

# Questions About Christ's Death - Part 1

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | September 5, 2008



*I listened to one of your lessons for the first time yesterday, and I was puzzled by a couple of things you said. First, why do you seem to have a disagreement with the statement in the quarterly that says, "Christ died for our sins"?*

*This is actually a direct quote from scripture (emphasis supplied by emailer).*

*1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died for our sins** according to the scriptures.*

*The second point I disagree with you on is the statement that you made, "Christ did not die the second death. He died to destroy death." Yes, Jesus died to abolish or destroy death, but the death He died was the second death.*

*"Show to your hearers Jesus in his condescension to save fallen man. Show them that He who was their surety had to take human nature, and carry it through the darkness and the fearfulness of the malediction of his Father, because of man's transgression of his law; for the Saviour was found in fashion as a man. Describe, if human language can, the humiliation of the Son of God, and think not that you have reached the climax, when you see*

*him exchanging the throne of light and glory which he had with the Father, for humanity. He came forth from heaven to earth; and while on earth, **he bore the curse of God as surety for the fallen race**. He was not obliged to do this. **He chose to bear the wrath of God**, which man had incurred through disobedience to the divine law.” RH.1888-09-11.010*

*“Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God’s wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. Salvation has been purchased for them by the suffering and death of the Son of God. It might be theirs, if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit and choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they have their choice, and at the end receive their **wages, which is the wrath of God and eternal death**. They will be forever separated from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness and sacrificed eternal glory for the pleasures of sin for a season.” 2T.210.001*

*These quotes do not support what you are teaching, but thank you for making me dig!*

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Thanks for your thoughts and listening to our lessons. I think there may be some misunderstanding regarding your concerns so let me clarify, and I really appreciate you sharing your thoughts and willingness to open a channel for clarification.

Regarding 1 Cor 15:3, if we consider what Christ taught in Matthew 5 that sin is not the act but the condition of the heart that leads to bad acts (lust in the heart, hate in the heart) we realize that the acts of sin are conditions of a sinful heart and mind, a warped character. The purpose of Christ’s mission was not to die for “sins” but to cure our “sinfulness” and the word in the Corinthians text can be translated “sinful” or “sins” so I do no violence to the scripture in seeing that Christ died for our sinfulness, our sick condition in order to heal and restore. In fact, the weight of scripture would support this position when we realize the plan of salvation is about having a “new heart and right spirit”, having “the mind of Christ”, being “reborn”, being “recreated in the inner man”, having the law “written on the heart”, being “partakers of the divine nature, etc. In other words the plan of salvation is the plan of curing our sinfulness and restoring us in righteousness rather than dying for “acts.”

You cited several quotes and then concluded they do not support what I am teaching regarding Christ and the second death. Would you be willing to explore that conclusion? I believe each one of the quotes you cited support exactly what I am teaching. Let me explain where I think the breakdown in our understanding has occurred:

I want to be clear that I never said Jesus didn’t experience God’s “wrath” upon sin. I believe He did. I never said He wasn’t treated as we deserve etc. etc. I believe He was. I said He didn’t die the second death. What does the evidence say? Please notice that none of the quotations you cited actually says Jesus died the second death. In fact the one which uses the words “eternal death” doesn’t say Jesus died it but that the wicked will.

Please see my previous blog, [Did Christ die the “Second Death”?](#) for a full explanation and discussion of the second death.

Many people get stuck on believing that Jesus died the second death because they have bought a false idea of Jesus' purpose, namely penal substitution, that Jesus had to pay a legal penalty and that penalty is eternal death. Therefore it is insisted that we must believe Jesus died that death so our penalty is paid. But this is because the problem has been misdiagnosed as a legal problem rather than the reality that our very nature and condition was changed by sinfulness and needs fixing/curing. Jesus came to cure the condition of sinfulness and thus destroyed death (2Tim 1:9,10 Heb 2:14), not pay a legal penalty to His Father or the Law. And Jesus did just that, therefore after defeating death He was free to rise again.

The place where the death of Christ and the death of the wicked are similar and for which the quotes you cited are correct is God's action toward each. God acts the same toward each in that He gives each up to reap the consequences of their own choices (God's wrath, see Romans 1:18, 24,26,28). He gave Christ up (Romans 4:25) to reap what Christ freely chose - the path of the Cross, to be our substitute in defeating sinfulness and curing our condition. And God gives the wicked up to reap what they have chosen eternal separation from Him, dying in their unhealed state.