

CHRISTMAS - REFLECTIONS ON THE CRUCIFIXION

INTRODUCTION

- A. The movie by Mel Gibson, *The Passion of the Christ*, raised one question in particular: Who crucified Jesus?
 - 1. There was concern that the graphic movie would renew anti-Semitism.
 - 2. The movie portrayed the role of Jews in Christ's death.
 - 3. Blame shifting is always a way to avoid personal responsibility.
- B. I believe the question who killed Jesus is best answered as we examine the question: Why was Jesus crucified?
 - 1. Why did such a good man who did such good deeds have to suffer so terribly?
 - 2. Rightly, Mel Gibson spent the majority of his movie on our Lord's death.
 - 3. When we have a biblical understanding of the "why" we will undoubtedly know "who" was responsible.
 - 4. Let's spend a few minutes in the accounts of Jesus on the cross.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CRUCIFIXION MATTHEW 27:45-50; LUKE 23:33-34, 44-48; JOHN 19:28-30

- A. A cry to God - *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46)
 - 1. This was a cry at the level of Jesus' full humanity. *It was a cry of distress but not of distrust.* Arthur Pink
 - 2. At that moment, He was separated for the only time, past, present, or future, from God, *This was a break in fellowship, not a break of the fundamental unity of the Father and Son.* Erwin Lutzer
- B. A request to His Father - *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)
 - 1. The close relationship of Jesus to God is normally seen as Jesus addressed God as "Father," but in Matthew 27:46, Jesus was addressing God as a man under judgment, not the Son of God crying out to His Father.
 - 2. Jesus' request is timeless. Those in need of forgiveness is a much larger group than those in Jerusalem.
 - 3. Jesus' request was granted not solely because of Who He is but also because of what He did.
- C. Proclamations of triumph
 - 1. *It is finished.* John 19:30
 - a. Charles Spurgeon, *This one word (tetelestai)* "would need all the other words that were ever spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain it...It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it.
 - b. Chrysostom, *When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, he yielded up his spirit. This refers to what he had earlier said: 'I have the power to lay down my life, and I have the power to take it again,' and 'I lay it down of myself.'* So for this cause he cried with the voice, that it might be shown that the act is done by his own power.
 - c. At that moment, payment was made in full by God the Creator for His creation who place their trust in Him alone. Colossians 1:15-20, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*
 - 2. *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!* (Luke 23:46)
 - a. John Stott, *The Father did not lay on the Son an ordeal He was reluctant to bear, nor did the Son extract from the Father a salvation he was reluctant to bestow.*
 - b. Erwin Lutzer, *...the better we grasp what the cross meant to Christ, the better we will understand what the cross should mean to us.*
 - 3. The sky turned black, the Temple veil torn in two from top to bottom, tombs opened with dead alive again.

D. Questions answered

1. Why was Jesus crucified - to make payment for sin
 - a. He was forsaken by God for others, specifically, for you and for me. A Scottish theologian declared, *This is the heart of the atonement: Jesus Christ stood in the stead of others.*
 - b. Apollinaris, *He bears shame that was due to us.*
 - c. *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* (185), Isaac Watts, *When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.*
2. Who crucified Jesus - it lies in the heart of every man, woman, and child.
 - a. Herbert Butterfield, *Our attitude to the Crucifixion must be that of self-identification with the rest of human nature - we must say, "We did it."*
 - b. Charles Wesley, *And can it be that I should gain, An interest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

CONCLUSION

- A. *Death is destroyed. The cross has triumphed over it. It no longer has any power but is truly dead...Before the Savior came, death was terrible to the saints. Everyone wept for the dead as though they perished. But now that the Savior has risen, death isn't terrible anymore. For everyone who believes in Christ tramples over death...For they know that when they die they aren't destroyed, but actually begin to live. Through the resurrection they become incorruptible.*
Athanasius
- B. As he was dying D. L. Moody, said, *Earth recedes; Heaven opens for me...If this is death, it is sweet.*
- C. Fanny Crosby, *Jesus, keep me near the cross, There a precious fountain, Free to all, a healing stream, Flows from Calvary's mountain. In the cross, in the cross, Be my glory every, Till my raptured soul shall find, Rest, beyond the river.*
- D. My response must be a loving declaration to the world that God loves them desperately. Just look to the cross!