



**HOW  
AND  
WHY  
JESUS  
DIED**

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'How and Why Jesus Died'  
by  
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# HOW AND WHY JESUS DIED

Jesus died on a cross which was a Roman form of capital punishment called crucifixion. I have typed the Cross of Jesus with a capital C to emphasize its unique significance.

## *Crucifixion*

Crucifixion was the worst way of killing a person that the Romans could think of. A cross was formed out of two long pieces of wood, one laid across the other near the top to form the cross shape. The person's arms were stretched out along the horizontal sections and either tied to the cross or secured by driving a nail through the palm of each hand and into the wood. The feet were also either tied or nailed to the upright section of the cross. The cross was then lifted upright and slotted into a prepared hole in the ground. It was tall enough so no-one could reach up and set the person free. Jesus was nailed to the Cross.

Death by crucifixion took a long time, from hours to days, and was agonizing. Scholars have found that the actual resulting cause of death could be one or more of heart failure, hypovolemic shock, acidosis, asphyxia, arrhythmia, pulmonary embolism, or infection from the nail holes.

Sometimes, if death was taking too long, the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the person being crucified. This caused the whole weight of the body to hang from the arms. Breathing would quickly become impossible and the person would die. Jesus was crucified on a Friday and the Jews wanted His body and those of the two criminals crucified with Him, to be taken down before sunset when the Sabbath would begin. The soldiers

agreed to break their legs to hasten death, but when they came to Jesus they found he was already dead and did not need to. Jesus didn't wait for crucifixion to kill Him. He chose His own moment to die when He had finished everything that God had sent Him to do on the Cross. John 19:30 says that – *'he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.'*

## *The Bible Accounts*

There is an account of Jesus's crucifixion in each of the four gospels in the Bible. You'll find it in Matthew 27:20-66, Mark 15:11-47, Luke 23:18-56 and John 19:13-42. To get every detail it's good to read them all. You can also read my booklet 'The Crucifixion' which is an integrated biblical account.

## *The People's Reason for Killing Jesus*

The people who killed Jesus wanted Him out of the way. The Jewish religious leaders saw Him as someone who was threatening their whole way of life, which was based on the religious laws, and they were worried about Him gathering new converts around Him in increasing numbers. The Romans who controlled the region at the time saw Him as a troublemaker.

For quite a while before His death, the Jewish leaders had been trying to catch Jesus out so they could take Him before their court and put Him on trial. Their main trick was to try and get Him to say or do something which was against their religious laws, but Jesus was always able to put them at a disadvantage instead. But eventually, with the help of one of Jesus's own disciples, Judas Iscariot, they arrested Him and put Him on trial. He was passed back and forth between the Jewish leaders, King Herod and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate could not

see how He had broken any law of the land, so he offered the crowd the choice of releasing Jesus or a murderer called Barabbas. This was the custom at the time of the Jews' Passover Feast. The crowd, at the religious leaders' instigation, shouted for Barabbas and when Pilate then asked them what he should do with Jesus they shouted "Crucify Him!" Reluctantly Pilate agreed, but he ceremoniously washed his hands saying he was not accepting the blame for Jesus's death.

Pilate had handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers who mocked Him. They dressed Him in a kingly robe and put a crown of thorns on His head and pretending to worship Him as King. Then they spat on Him and flogged Him. Putting His own clothes back on Him, they led Him out to crucify Him, along with two criminals.

### *God's Reason for the Crucifixion*

The Jews and the Romans thought they were at last getting their own way, but Jesus's crucifixion had been planned by God, and Jesus was in control of it! He knew when it was God's perfect timing for it and He went of His own accord to Jerusalem and into the hands of His enemies. 1 John 3:8 gives God's reason for it happening – *'To this end the Son of God was revealed: that he might destroy the works of the devil.'*

No-one can live a perfect life. Everyone does, says and thinks wrong things. You may feel you live a good life, but in your heart you know you still get some things wrong. You may be very aware that your life is far from good. Wrong actions, words and thoughts are called sin in the Bible. It was the devil who first introduced sin into the world. God could never let sin go unpunished. He absolutely and totally hates it. So, long before Jesus's birth, God gave His law to His people along with a system

of sacrifices through which they could receive His forgiveness for their sins. It's explained in detail in the Old Testament. Under this law everything depended on how people performed or measured up. If they obeyed the law perfectly then they were blessed, but if they disobeyed it in any way they were cursed. God wanted them to understand that they needed to avoid sin, but also that they could never be perfect. He wanted them to realise that they couldn't be perfect by their own effort and needed a saviour.

God loves you so much. He longs for you to know Him personally in a close Father and child relationship. He does not want to punish people. So He sent His Son Jesus, who never sinned once, to take the punishment for all people, for all sins and for all time. Hebrews 7:27 says Jesus - *'did this once for all, when he offered up himself.'* Jesus took all your sin, all your guilt and all your shame on Himself and He did it 'once for all'. He did it for all people - everyone who's ever lived and ever will live. He did it for all time - it stands in history at a specific time and will never need to be repeated. And He did it for all sins - past, present and future. Jesus was the final sacrifice. Jesus died instead of you! Jesus paid the price and suffered the punishment. And because of this, God's not angry with people anymore. You can now be at peace with God, free from the curse of the Old Testament law.

You are now free to come into that relationship with God which He longs for, not because you've earned it or deserve it, but because Jesus has done everything that is needed. When you become born-again, that is accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you receive the total forgiveness He has won for you. Sin can no longer control you. You are set free from it. It doesn't mean you will live a perfect life. And it doesn't mean that sin

doesn't matter. God still hates it, but He loves you and wants to help you live in a way that pleases Him which is the most fulfilling way to live. The devil would love you to keep on sinning so he can try to influence your life for the worse, but God has set you free to say "No" so your life can be lived for the best. When you do sin you can turn away from it, receive forgiveness and walk away free. Jesus said in John 10:10 – *'The thief (the devil) only comes to steal, kill, and destroy.'* But his work is defeated. He will still try and influence things negatively, but now he cannot continue when Christians command him to go in the name of Jesus.

John 3:16 gives another of God's reasons for it happening – *'For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'* Jesus destroyed the works of the devil and because sin can no longer keep a born-again Christian out of God's presence, you can be sure, when you are born-again, that you will not perish, but live eternally with God in perfect joy and peace and love.

Now everything depends not on your performance, but on God's grace - His unconditional and undeserved love for you. It's not about what you do, it's all about what Jesus did and it all becomes reality in your life when you're born-again – that's amazingly good news! This is why Christians call the day of Jesus's crucifixion, 'Good Friday'. (To read about being born-again go to the end of this booklet.)

## *Further Significance of the Cross*

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:2 – *'for the joy that was set before him (Jesus) endured the cross, despising its shame.'* That joy came from knowing that what He was doing would make

forgiveness, freedom, salvation, deliverance, prosperity and healing available to everyone who would accept Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Death itself was defeated when Jesus died on the Cross. 2 Timothy 1:10 says Jesus – *‘abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.’* This was perfectly demonstrated when Jesus came back to life three days later.

Through His suffering, sickness is defeated and healing is available for all who believe. 1 Peter 2:24 says - *‘You were healed by his wounds.’*

God also won true prosperity through Jesus. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says – *‘he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.’* This isn’t about having millions of pounds, an extravagant lifestyle, a huge house and many expensive possessions. It is about having enough to live without any struggle and without the fear and stress of financial problems, and also with enough over to be able to give into God’s Kingdom, and help and bless others. What a blessing to know that God can and wants to look after all your needs.

## ***Victory!***

The Cross was the place where victory was won over the devil and all his works of death, sin, sickness, poverty and bondage. Jesus’s last words which He cried out just before He died were “It is finished.” He had done the work God sent Him to do and He had done it perfectly and completely. Things would never be the same again. From that point in time everyone has the free opportunity to start to walk in the victory Jesus won for them on the Cross and that includes you!



Some amazing things happened as Jesus finally died. Matthew 27:51 says - *'the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.'* This is hugely significant. The veil in the temple of the Jews separated the area called the 'Holy of Holies' from the rest of the temple. Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond the curtain into God's holy presence and only once a year.

As Jesus died the curtain was miraculously ripped from top to bottom demonstrating beyond doubt that now anyone who trusted in Jesus could come straight into God's presence just as they are and wherever they are. You no longer need to go through a priest to gain access to God. The way is open and available to you directly. Just you and God – wow!

Matthew 27:52 says – *'The earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.'* And Matthew 27:54 says – *'Now the (Roman) centurion, and those who were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God."'* (To find out what happened next - read the booklet 'Happy Easter!')

## *The Power of the Cross*

The Cross stands at the centre of everything. It is the most powerful thing that has ever happened in history and its power is as real today. That power comes into your life when you become born-again. You can start to walk in an intimate loving relationship with your Father God, experiencing forgiveness, freedom, victory, healing and eternal life, lacking nothing and filled with Jesus's Holy Spirit.

## *For You*

Everything Jesus won on the Cross is for you. Whatever your life has been like or is like, Jesus died for you. Accept Him and start to see things change for the better as you set out on your new exciting life, knowing that God loves you so much that He sent His Son to die in your place so you could live forever with Him.

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### *Being Born-Again*

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for yourself personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again and have a new perfect spirit. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal love relationship with Him. Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you do, say and think. Choose to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for you and is now alive. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Say it with your voice and believe it in your heart. If you’ve done that sincerely, you are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins, past, present and future, are forgiven, and after this life is over, you’ll live in peace and joy with God for ever. As a child of God, you have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God’s love and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

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Jesus's death on a cross is a historical fact,  
but do you know why it happened?  
The crucifixion is the most significant event  
in the whole of history.

This booklet will help you understand  
what happened and why,  
and you can discover that it has  
the most wonderful the implications for you.



**Katherine Hilditch** has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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