

MADE TO BE SIN FOR US

On the day following Passover, Jesus, carrying His own cross, was led by Roman soldiers up to the hill of Golgotha. When He could bear the weight of the cross no more, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross the rest of the way. When they arrived at Calvary, Jesus was crucified – hanged upon the cross, most likely, with nails through his wrists and feet. “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Mat. 27:46). It may be impossible for a mere human to fully comprehend the very moment that this was spoken by Christ. “This expression is one denoting intense suffering. It has been difficult to understand in what sense Jesus was ‘forsaken by God.’ It is certain that God APPROVED His work. It is certain that He was innocent. He had done nothing to forfeit the favor of God. As His own Son – holy, harmless, undefiled, and obedient – God still loved Him” (Barnes’ Notes). The statement may, however, encompass the fact that Christ was paying the price for the sins of mankind. “For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). The idea is that Christ became a “sin offering” for man. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin” (Isa. 53:10). He was not only the High Priest (Heb. 8:1) who would offer the sacrifice, He also gave Himself to be the sacrifice. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Isaiah prophesied this of the Suffering Servant, “surely He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all...He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of *my people* was He stricken” (Isa. 53:4-6, 8). Isaiah made it clear for whose iniquities the Suffering Servant would die. He was slain for “our iniquities.”

Jesus paid a price that He did not owe. He did not die for anything that He had done; He died for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). He died to fulfill His Father’s will (Mat. 26:39) and to open up the fountain needed to wash away sin (Zec. 13:1). When the apostle Paul made the appeal for man to “be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20), Paul’s profound argument for urging man to obey was the fact that the sinless Son of God left His home in Heaven to become a man and to suffer and die in our stead. The heart that is not moved to tears and subsequent obedience to God after knowing that “He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), is a hard heart indeed. The knowledge of God’s plan to save is found in God’s Word and produces faith (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17). Such knowledge should compel men to repent of their past sins (Luke 13:3), confess that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and be baptized to have their past sins forgiven (Acts 2:38). It is at baptism that man can contact the fountain opened by Christ which washes away sin (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). Will you be reconciled to God?

- Brad Green