israel, God promised that he was going to bless all the families and nations of the earth through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18). However, many Jews believed that God was going to save the Jews only and punish the Gentile nations. In Ephesians 2:13-19 we read that Jesus Christ died to remove the barrier and enmity between the believers among the Jews and the believers among the Gentiles. By dying on the cross, Jesus

abolished the ceremonial and civil law, which distinguished Israel from the other Gentile nations (15). By dying on the cross he reconciled the Jewish and Gentile believers with one another (16). By dying on the cross he formed the Jewish and Gentile believers into one new “people of God” (1 Pet 2:9), into one Church (Eph 2:19-22), into one kingdom of God (Mt 21:43)! Israel in the Old Testament as a special nation of God’s people had fulfilled its purpose (Mt 27:51) and now developed to something much bigger that encompassed all the believers of all nations, namely, the Body of Christ or the Kingdom of God. *The third reason why Jesus Christ died for us was to destroy the division between Jew and Gentile and to form one people of God consisting of believers from every nation on earth!*

(S) Fourth. Jesus Christ died to remove the fear of people and circumstances. In Romans 8:28-39 we read that because we have been justified and reconciled to God, God is for us and nobody and no circumstance can really be against us! God has chosen us, called us and justified us. He will certainly protect us from eternal harm, make certain that nothing can separate us from his love in Jesus Christ for us, and finally he will certainly glorify us! *The fourth reason why Jesus Christ died for us is to give us assurance of eternal salvation in spite of what people do and in spite of difficult circumstances.*

(T) Fifth. Jesus Christ died to remove selfish ambition. Philippians 2:1-8 teaches that because Jesus Christ humbled himself to death, we Christians should do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit (3). 2 Corinthians 5:15 teaches that Jesus Christ died so that we should no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died for us. *The fifth reason why Jesus Christ died for us is to deliver us from independence from God and from selfishness with respect to people.*

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.**

First. Teach new believers the meaning of Good Friday - the festival commemorating the death of Jesus Christ.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.