

Through belief and baptism, we receive forgiveness of sins and hope of being raised from the dead to live for ever with the resurrected Christ. 'So many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death... if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection'. **(Rom. 6:3-5)** 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body'. **(Phil. 3:21)**

Those related to Christ and to this hope can truly say 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'. **(1 Cor. 15:57)**

The Christadelphians

Please be assured that anything connected with the Christadelphians is entirely free, and based wholly upon Christ's precept, "freely ye received, freely give". Christadelphians, or as the name implies, brethren in Christ, are a body of people (established initially in the mid-nineteenth century) bound together by a wholehearted belief in the Bible. We do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Bible itself is able to make one "wise unto salvation" **(2 Tim. 3:15-17)**. Believing in the Divine Authorship of the Bible, we do not accept any interpretation which does not harmonise with its teaching as a whole. Finding that the creeds and practices of those who claim to be Christian are in many ways opposed to this teaching, we feel compelled to stand apart from them. We believe in the personal, visible return of Christ to the earth, to establish his throne and reign thereon, and we seek to share this knowledge with others. However we guarantee that we will not pressurise you in any way, if at any time you wish to discontinue contact.

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Why Did Christ Die?

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Why Did Christ Die?

'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and ... he was buried, and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures'. **(1 Cor.15:3,4)** In these words the apostle Paul sets out some of the fundamental truths of Christianity and defines quite simply why Christ died: he died for our sins. Most religious people will accept this statement without question, but if we further enquire why was it necessary for him to die, then we are faced) with a variety of answers. Some have thought that he died instead of the sinner; like an innocent man going to the gallows and letting the offender go free. This is obviously unjust and not in harmony with the righteousness and justice of God. Moreover if the penalty due by man has been paid, why do we still die?

Another view is that Christ's death was the supreme act of love, which wins men's hearts by its example. Whilst this is less repugnant to one's sense of justice, it is by no means the whole truth as set forth in the Bible.

In looking at the teaching, two points stand out:

(1) Christ died to take away our sins.

He 'gave himself for our sins'. **(Gal. 1:4)** 'Christ died for our sins'. **(1 Cor. 15:3)** 'Christ died for the ungodly'. **(Rom. 5:6)** 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. **(Rom. 5:8)**

(2) He died as a sacrifice.

'He ... offered one sacrifice for sins for ever'. **(Heb. 10:12)** 'Christ... hath given himself for us ... a sacrifice to God'. **(Eph.5:2)** 'He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' **(Heb.9:26)**

To understand why Christ had to die, we must appreciate the reason for man's mortality. Man dies as a result of sin: 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. **(Rom. 5:12)** 'The wages of sin is death'. **(Rom. 6:23)** 'Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death'. **(Jas. 1:15)**

All have sinned, and to escape from death we need forgiveness. Immediately after Adam and Eve had sinned by transgressing God's law, God showed that the way to forgiveness was through sacrifice. He made them coats of skins, which involved the slaying of animals. Later, sacrifice became a regular feature of man's approach to God. **(Gen. 4:4; Gen. 8:20; Gen. 22:13)**

This principle was incorporated into the laws given through Moses to Israel. In that law it became clear that the animal represented the one who had sinned - e.g. in certain sacrifices the offerer placed his hand on the head of the animal as it was slain. As the man offered the animal, he said in effect, 'I have sinned, I am worthy of death; I acknowledge this by offering this animal as my representative'. Thereby the man acknowledged that God was righteous in demanding his death.

The animal, however, was not a perfect representative; it was of a different nature and it had no choice in the matter.

The apostle Paul wrote, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins'. **(Heb.10:4)** Only a man could do this. Jesus Christ was that man: the perfect representative of the human race. 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'. **(1 Tim. 2:5)** By offering himself on

the cross voluntarily as a sacrifice, he publicly declared that God was righteous in condemning sinful man to death. Paul said he declared 'his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God'. **(Rom. 3:25)** Because Jesus offered himself in this way, God is pleased to offer forgiveness of sin to all who have faith in his work and are prepared to obey his commands. 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'. **(Acts 2:38)** 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved'. **(Mark 16:16)**

It may be asked, why could not the voluntary death of any other member of the human race achieve the same object? The righteousness of God is declared in the death of every sinner, but it stops short at the grave. The object in the case of Christ was to go beyond the grave — to overcome death by resurrection. But this could only be justified in the case of one who was without personal sin. Only such an one could rise from the dead to immortality. The perfect sacrifice had to be that of a man with an unblemished character. Only Jesus Christ has met this demand. He was able to do so because he was Son of God as well as Son of Man. 'He hath made him 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 resurrection of Christ was just as essential to human salvation as was his death; 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished ... But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.' **(1 Cor. 15:17-20) ►►**