

Special Topic ...

The Death of Christ

By Steve Rudd

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## CAST MEMBERS OF THE CRUCIFIXION STORY:

If we approach the story of the death of Christ as a "theater production" we would have the following cast members for the play. We have Malchus, the high priests slave, who lost an ear when Peter was aiming for the middle of his head with his sword, Lk 22:47-51. Caiaphas, the high priest made one of the few New Testament prophecies of Christ's death, Jn 11:50. Yet it was not because he was a righteous man, but that the Holy Spirit "forced" him to prophecy against his will. (A great example of "no prophecy came about by an act of human will" 2 Pe 1:21.) Later Caiaphas would be a central figure in both the condemnation of Jesus, Mt 26:65 and the persecution of Christians thereafter, Ax 4:6; 5:17-21,27; 7:1; 9:1. Pilate and his wife are central players of the story. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent on the basis of his own instinct, cross examination of Jesus and the testimony of his wife. Some have suggested that Pilate's wife was in fact a disciple whom God gave the vision to as an unheeded warning to Pilate. Lk 23:4,13-22; Mt 27:18-19. Herod Antipas was the other politician of the story. Lk 3:1; Mk 8:15; Lk 13:32; It is interesting that Herod had the same regrets and hesitation in beheading John that Pilate had in crucifying Jesus. Mk 6:17f; Mt 14:8; Herod knew he was in the midst of the famous "star of the show" and had wanted for a long time to meet with Jesus and talk with him. Lk 23:7-11. But this was a shallow curiosity that turned to contempt and mocking when Jesus remained silent. Barabbas was guilty of insurrection and murder. Pilate offered the Jews a choice between Barabbas and Jesus to be released as a political favour, Lk 23:17-19. We see the same kind of "prisoner exchanges" taking place today in the middle east. These exchanges have nothing to do with justice but merely provide an opportunity for gaining some political "brownie points". I can only imagine that Pilate deliberately chose the "notorious" Barabbas as the alternative to Jesus with the intent that surely Jesus would have been released. Imagine his shock when the people, out of their jealousy Mt 27:18, chose "Jeffery Dahmer or Paul Bernardo" over the innocent Jesus. Simon from the region of Cyrene (cf. Acts 6:9), was merely a passive onlooker as we might be at a parade. Just as one can be randomly honoured when the "President" singles one in the crowd out for unsolicited publicity, Simon became famous, likely against his own will. Mk 15:21. There were the mockers present at the crucifixion sight in fulfillment of prophecy. Mt 26:39-44 (cf Ps 22:7-8). As were the two thieves: Mk 15:27; Lk 22:37. Unlike the big tough men, the women, with the exception of John, appear to be the only disciples who were at the foot of the cross. Salome, Mary Magdalene, Mary-mother of Jesus, and "His mother's sister", Jn 19:25; Lk 8:3; Mk 15:4. Centurion & Guards: Jn 19:23-24; stood by

during the crucifixion prompting even though his dead, a confession of faith in his deity. "Truly this man was the Son of God" Mk 15:39. Finally we have Joseph of Arimathea who sent to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus for burial and laid him in his own tomb and Nicodemus who was involved in preparing the 100 pounds of embalming spices Jn 19:41; Lk 23:51; Mk 19:43.

## JESUS DEATH SOMEONE ELSE'S FAULT!

We see the different cast characters in our "story" provided with an alibi for not taking personal responsibility for the death of Jesus. Has anything really changed today? Courts are letting murderers off the hook because it really wasn't their fault. Yet we can clearly identify the primary murderers in the story. Obviously the Jews are first in line for fault because they delivered Jesus over to the Roman authorities: 1 Th 2:14-15; Mt 27:22-25; Jn 19:10-11; 7:52-53.

Next the Romans in general, and Pilate and Herod specifically must also take primary blame. They allowed a man they knew to be innocent to be executed: Mt 27:2; Lk 18:32; Jn 18:28-32; 19:15-18; Ax 2:23; 3:13; 4:27. Pilate and Herod might say that the Jews were responsible and that for political reasons, we was forced to let them have their way. Yet it was clearly cowardice and personal political gain that motivated him: Jn 19:8,12-16 The soldiers, like Nazi war criminals, might say, "I was just carrying out my orders" Jn 19:1-3,18. The mob might claim to be carried away by the passion of the moment. In fact the only group that actually took direct responsibility at the time were the Jews. They later denied the very responsibility that they confessed to. Acts 5:27-28.

Of course in a general sense, every one who has sinned is responsible for the death of Christ, for it was because of sin, that Jesus died. Isa 53:4-6,10-12; Rom 6:23. Christians who fall away are actually guilty of "re-crucifying" Jesus a second time. Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2 Pe 2:20-22. I dare say that more mercy will be shown mass murderers of our time than the elder of a church who runs off with "another woman" and gives up his faith. Lk 12:47-48.

## WHY DID JESUS DIE

The reasons behind why Jesus died are a combination of God's plan and man's foolish sin in killing an innocent man. The foremost reason is the love of God, Rom 8:5; 1 Jn 3:16. Man had a desperate need for redemption, Rom 3:10; Mt 20:28; Heb 2:9; 1 Ti 1:15. Ultimately, a need for the remission of sins, Rom 2:5; Heb 9:22; Lk 24:46; Ax 17:3; 1 Cor 15:3. Jesus was that "acceptable sacrifice" to God, Mt 20:28; Eph 5:2; 1 Th 5:10. It was God's plan that Jesus died "vicariously" or in place of those who deserved it. This vicarious pattern was illustrated directly through the Old Testament antitype of the scapegoat, Lev 16:21-22. It was God's plan that an exchange be made: "the just for the unjust", Jn 10:14-18; Mt 26:53; 1 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:3-4; ; 3:13; 2 Cor 5:14,21; 1 Pe 2:24; 3:18; Rom 5:7-8; Isa 53:8-9. Without His death, Jesus could not have "qualified" as a high priest "with his own blood": Heb 9:7-12. These were the primary reasons from God's view why Jesus died.

It appears that in God's overall plan, there was some kind of time table in place to determine when Christ would die. Jesus was clearly appointed by God to die from the Garden, even before creation: Gen 3:15; Isa 53:6,10; Ac 2:23; Eph 3:11; 1 Pe 1:19-20. It seems that when the Gentiles started taking interest in Jesus, it was a signal to Christ that His death was near and His mission was accomplished: Jn 12:20-23; Jn 4:34; 17:4; 19:28-30. Although the death of Christ was part of a predetermined plan, Jesus was clearly not forced into dying, but volunteered his life as a gift, Isa 53:12; Mt 26:53; Joh 2:19; 5:26; 10:17,18.

Jesus death was not something hidden in a corner. It was staged by God during the most important festival of the Jews. There were people from "every nation" present there. It was an event openly displayed for all to see and talk about, Ax 26:26; Mt 28:11,15.

From Jesus' point of view, his death was primary a result of His selfless humility, Phil 2:5-8. Yet death was also necessary for the divine Jesus to "learn" obedience: Heb 8:5. This humble obedience is an eternal "pattern" for all creation to imitate.

On a grandeur scale, the death of Christ provided a foundational "model" and the most basic reference point that Christians are to focus upon. It sets the tone and outlook as Christians. The death burial and resurrection is perhaps the foremost of 5 metaphors of baptism. (New birth, clothing, circumcision, washing) Our very initiation into the family of God begins with baptism: Rom 6:2-6; Mt 16:24;; 5:24. The first requirement of becoming a Christian is "death" to self. Gal 2:20. This struggle continues throughout our walk upon the earth. Jesus death is our "ultimate" example of enduring wrongful suffering on a day to day basis as Christians, Heb 12:2; 1 Pe 2:21. So we can see that the death of Christ provides a foundation for every meaning, thought and action for the Christian. Without the death of Christ, our outlook would be very different indeed. The Christian's essence might otherwise be seasoned with pride rather than humility.

#### PROPHECIES OF CHRIST'S DEATH: MT 26:54

NT prophecies:

1. Caiaphas: Prophesied death: Jn 11:50
2. Mary anoints for burial: Mt :26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8
3. Jesus predicted His own death: Mt 12:40; 16:21; 17:9,12,22;  
20:18-19; 26:2; 27:63; Mk 8:31; 9:12,31; 10:34; Lk 9:22,44; 17:25;  
18:31-34; 22:37; 24:7; Jn 2:19-22; 3:14; 8:28; 10:11-18;  
12:20-26,32-34
4. The "hour" prophecies: Mt 26:45; Mk 10:33; 14:35,41; Jn 2:4;  
8:20; 11:13; 12:23; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1

OT prophecies of Jesus' crucifixion: Gen 3:15; Dan 9:26

| PROPHESED             | EVENT                          | FULFILLED       |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ps 41:9<br>Zech 11:12 | Betrayed by a friend           | Jn 13:18-27     |
|                       | Sold for 30 pieces of silver   |                 |
| Zech 11:13            | pieces thrown in Temple        | Mt 27:3-5       |
| Zech 11:13            | pieces buys potters field      | Mt 27:6-10      |
| Zech 13:7             | Forsaken by His disciples      | Mk 14:27+50     |
| Ps 35:11+20-21        | Accused by false witnesses     | Mt 26:59-61     |
| Isa 53:7              | Silent before accusers         | Mt 27:12-14     |
| Isa 53:4-6            | Wounded and bruised            | 1 Pet 2:21-25   |
| Isa 50:6              | Beaten and spit upon           | Mt 26:67-68     |
| Ps 22:6-8             | Mocked                         |                 |
| Mt 27:27-31           |                                |                 |
| Ps 109:24-25          | Fell under the cross           | Jn19:17;Lk23:26 |
| Ps 22:16              | Hands and feet pierced         | Jn 20:24-28     |
| Isa 53:12             | Crucified with thieves         | Mt 27:38        |
| Isa 53:12             | Prayed for enemies             | Lk 23:34        |
| Isa 53:3              | Rejected by His own people     | Jn 19:14-15     |
| Ps 69:4               | Hated without cause            | Jn 15:25        |
| Ps 38:11              | Friends stood aloof            |                 |
| Lk22:54;23:49         |                                |                 |
| Ps 22:7;109:25        | People wag their heads         | Mt 27:39        |
| Ps 22:17              | People stared at Him           | Lk 23:35        |
| Ps 22:18              | Cloths divided and gambled for | Jn 19:23-24     |
| Ps 22:15              | Became very thirsty            | Jn 19:28        |
| Ps 69:21              | Gall and vinegar offered Him   | Mt 27:34        |
| Ps 22:1               | His forsaken cry               | Mt              |
| 27:46                 |                                |                 |
| Ps 31:5               | Committed Himself to God       | Lk 23:46        |
| Ps 34:20              | Bones not broken               | Jn 19:32-36     |
| Ps 69:20;22:14        | Heart broken                   | Jn 19:34        |
| Zech 12:10            | His side pierced               | Jn 19:34+37     |
| Amos 8:9              | Darkness over the land         | Lk 23:44-45     |
| Isa 53:9              | Buried in rich man's tomb      | Mt 27:57-60     |

## OT ANTITYPES OF DEATH OF CHRIST:

Adam & Christ, both died because of transgression

Lord's supper & Passover are co-antitypes: 1 Cor 5:7

Jewish Passover ----- Lord's Supper

Meaning Remember Egypt Ex 12:26-27 ----- Remember Lord 1 Cor 11:25

Lamb 1 Yr. unblemished Ex 12:5 ----- Sinless Jesus Jn 1:29; 1 Pe 1:19

Flesh Eat, Ex 12:8 ----- Eat 1 Cor 11:27

No bones broken Ex 12:46; Num 9:12 ----- Jn 19:33,36 (Ps 34:20)

Blood On mercy seat for sins Ex 12:7 ----- For forgiveness Mt 26:27-28

Participants Circumcised Ex 12:43 ----- Baptized 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:29

Frequency Every Nissan 14: Ex 12:6 ----- Every Sunday: Ax 20:7

Slaughtered goat, scape-goat & high priest: Lev 16:1-34

## GOAT CHRIST

Lev 16:6,14 High Priest slaughtered bull & ram for own sins----- Heb 7:26-28

Lev 16:7-8 physical body for sacrifice ----- Heb 2:17; 10:5-12; 13:10-13 Lev 16:15-19;

Heb 10:1-4 Offered up his own blood for sins of people----- Heb 9:7-12,34

Lev 16:20-22 Sins vicariously placed on scape-goat ----- Rom 3:23; 1 Jn 2:2

Lev 16:27-28 body of slaughtered goat burned outside city ----- Heb 13:11-13; Jn 19:17

The brazen serpent: Num 21:8; Jn 3:14

Jonah: Jonah 1:17; Mt 12:40; Lk 11:32

Isaac offered by Abraham: Gen 22:2-10

Joseph: Gen 37

## JOSEPH

## COL 2:17

## CHRIST

Gen 37:3 Beloved son of father Mt 3:17

Gen 37:3 Spoke truth knowing result Lk 20:19

Gen 37:4,8 Hated by brothers w/out cause Jn 7:5; 15:25

Gen 37:5-8 Foretold of future exalted position Mt 24:30-31

Gen 37:14 Lived with father before sent Jn 17:5

Gen 37:13 Willingly went at father's request Jn 8:42

Gen 37:19 Ridiculed Lk 22:63

Gen 37:20 Plotted against by brethren Mt 26:4,15

Ax 7:9 Men jealous of him Mk 15:10

Gen 37:23 Stripped of his robe Jn 19:23-24

Gen 37:28 Sold for pieces of silver Mt 26:14-16

Gen 39:6-20 Tempted without sin Mt 4:1-11

Gen 39:14 Falsely Accused Mt 26:59-61

Gen 39:20 Suffered for another's sin 1 Pe 1:21-24

Gen 40:1-3 Sentenced with 2 criminals Lk 23:32-33

Gen 41:38 Inspired by the Holy Spirit Lk 4:18

Gen 41:46 Began ministry at 30 years old Lk 3:23

Gen 41:42-44 Given all power and authority Mt 28:18

Gen 50:20 Evil turned into blessing 1 Pe 2:24  
Gen 47:25 Became saviour of the people 1 Jn 4:14  
Gen 41:55-57 All must go to him for bread Jn 6:35  
Gen 42:8 Unrecognized by his own Jn 1:11  
Gen 50:21 comforted those who let him down Jn 20:19  
Gen 37:31-33 False story of his death told Mt 28:13-15

## THE MOMENT OF CHRIST'S DEATH...

The moment of the death of Christ accomplished much. It brought about the abolishment of the Law of Moses, simultaneously establishing the Law of Christ: Col 2:14; Heb 9:16. It established peace between Jew and Gentile, Eph 2:15 and in a most strange way even brought peace between two former political foes: Pilate and Herod, Lk 23:12. It even moved two formerly secret disciples of Jesus, Joseph and Nicodemus, to openly declare their faith in Jesus. Jn 19:38-39.

But the most dramatic images of the moment Christ died are captured at the climatic statement of the centurion who witnessed the death and proclaimed, "Surely this was the Son of God". Yes, he witnessed quite a show indeed! The sky had already been darkened for the three hours PRIOR to Christ's death, Mt 27:45-46. The earth quaked, there were dead raised, the veil ripped in two (symbolizing the abolishment of the law of Moses) Mt 27:51. It appears to me that at the moment of Christ's death the "lights came on", ending the 3 hours of darkness, almost as if the "play" was over. The Centurion stood stunned by all this and made the soul saving proclamation!

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