

Jesus died to God before he died for us. In the simplest of terms, Gethsemane is the beginning of Golgotha. The resurrection of Christ is the natural conclusion to his atoning sacrifice. The struggle of Christ in Gethsemane is the preface to the submission of Jesus to the horrors of the cross. The cross itself is an event which extends beyond the moments of judgment and execution of Good Friday. The preaching of the cross includes all the ramifications of the meaning of the Messiah experience. In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. (2 Corinthians 5:19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.) He was also laying out the perfect life and the mind of the mature believer. We Christians profess that the cross did not "happen" to Jesus. He embraced it as his mission and called it his glorification. The cross of Jesus Christ is not only the source of our salvation, but it is also the revelation of the goal of that salvation and holiness. The cross is not only Christ's – it is also ours.

The early believers were confronted with the paradox of the cross. Jesus of Nazareth died horribly and [apparently] powerlessly.¹ Yet out of this traumatic forsaken death, the church came to embrace the preaching of the cross as not only the work of God but as the power of God. Out of the surrender of their Lord in utter weakness was birthed the power of God for the Christian life. *He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God; and we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God* (Paul). Beginning with apostles, the earliest Christian proclamation readily admitted that this was foolishness to the rulers of this age. Had this been clearly understood by human reasoning, they would not have crucified the Lord.² Yet this very foolishness had become the gospel.

Romans 6:1-12

"On a spring morning in about the year 33 C.E., three men were executed by the Roman authorities in Judea."³ At the request of the Hebrew temple hierarchy, the governor Pontius Pilate hanged the three publicly outside the western gate of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Two of the three, of whom the world has little memory, were terrorists. The third we profess to be the divine agent of the only true God – the Lord of the Hebrew covenant. It is what we profess that magnifies this execution. This event and its climactic finality at sunrise on the first day of the next week shook all human history as its accompanying earthquake (at the time of the death of Jesus) and its Sunday morning aftershock (at the moment of resurrection) shook ancient Jerusalem.⁴

Therefore, any teaching, which purports to be Christian theology, must be an explanation and proclamation of the great God-event. If God is to be known he must be understood in the dying and rising of Jesus. The core of all we call Christian thought must be brought both to ponder that historic moment and to harmonize with that moment - not simply as a historical event but for the content and meaning of the Divine revelation. So, what is it that is real – must be of God – who declares the Messiah a "Lamb" from baptism to glory.

I Corinthians 2:1-8

¹ 2 Cor. 13:4

² 1 Cor. 2:8

³ P. 1, E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Picture of Jesus*, The Penguin Press, 1993

⁴ Matthew 27:54; 28:2 [All references are taken from the Revised Standard Version Bible, 2nd edition 1971]