

Thirty Days with Jesus Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Intro: It might be possible to divide John's gospel into two major sections. The first twelve chapters report to us the presentation of the Christ; the last eight chapters report the passion of the Christ. Most of our lessons have centered on the presentation of the Christ. We have looked at His claims, the proofs He offered to support those claims and the response of people to His proofs. We have been able to see that Jesus was a controversial figure. Some believed; but most did not. The disbelief of the religious leaders and the multitudes would have tremendous consequences for Jesus. Their unbelief would lead to His passion which John reports in the second section.

Perhaps those unfamiliar with the gospel might wonder, "Did God know that this would happen? Did Jesus know? If so, why would God send His Son to earth knowing that He would be rejected by most people? Why would Jesus knowingly submit to such horrible treatment?"

Was Jesus' rejection a part of God's plan?

John states that the prophet Isaiah had anticipated this reaction to the Christ.

But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (John 12:37-38)

Isaiah's portrait of the Christ as a "suffering servant" included his rejection by the Jewish people as the grounds of his suffering.

The "report" is the prophet's message of the Christ; the Jews had not believed it.

"The revealing of God's arm" suggests God reaching forth or lifting up His arm to save His people; yet in this case, it does not happen!

Because of the certainty of God's prediction, John further states that the Jewish rejection had to occur.

For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them." (John 12:39-40)

John is not saying that the Jews were not responsible for their deeds because they were living out God's sovereign decrees and they had no choice in the matter. Instead He is showing that the Jews' actions were in harmony with the principles of divine government that both hardens the heart of the unspiritual while softening the heart of the spiritual. What is clear is that Jesus' rejection was no surprise to God!

Did Jesus know He would be rejected?

One of the amazing things about the story of Jesus' life is the certainty with which he often spoke about His death. Throughout the gospel we hear words from Jesus in which He clearly expects to be murdered by His enemies!

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18)

Jesus therefore said, "Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me." (John 12:7-8)

In all these texts we can see Jesus' understanding that He would have to die.

Jesus faced his death as if it were an appointment on a calendar.

Jesus would begin his ministry at the time the Father had appointed.

*And Jesus *said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4)*

No man could change the divine time-table. Jesus could live with the assurance that His work would be completed.

They were seeking therefore to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. (John 7:30)

John observed that the last Passover marked the end of the time God had determined for Jesus' ministry.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1)

Jesus himself hours before His death acknowledged that time was complete!

These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, (John 17:1)

What would it have been like to know that it would all end this way? Was there a day when Jesus did not think about this?

What would be accomplished by His death?

John's testimony indicates that Jesus' death was to be a sin-offering

*The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)*

*Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35-36)*

The high priest's testimony indicates that it was to be a vicarious death for the whole nation

But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish. Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he

prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (John 11:49-52)

Jesus' testimony indicates that it was to be a source of healing and eternal life to sinners.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." (John 6:51)

Consequently, Jesus alone would be the way to the Father.

*And He *said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51)*

Conclusion: Jesus' rejection was a part of God's plan. It was essential to God's plan. Was it possible that God could have forgiven men without the death of Jesus? Could He have simply been disposed to dismiss man's sin without penalty? The answer is no! God could not be true to who He was and leave sin unpunished. The only solution for man's sin was and is Jesus' death.

Every time we ask for God's forgiveness we should realize this. We are not forgiven merely because God is a kind and easy-going god who doesn't take our mistakes seriously. We are forgiven because Jesus made forgiveness possible through His death.