

At the present time the Thursday evening Bible study class is using as its guide the book, "Change Us Not God" by Dr. John Launchbury. This book is serving as an extremely helpful guide in answering the question, "Why did Jesus Die?"

The author sees the book not as a study in systematic or comparative Theology but rather as a series of meditations on the subject of the atonement. It is serving its purpose well as we look at the answers the Bible gives to the questions concerning the death of Jesus in comparison with the responses of much of popular religious teaching.

The thrust of the book is to demonstrate from the scriptures that the death of Jesus did not involve a transaction that changed God's

thinking regarding the possible eternal salvation of mankind, but rather it looks at the ways by which the death of Christ needs to affect our thinking to bring about the necessary repentance and change in us to make us acceptable before our heavenly Father. It is not God that needs changing it is us. Hence the Title "Change Us Not God."

The two main articles in this Quarterly Newsletter deal with two aspects of this important subject. In the first article, *Facing the Cross- "They shall look on him whom they have pierced"*, we see the extent of our own involvement in the death of Christ and how the example of his love for his Father and a will to obey his Father's commands, even to the cross, become an example to us.

In the second article, *Jesus promised: You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy*, we see the life giving power of the resurrection of Jesus as that power which mightily works in each of us to bring about that change and transformation so that we might become "kings and priests" to our God in the wonderful age to come when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

There is still time to join us for this exciting and life-changing weekly study of the question Why did Jesus die? Please join us at Thursday evenings at 7:00 at the Hampton Inn and Suites across Jefferson from the Patrick Henry Mall. A copy of the book Change Us Not God will be provided.

Portrait of the Messiah

Facing The Cross "They shall look on him whom they have pierced"

What we're talking about is awful, that is horrendous, terrible, something we don't want to talk about, think about, or look at. And yet that is what God wants us to do. He wants us to face it straight on.

In our class on Thursday evenings we have been considering the subject of Jesus' death through the meditative book called "Change Us—Not God". As the author, John Launchbury, points out, the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross was not to complete some great transaction

that somehow paid for our sins. If our sins were paid for through the death of Jesus, then why do we still need God's forgiveness and mercy? Why is it important that we follow Jesus and become changed people? Why is it necessary for us to be good Christians if the death of Jesus paid for all our sins and all the sins of the world?

We do recognize as followers of Jesus that we need to be changed people. Wasn't that the whole concept of Jesus' ministry for those three and a half years? Did

Jesus not teach such things as?

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

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(Matthew 7:21)

In fact the whole point of the new covenant is that people are changed from the inside out:

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

(Hebrews 8:10-12)

If then the crucifixion of Jesus is not a transaction—a payment for sins, what is it? What is the purpose? Why did Jesus die such an awful death?

Jesus died at the hands of criminals and murderers. Not the backstreet, mobster style of criminal but murderers nonetheless. Stephen tells us this in Acts 7:51-53

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— you who have received

the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

But there's more to this than just a few evil "religious" leaders murdering the most righteous person who has ever lived. In this whole event, only Jesus loved, obeyed, and submitted to God. Everyone else had a hand in his death. The Jewish leaders were intent on getting rid of him. The people, who had just the week previously waved palm branches and cried "Hosanna to the Son of David" now repeated over and over again "crucify him". Pilate, the Roman who had the authority to condemn him to crucifixion, even though warned that he shouldn't, turned him over to be murdered. Judas, a disciple who walked with Jesus for three years, betrayed him for money. Peter, a disciple who had seen his glory on the transfiguration mount, denied him rather than take the chance of being crucified with him. All the other disciples fled, one even leaving his clothes behind, rather than be identified with him.

All of these actions conspired together. Everyone had some responsibility in the death of Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost Peter did not just point the finger at the Jewish leaders. He was speaking to everyone there and to us also when he said:

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (Acts 2:23-24)

This criminal behavior of murder-

ing the innocent because of fear, jealousy, and hatred is nothing new. Genesis chapter four tells how Cain killed his brother Abel because Abel's sacrifice had been accepted by God but Cain's had not. Joseph's brothers almost killed him and then sold him into slavery because their father loved him more. In our Bible readings in June in 1 Samuel we read about King Saul, who through jealousy and fear became intent on killing David even though David was innocent of any traitorous thought. The prophets of old were persecuted and killed by the people, even though they were innocent of any evil. And we are no better than they.

They were all led by the same principle of sin that rests in the heart of all mankind. The prophet Jeremiah tells us "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9)

When we look at the cross we see the awfulness of sin and rebellion. In other words, Jesus was killed by the sins of people just like us, not people with murderous intent but people who let the temptations of the flesh like fear, envy, jealousy, and hatred lead them to sin. Before we can repent, before we can serve God, before we can be changed, we must see, on the cross, the awfulness and the consequence of our sin, our constant rebellion against the will of our heavenly Father.

It is said that half the battle in overcoming something is recognizing the problem. That's what God wants us to do. Look at the cross. Do you see the awfulness? Do you get it? Many of those that

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heard the words of Peter on the Day of Pentecost saw what they had done, they got it, and they were cut to the heart:

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you

crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36-37)

Looking at Jesus on the cross and truly seeing him brings us to the

point of real repentance--a true sorrow of heart for what we have done and the desire to change:

"Then I will pour out the spirit of grace and prayer on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on him they pierced, and mourn for him as for an only son" (Zechariah 12:10-11 TLB)

Bible Principles

Jesus promised: You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

Can you imagine the heartache of Jesus' mother Mary as she stood beneath that cross? What about Peter and James and John? How about the other disciples? They didn't understand then what we know now and what they later learned. Out of this terrible, terrible treachery our awesome God brought forth salvation. He raised Jesus to life again. Through his Son he showed us that the life of obedience and submission that Jesus lived defeated sin and death. The grave could not hold him. God raised him to life, that is everlasting life, and made him Lord and Christ. Peter tells us this:

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him...God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy

Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:23-24,32-33, 36)

Peter repeats several times in this second chapter of Acts the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. We may think that our salvation was completed in the death of Jesus but this is not the case. In fact there are several verses in the Bible that state very clearly that without the resurrection there is no salvation:

He was delivered over to death for our sins and **was raised to life for our justification.** (Romans 4:25)

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:17)

...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. **It saves you by the**

resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21-22)

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will live.** (John 14:19)

Notice Jesus tells us that because he lives, we live. It is not because he died that we live but because he lives.

Literally out of dust and ashes God has brought forth beauty. From the hideousness of sin God has brought life. Through Jesus' complete submission and obedience to the Father, the grave could not hold him. Following the example of Jesus we now know the way to life:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his res-

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urrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:4-11)

I want to **know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,** and so, somehow, **to attain to the resurrection from the dead.** (Philippians 3:10-11)

Facing the cross brings us to repentance. We mourn for what we have done. We also want to

change.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation... (2 Corinthians 7:1)

...that they should turn from their sins to God and then do deeds consistent with that repentance. (Acts 26:20 CJB)

It is Jesus, the living Jesus, who helps us to change. He is there to help us in times of temptation. He is there to lead and guide us in the way of salvation. The death of Jesus is the beginning of our salvation--it brings us to repentance. Our living Lord is with us now to transform us into true sons of God. He is our High Priest:

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:16-18)

But we Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be

mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him. (2 Corinthians 3:18 TLB)

In the prophecy of Revelation a new song is sung in praise of the Lamb of God:

And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV)

We see Jesus who on the cross overcame sin through his perfect obedience and, surely, he is worthy of much praise for this. But that is only the beginning of the picture. The living Jesus, resurrected, has been made our Lord. It is through him that we are now being changed, being transformed so that we will become "kings and priests" to our God and reign on the earth.

You believe in God but what do you know about him? Jesus tells us that it is "life eternal" to know the only true God. Do we really know him? Do we know why he made us? Is he real to us? Do we know his purpose in his creation? Have we considered his holiness, his greatness, his love, and yes, even his wrath?

We would like to send you a very helpful booklet that considers all these questions entitled:

"Getting to Know God"

To receive a free copy of "Getting to Know God" send your name and address to:

DailyBibleReader, P.O. Box 16070, Newport News, VA 23608 or e-mail
info@dailybiblereader.com.

The Bible readings for the third quarter according to the Daily Bible Reader schedule include the writings of the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, several Psalms, the Gospel of John, and several of the letters of Paul the Apostle. We all have verses that are our favorites and these books include many of mine. We live in a sick and dying world that many times seems futile and painful. Human history is a history of wars and destruction. Yet God wants us to live. Through the Bible he has revealed himself and given us hope of joy, a new earth, and everlasting life. These verses reflect these thoughts and hopes that God has shared with us. You will need to open your Bible and look up the verses in order to find their full beauty. So look up and read the cited verses. In fact, read the verses before and after. Underline or memorize them if they touch you. Set them to melodies and watch your heart and spirit lift:

Psalm 84:1-2 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!

Psalm 103:8-13 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love...

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.

Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send?"

Isaiah 11:9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,

Isaiah 12:2-3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 25:6-8 he will swallow up death forever.

Isaiah 30:15 in quietness and trust is your strength,

Isaiah 32:17 the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Isaiah 35:10 everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Isaiah 40:5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,

Isaiah 40:28-31 Do you not know? Have you not heard?

Isaiah 45:18 he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited —

Isaiah 46:5-10 "To whom will you compare me or count me equal?"

Isaiah 50:4 He wakens me morning by morning,

Isaiah 55:8-13 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts..."

Isaiah 58:6-9 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice

Isaiah 65:17-19 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth.

Amos 3:6-8 Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan

Amos 4:13 He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man,

Micah 6:6-8 With what shall I come before the LORD

John 14:15-21 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 15:9-14 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 17:1-5 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you,

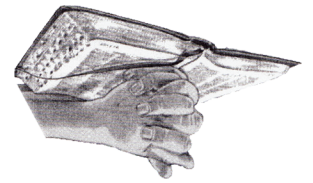
John 17:20-23 "My prayer is not for them alone.

Ephesians 1:15-23 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 3:14-21... may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Philippians 3:7-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,

Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!



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Your DailyBibleReader Quarterly Newsletter

Daily Bible Readings for July, August and September

Read the Entire Bible in One Year

JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa	DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa	DAY	Old Test	NewTest/Psa
1	II Sam 15, 16	II Corinth 13	1	Isaiah 49, 50	John 1	1	II King 14, 15	Psalm 97
2	II Sam 17, 18	Psalm 74	2	Isaiah 51, 52	John 2	2	II King 16, 17	I Thess 1
3	II Sam 19, 20	Galatians 1	3	Isaiah 53, 54	John 3	3	II King 18, 19	i Thess 2
4	II Sam 21, 22	Galatians 2	4	Isaiah 55, 56	John 4	4	II King 20, 21	I Thess 3
5	II Sam 23, 24	Galatians 3	5	Isaiah 57, 58	Psalm 85	5	II King 22, 23	I Thess 4
6	Song Sol 1-3	Galatians 4	6	Isaiah 59, 60	Psalm 86	6	II King 24, 25	I Thess 5
7	Song Sal 4-6	Galatians 5	7	Isaiah 61, 62	John 5	7	Jonah 1-4	Psalm 98
8	Song Sol 7, 8	Galatians 6	8	Isaiah 63, 64	John 6	8	Micah 1-3	Psalm 99
9	Isaiah 1, 2	Psalm 75	9	Isaiah 65, 66	John 7	9	Micah 4, 5	Psalm 100, 101
10	Isaiah 3, 4	Psalm 76	10	I King 1, 2	Psalm 87, 88	10	Micah 6, 7	II Thess 1
11	Isaiah 5, 6	Ephesians 1	11	I King 3, 4	John 8	11	Nahum 1-3	II Thess 2
12	Isaiah 7, 8	Ephesians 2	12	I King 5, 6	John 9	12	I Chron 1, 2	II Thess 3
13	Isaiah 9, 10	Ephesians 3	13	I King 7, 8	Psalm 89	13	I Chron 3, 4	Psalm 102
14	Isaiah 11, 12	Ephesians 4	14	I King 9, 10	John 10	14	I Chron 5, 6	Psalm 103
15	Isaiah 13, 14	Ephesians 5	15	I King 11, 12	John 11	15	I Chron 7, 8	Psalm 104
16	Isaiah 15-17	Ephesians 6	16	I King 13, 14	John 12	16	I Chron 9, 10	I Timothy 1
17	Isaiah 18-20	Psalm 77	17	I King 15, 16	Psalm 90	17	I Chron 11, 12	I Timothy 2
18	Isaiah 21, 22	Psalm 78	18	I King 17, 18	John 13	18	I Chron 13, 14	I Timothy 3
19	Isaiah 23, 24	Psalm 79	19	I King 19, 20	John 14	19	i Chron 15, 16	I Timothy 4
20	Isaiah 25, 26	Philippians 1	20	I King 21, 22	Psalm 91	20	I Chron 17, 18	I Timothy 5
21	Isaiah 27, 28	Philippians 2	21	Joel 1, 2, 3	John 15	21	I Chron 19, 20	I Timothy 6
22	Isaiah 29, 30	Philippians 3	22	Amos 1-3	John 16	22	I Chron 21, 22	Psalm 105
23	Isaiah 31, 32	Philippians 4	23	Amos 4-6	John 17	23	I Chron 23, 24	Psalm 106
24	Isaiah 33, 34	Psalm 80	24	Amos 7-9	Psalm 92	24	I Chron 25, 26	Psalm 107
25	Isaiah 35, 36	Colossians 1	25	Obad, II King 1	John 18	25	I Chron 27, 28	II Timothy 1
26	Isaiah 37, 38	Colossians 2	26	I King 2, 3	John 19	26	I Chron 29 Hos I	II Timothy 2
27	Isaiah 39, 40	Colossians 3	27	II King 4, 5	Psalm 93, 94	27	Hosea 2-4	II Timothy 3
28	Isaiah 41, 42	Colossians 4	28	II King 6, 7	John 20	28	Hosea 5, 6	II Timothy 4
29	Isaiah 43, 44	Psalm 81	29	II King 8, 9	John 21	29	Hosea 7, 8	Psalm 108
30	Isaiah 45, 46	Psalm 82, 83	30	II King 10, 11	Psalm 95	30	Hosea 9, 10	Psalm 109
31	Isaiah 47, 48	Psalm 84	31	II King 12, 13	Psalm 96	31		

See page 5 for some thoughts on the daily readings.
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