

His holy fingers formed the bough;
whence came the thorns that crowned His brow.
He died upon a cross of wood;
yet made the hill on which it stood.
The sun which hid from Him its face;
By His decree was placed in space.
The nails which pierced his hands were mined;
In secret places He designed.

Jesus' crucifixion was a **murder**. It was the evil work of people like you and me. John one says He came "to **His own**" and "His own" did not receive Him. More than a month after He was killed, Peter preached to a crowd of Pilgrims from all over the world. They had nothing to do with Jesus' execution, but Peter said: "Let **all Israel** know— God has made this Jesus **you crucified**, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2).

We have in us, the same sins that killed Jesus (Hebrews 6). We are sometimes like the rulers who killed Him out of jealousy; the crowd that mocked Him while He was dying or like Pilate, who went against his conscience and sentenced Him to keep his job. This is why we cannot do enough good things for God to forgive us. If I murdered your child, no amount of sorrow or service for you could obligate you to forgive me. That kind of forgiveness cannot be earned. It is "**grace**" – a gift we, who murdered God's Son, do not deserve (John 1:14-16).

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

"Father, if there is another way, please take this cup away / My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me" (Matthew 26:39-42; 27:46).

We do not fully understand why Jesus had to die, for us to be forgiven. If Jesus asked "Why" and wondered if there could be another way, we know the answer is not simple. There have been three basic answers:

Punishment in Our Place

(Romans 3:24-27)

"We are justified (*declared not guilty*) through the redemption (*a price paid*) which is in Christ Jesus. God displayed Him publicly as a

propitiation (*atoning sacrifice*) in His blood accepted through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness (justice-NIV) because in His forbearance He had **passed over** sins previously committed." (*NIV - **let go unpunished**)

The normal term for punishment is never used to explain the death of Christ; but it seems to be the teaching here and in Isaiah 53. We have done bad things to others and to ourselves. Any judge who sets a guilty person free with no punishment, is immoral and unjust. It is not in God's holy nature to do this. When God allows us into heaven the moment we die, Satan could charge Him with wrongdoing or injustice. But the Judge is Jesus (John 5:22) and He can show Satan His hands and say, "They have been punished".

In describing this punishment we should not set God **against** Jesus and make Him a stern Creator and Jesus, an innocent victim. Revelation six speaks of end time punishment as the "**wrath** of the Lamb". Second Corinthians five says, "God was **in Christ**, reconciling the world back to Him" (2 Corinthians 5). God drew the knife across His own heart. Paul, talking about God, not Jesus, goes so far as to say, "**He (God) purchased the church with His own blood**" (Acts 20).

During the Civil War, a young man was to be hanged for leaving the front lines in a battle. His mother's pleas to Lincoln persuaded him to pardon and reinstate him. The young man, ashamed of what he had done, refused the pardon and was hanged. We have all done things we are ashamed of. The question is: have you accepted this gift by praying and giving Jesus your sins to forgive and your lives to change? God has done His part. This part is yours.

Part 2 Next Week

Meadowbrook Christian Sympathy to
John & Barbara Daniel & Crystal McCoy in the
death of RICKY DANIEL, their son & brother.
Meg Jennings and Family in the death of her
grandfather, SAM WICKER.