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# Why Did Christ Have to Suffer?

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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In one of the Apostle Paul's letters, he made a simple and yet disturbing statement, he said: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and some have even died". Now when you think about that for a moment and if you were in that congregation and realizing as you cast your eyes about that there were people who were sick and had been that way for a long time, in spite of the prayers of the Church, and people that you had hoped would get well, that you had prayed for, and shed tears over and that they had died. And then you get a letter from Paul where he said: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and some sleep or have even died".

Wouldn't you be interested in knowing what the cause was? Would you be concerned about seeing if there was something that you could do about the cause, if there was some change that we could make as a Church or as an individual or if there was anything that you could do about it, would you want to?

Let's read the whole segment beginning in 1 Corinthians 11:29: "For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {30} For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Before I give you the definition of "discern", what do you think it is? Most people would say "to discern is to see it or understand it, or to perceive it", and indeed that is the secondary definition of the word and is derived from the primary meaning of the word which is *"to separate a thing mentally from another or others, to recognize as separate or different"*. To recognize as separate or different, as a matter of fact, that is quite precisely the meaning of the Greek word which is translated by the translators "discern", not separating or recognizing as different from something else, the Lord's body.

## **The Baptist Church**

Now I was a member of a Protestant Church for many years before I was a member of the Church of God, and I kept the Lord's Supper countless times because the Lord's Supper was not just something that we did once a year, some churches do it quarterly and some do it more often than that, and so I observed the Lord's Supper. I had in my mind a very clear idea about the blood of Jesus Christ and about Christ's death cleansing me from all of my sins. In the Baptist Church, for example, there is a clear distinction made in the serving of the bread and the wine,

there is a little unleavened wafer that is served and you take that and then in that church you take grape juice which is served and you take that, but I cannot recall at anytime hearing anyone explain to me or to really make a distinction with the Lord's body. It was treated as though there were the two things involved in it, but they were part of one whole sacrifice which indeed they are. But I never had in my mind any discernment, and of course the discernment that we are talking about here is to separate a thing mentally from another or others and to recognize it as separate and different.

Now as I said I understood that Christ shed His blood. I sang songs about it, such as "You were Washed in the Blood of the Lamb" which is a good old song, a camp meeting type of song. Another song is "There is Power in the Blood" which is a song you can get your diaphragm into. I understood that from as long as I can recall any awareness of the Christian faith, I have understood that, but for some reason I did not discern, I did not make a separation or distinction in my mind of the Lord's body. I did not see that.

I can also remember in the military when I would go to church and they would be having communion there and I would partake of communion, probably some Baptist ministers would not approve of my taking communion from a chaplain who did it this way, but the custom there was to dip a wafer in the wine and to put it on my tongue and I partook of the bread and the wine at the same time. Once again showing the unity of the sacrifice, the wholeness of the sacrifice that Jesus' body and blood were both shed for me that I might be forgiven, but there was no discernment of the Lord's body and you see that Paul comes back to us and really draws a very strong distinction. I will admit there is an appeal to the idea of the unity of Christ's sacrifice. The idea of dipping the wafer in the wine and partaking of both of them at the same time, the idea of wholeness, unity, has a very powerful appeal. And yet Paul draws a very heavy negative inference from the failure to separate those two things and the inferences have to do with people in the church remaining sick and some them not being healed and some of them dying. You cannot pretend that this is not in the book because it is right here.

Now I don't want to tell you that I have all of the answers but I think it might be worth a little bit of time for us to ponder this at Passover time if indeed we are to discern the Lord's body and to try to understand the relationship of it in the Passover service.

### **Jesus was Alone**

Jesus' sacrifice did not take place at an instant. He died in an instant. Death is something not really long and drawn out, it takes place, you are either dead or you are alive, there is no such thing as being half dead or half alive. His death took place in an instant but His sacrifice was extended over several hours.

Let's turn over to Matthew 26 and I want to point out a few things. First of all one of the things that Jesus experienced as a pain on this night was the fact that as the soldiers came to arrest Him, after the initial skirmish, everyone of His disciples left Him, forsook Him and fled. It is very important for us in a time of trial to have people around us to support us. It is very important to have people sometimes to share in the trial with us, if we are in pain and we know that someone else is suffering pain at the same time is kind of helpful or to know that someone is losing sleep

while we are in pain is in itself a meaningful thing, even though we ourselves would urge them to go home and get some sleep, but there is something down inside of us that says, I am sure glad that you are here, and I am glad to know that you are willing to lose some sleep while I am not only losing sleep but going through this agony that I am going through. So Jesus had to experience that, He had to go into this trial absolutely alone.

### **The Suffering**

Next, the first suffering or humiliation that Jesus experienced was not at the hands of the Romans. It was not even at the hands of the Jews. It was at the hands of or in the face of the sons of Aaron, the High Priest, the one who was supposed to represent Him, who was the one who carried the blood into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement every year and sprinkled it for the sins of all of the people, who represented the work of Jesus Christ, it was in this man's presence, in his court that Jesus Christ first experienced these indignities. The High Priest asked the people standing around him "What do you think about him?" and they answered and said "He is guilty of death". Continuing in Matthew 26:67 "Then they spit in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, {68} saying, "Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"

Now the question that I want you to contemplate at the moment is: Was this really necessary? Was this called for? Was this something that had to happen? We know that Jesus had to die for our sins, we understand that. I have understood that ever since I was a Christian. It was necessary that Jesus die for my sins. He was going to be crucified, He was going to have to go through that indignity, He was going to have a spear thrust into His side, wasn't it enough that He just die. Was this necessary or did man throw it in? Was this something that God intended?

### **Jesus' Back to be Smitten**

Let's turn back to the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah and I want to point out something to you. It is a familiar verse if you have ever heard Handel's Messiah or if you have read Isaiah before.

"The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. {6} I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:5-6 ). This was put here generations before, in the full knowledge that Jesus Christ was going to come to this earth, carry out His ministry and when the time came He would make a decision, a conscious living decision to give His back to the smiters. It was not taken from Him, it wasn't something that they decided to do regardless of what He wanted or His will or plan was, He actually gave His back to the smiters, He gave His cheeks to people who pulled out parts of His beard. He did not hide His face from shame, humiliation, and from being spit upon, which He could have done, that was manageable. You have to realize then, that this beginning of humiliation, and this beginning of suffering at the hands of the High Priest of the most High God was part of the plan. It was initially here, it is a part of what happened to the body of Jesus Christ, as opposed to what was later to happen when His blood was poured out. This whole segment continues and is moving and powerful.

### **Peter Betrays Jesus**

Lets pass on down to Matthew 27 and it's worth noting that just prior to this Jesus had known what was happening and He had been denied by one of His very closest disciples. Matthew 26:69 "Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." {70} But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying." {71} And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." {72} But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!" {73} And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." {74} Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed."

How do you feel about what Peter did? One of Jesus' best friends said that he didn't know Him. This is part of the experience that Jesus Christ went through on this Passover night.

### **They Chose Barabbas**

Let's continue in Matthew 27:1 "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: {2} And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." Judas at this point in time realizing what had happened repented after a fashion and went and threw the money at the chief priests and elders' feet and went out and hanged himself." Now in verse 19: "When Pilate was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. {20} But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." Barabbas was a murderer and a robber and they wanted Barabbas.

"The governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two do you want me release to you? They said, Barabbas. {22} Pilate said unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all said unto him, Let him be crucified." (Mat 27:21-22). These Jews were Jesus' people, He came to His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11). Being rejected by the Romans was one thing but He wasn't rejected by them, He was rejected by His own.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. {24} When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just (or innocent) person: see you to it. {25} Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." (Matthew 27:23-25).

What a tragic thing and yet all of these people were willing to accept Jesus' blood upon themselves rather than see Jesus released, but of course it was part of the plan.

### **Scourging of Jesus**

"Then he released Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26). I will not explain to you the graphic detail of what scourging is, it is a whipping with something similar to a cat of nine tails only worse, it goes on and on and on. It was not administered by the Jews who were limited in the kind of corporal punishment that they

could impose; but the Jew's could instigate it. The Romans could whip you with it until you died, if they chose to do so. In this case they chose not to, but they left Him there as a bleeding bloody hulk at this point.

Matthew 27:27: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. {28} And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. {29} And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! {30} And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. {31} And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him." Was all of this necessary? Did all of these things really have to happen? Was it needful that He go through the scourging, and endure this extra humiliation? Was the crown of thorns important in all of this?

### **What Jesus Was to Do**

Let's turn back to Isaiah one more time to chapter 52, for here, generations before the Messiah was to come, what He was to do, and in very large measure why He was to do it, was presented to us. Beginning in verse 11: "Depart you, depart you, go you out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her; be you clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. {12} For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard".

Then he says in verse 13, "Behold, my servant" and the context is very clearly talking about Jesus Christ and what He is to do, "my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. {14} As many were astonished at you;" they were startled, they did not understand what they were seeing, "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:" Now did it have to be so? Apparently so, for here as I say generations before the Holy Spirit speaks through a prophet who begins to talk about the sacrifice of God's servant, who is going to be His Son, and we are told His visage, His appearance, was so marred that He was unrecognizable, which probably happened during the scourging, and the scourging that took place at the hands of the Roman soldiers was a part of the original plan, He gave His back to the smiters, He gave His cheeks to those who slapped Him and pulled out His hair and He did not turn His face away from the spitting, He accepted it, He took it, it was voluntary. WHY? Was it necessary so that you could be resurrected? Wasn't His death, burial and resurrection sufficient to raise you from the dead? Is not His death, His grace, sufficient? One would think so, and yet here, in the plan, this must take place. Let's read on in chapter 53:1: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? {2} For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. {3} He is despised, hated, and rejected of men". Was He? When Pilate brought Him out before all of the people, and he said "this is the time of the year that I am going to release one person to you, you have a choice, here is Jesus of Nazareth who has done no wrong and here is Barabbas who is a murderer, a thief, a robber and a leader of sedition, which one of these two men do you want me to release to you" and the whole crowd said give us the murderer and here is Jesus listening to all of this. They hated Him so much, they despised Him so much, they

rejected Him so completely that they would accept a dirty foul rotten murdering beast to be released rather than Jesus Christ. It was all in the plan. It was all there. It was all intended.

He continues to say: (Isaiah 53:3) He is "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". Those words basically mean, pain, and sickness. He was a man of pain and acquainted with sickness, and "we hid our faces from Him, He was hated and we esteemed Him not". They all despised Him but when you looked at Him you didn't want to look, you would want to hide your eyes, turn you face away so you wouldn't have to see,

"Surely he hath borne our pain, and carried our sickness; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4), maybe it was because it was something that He had done, maybe He deserved it somehow, maybe He should have been crucified, and yet we are left with a contrast between Him and Barabbas, as a choice, as to who ought to be released.

"Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" {5} But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). This is talking about the healing of the spirit as well as the healing of the body, but don't think for a moment that it doesn't have to do with the sicknesses and diseases that might afflict us.

### **Physical Sin**

There was a time in the church when there was a concept of physical sin that if somebody was sick, it was because he had committed a physical sin of some sort. This was the mentality that the disciples had and they came and said to Jesus, "who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (John 9:2-3). They had to think in terms of that blindness as the result of some specific definable sin and Jesus said "nobody, it wasn't him, it wasn't his parents, this man was born blind so that my glory might be revealed in him, if you are able to understand what that means". Jesus rejected that out of hand. And yet, what is a physical sin? I would have thought that adultery is a physical sin, it is one of the Ten Commandments. This says that He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.

Is eating too much white sugar mentioned somewhere as part of the Commandments of God? Is it somewhere in the statutes and judgments, is it somewhere back in the revelations in the New Testament or elsewhere of God's will of what man is supposed to be? NO. How could this be a sin? It's not a sin. It may be a mistake, it might affect your health, but it has nothing to do with what this is talking about. This is talking about transgressions (1 John 3:4), or cutting across. Cutting across what? The Law of God, it is talking about iniquity. What is iniquity? It is lawlessness. What law? The Ten Commandments. Let's start right there, it is talking about lying, stealing, coveting, dishonoring your father and mother, it is talking about taking God's name in vain, breaking the Sabbath Day. It says that He was wounded for our transgressions and He was bruised for our iniquities. The physical affliction to Christ's body was because you and I have broken the Ten Commandments. But, there is more.

### **By His Stripes We Are Healed**

It says: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. {6} All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. {7} He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. {8} He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due" (Isaiah 53:5-8). You see it was you and I who was suppose to suffer the pain, it was you and I who was supposed to be sick, it was you and I who was supposed to have diseases upon our bodies because of broken laws, but Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body. Is disease and sickness in the world because of sin? Sure it is. Does breaking God's Law lead to sickness? Of course it does. Is everyone who is sick guilty of breaking God's Law? Whether they are sick or not, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). It is the height of self righteous foolishness to go searching around for some sin that caused one of our poor brethren to be sick. For it would imply I am not sick because I haven't done what you have done. The truth is that I may have done worse things than you have done, and I am not sick and you are.

We know about that, common sense tells us that, doesn't it, we have that right down in the core of our being. But don't you ever make the mistake or misunderstand or sell short what He says here, Jesus Christ cares that people on the face of this planet suffer and are in pain and are sick and are diseased and die untimely deaths leaving people behind them grieving and with great tears running down their cheeks. He cares very much. And He bore those pains in His body, He received those strokes on His back that you and I should have had on ours. And there is no reason that you and I carry ourselves, what He has already carried for us. People speculate about why Jesus Christ healed the sick? He was a compassionate man, He felt sorry for those people, He wanted to demonstrate His power. Really? Do you think then that those people He did not heal, in that one area that He went into that the Bible mentions, is because that He didn't feel sorry for those people? Was He merciful to those people but He decided to not be merciful to these people? It is an interesting thought, isn't it? Was it because He had power down here but didn't have power up there? Perhaps it was because of their unbelief? Well, we know that Jesus did heal people who didn't believe. In fact, He has healed people that didn't even know that it was coming, hadn't even thought of it, it hadn't cross their mind.

One man who was waiting by Peter stuck out his hand expecting to receive alms and look at what he got, He got to walk for the first time in his life when Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:1-12). This man's faith, his belief, he didn't know there was anything to have faith in.

### **It Pleased God to Bruise Him**

Continuing in Isaiah 53:9 "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. {10} Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he (the Lord) hath put him to pain". Have you thought about that? In one translation it says: "it pleased the Lord to crush him". Physically, just crush Him. Why do you suppose that was so? In the first place, the language is probably not the best for a twenty first century reader, to say: "it pleased the LORD to bruise him". It is probably more accurate to say

"it was God's will, it was part of His plan, it was His intent to bruise Him", it was not an accident, it didn't just happen because evil men did it and it wasn't what God wanted. It wasn't because things got out of hand, it was a part of the original plan of God that the body of Jesus Christ should be bruised for you and for me. It is that part of His sacrifice which Paul says, "many of you are weak and sickly because you have not discerned or separated or distinguished the Lord's body". Isaiah is quoted by Peter as saying "By His stripes you are healed" (1 Peter 2:24). That is really a startling thing to think about, that it pleased God to bruise Him, so that all these things that He went through were a part of the original plan and intent of God.

### **Jesus was an Offering for Sin**

"You shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. {11} He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. {12} Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:10-12).

How did He make His soul an offering for sin? Well, when you repent of your sins, and you come to someone in the ministry and say, "I want to be baptized", you have made a decision to make Jesus Christ life an offering for your sins, because when you are under the waters of baptism, you are going to be asked "Have you repented of your sins which is the transgression of God's holy and righteous law?" and your going to say: "I have". And then you are going to be asked: "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?" And you will have to say: "I do". It is at that moment of time that you really do make His soul an offering for sin and you go down into the waters of baptism being buried with Him so that you can actually be raised with Him and walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

### **Renewal at Passover**

A renewal happens to us every year at Passover when you take a small piece of the broken unleavened bread as it is passed out, and someone will read the scriptures saying: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). And you will partake of that and you will say: "I accept the sacrifice of Christ's body". If you can discern then you will know at that moment of time that it is a different thing that you are about to do as you partake of His life, His blood, represented by the wine. Then the wine will be passed around and you will partake of the wine as well, and you will be saying: "I accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for my sins".

### **Prayer of Faith Shall Save the Sick**

And then there is another moment in which we do this, and the description of it is accounted back in James 5:14 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: {15} And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be



forgiven him." Is this a promise? Yes, it is a promise. Isn't this something that you can really depend on? The prayer of faith shall save the sick!

Now there is a problem with this and why sometimes it bothers people, and they will say to themselves: "I guess that means that everybody who is prayed for and doesn't get well must not have had sufficient faith. No it doesn't mean that, and I don't want to confuse you, but bear with me for a moment, I will explain to you what I mean.

James says: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and IF he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15). There are a couple of things that I want you to understand.

This is a promise. It is not an unconditional promise, it is a qualified promise, it is conditional upon faith. Are those not healed lacking in faith? Jesus Christ went into the garden of Gethsemane on the night before He was to be crucified, and He went off by Himself and He made a prayer to God, He said: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but as your will be done" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus Christ prayed that the cup might pass from Him, it did not. Was that because He lacked faith? No one is willing to say that, are they? And yet, here is a prayer that was made which in a sense was not answered. And yet it was a qualified prayer, wasn't it? He said: "nevertheless not my will, but as your will be done".

### **Faith Requires Three Things**

Faith requires three things, and this scripture about if you are sick, you are to call for the elders of the church and have them come and anoint you. The prayer of faith that you are going to receive involves three things: First of all, it involves belief. A belief in Jesus Christ, belief in His power, belief that He can heal you, belief that He can raise you up off of that bed of pain, a belief that you can walk though you haven't walked in years, a belief that you can see even though you are blind, to know that He is there, that He can do it. But it involves something else again and you cannot say you have faith unless this is present.

Second, It involves an acceptance of God's will. You have to be able to accept God's will. Otherwise how can you have faith? If for example, if it is not God's will for reasons that you do not know, to heal you at this moment in time, why would that ever be? I can give you one good reason.

There was a man named Hezekiah, whom God sent a prophet to him and said "set your house in order because you are going to die (1 Kings 20:1), you are not going to live". This hit him like a ton of bricks. The prophet turned around and began to walk out, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and began to pray and sob with tears running down his face, he begged God to let him live, and God said "OK" and He sent Isaiah back into Hezekiah and the prophet said: "God has added fifteen years to your life". In the latter part of his life Hezekiah turned away from God. What do you prefer? Fifteen more years of life or to have God tell you to get your house in order, you have come to the end of your life, it is my will that it is your time to go. I will give you more if you want it but I will tell you that when the end of that comes, you will not be in the Kingdom.

Which would you choose? Easy choice? Perhaps. The second thing you have to have if you claim to have faith is to accept God's will.

Third, there is one more and it is so obvious that you would wonder how a person could miss it. Faith without works is dead.

I remember once, we were preparing for a ministerial conference in Pasadena, California many years ago and at that time it seemed that at every ministerial conference we had all sorts of questions about medical treatment and medical doctors and what you could do and what you couldn't do. The leader of the ministerial conference resolved these questions when he said: "The principle is so simple, why doesn't everybody understand it, God will not do for you what you can do for yourself". There is absolutely no conflict between faith that God will heal you and doing the very best for yourself that you possible can or what a doctor or some other specialist can do for you, there is no conflict at all.

God will not do for you what you can do for yourself, He expects that if you have a broken bone that it is to be set, He expects that if you have a rotten tooth that is poisoning your system that you get it pulled out, and He wants you to go find somebody who will do the absolute best job of pulling it out and hopefully that it not get infected in the process and will be able to treat you if it does.

The Bible speaks of balms (Jeremiah 8:22), it speaks of doing things for yourself that you can do. There is no conflict between medical science as a generality and faith as a generality. There may be some specifics in it that a person may have a problem with, but we are not going to worry about that now. God assumes that we have enough sense, somehow, to know the sort of things we ought to do and the sort of things we ought not to do.

Let's turn back to Matthew 27 one more time, to verse 34: "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall". This basically was a pain killer, it was a mild anesthetic, it was something to give Him to get through the initial shock of what was going on here. Jesus turned it down and would not drink it. Apparently He was determined to experience the full effect of everything. Verse 35: "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."

### **God Forsook Jesus**

Did this all have to happen? Did Jesus when He came down to the end of all of this have to come to the place to where He cried out and screamed "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). In the last moment of Jesus' life, God did forsake Him.

In Psalms 22:1 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The words that Jesus spoke on the cross were written hundreds and hundreds of years before by David. It was all a part of the plan of God. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" {2} "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you don't hear; I cry in the night season, and am not silent. {3} But you are holy, O you that inhabits the

praises of Israel. {4} Our fathers trusted in you: they trusted, and you did deliver them. {5} They cried unto you, and you delivered them: they trusted in you, and were not confounded. {6} But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. {7} Everyone that sees me laughs me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, {8} He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. {9} But you are he that took me out of the womb: you did make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. {10} I was cast upon you from the womb: you are my God from my mother's belly. {11} Don't be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help."

It's the cry of a lonely man, left alone, forsaken by all those He trusted and depended upon for all this time.

Verse 14: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

Do you think that Jesus experienced no dread or no fear of what was going to happen to Him, that there was no sweating to be done about the suffering that was going to happen to him on the morning of the Passover. We are told that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44) as He prayed in agony over this whole thing.

This is part of what He had to say, Verse 15: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and you have brought me into the dust of death. {16} For dogs have compassed me". Oddly enough dogs in Biblical terminology is a reference to false prophets. "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." {17}"I can count all my bones: they look and stare upon me. {18} They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my clothing." What a tragic thing, it was all part of the plan. It was all part of what God intended.

Finally, let's turn back one more time to 1 Corinthians 11 where we started and see if we can get a grip on what this is about.

He said to them in verse 23: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: {24} And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. {25} After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. {26} For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. {27} Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Does this sober us up a little bit?

### **Examine Yourself**

In Verse 28: Paul said: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. {29} For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Unworthily, can you ever be worthy to partake of the Passover? Well, in the first place, it is an adverb, unworthily, and it has to do with partaking the Passover in an unworthy manner, but it is not talking about gluttony or about drunkenness, as part of the unworthiness of taking the Passover, it's talking about arrogance, it's talking about hatred, it's talking about animosity with other human beings, it's talking about selfishness, it's talking about an unrepentant spirit that fails to remember that Christ suffered for us. It fails to discern the sacrifice of His body, notice that after He says if you partake of it unworthily, you actually take judgment to yourself because you do not discern or distinguish the Lord's body. You know the awareness of the suffering of Christ, the awareness of that suffering was due to me, I actually earned it, I accumulated it on record, but He did it in my place, should put me in the frame of mind when I come to the Passover to partake of it that there is no room for hatred for any other human being on the face of the earth. No room for envy. How can I find room for animosity, or bitterness, or strife for another human being. There is no room for that, not at the Passover.

Can you partake of the Passover worthily? Sure you can.

Verse 28 says: "Let a man examine himself". All you have to do to partake of the Passover worthily is to take a few moments between now and the Passover and take a good long look at yourself. Think about what you are, and be sure that you come to the Passover in a repentant spirit and attitude.

You know, if you are not baptized, there is no time in the year like right now to take a good hard long look at yourself and listen to Peter's words for he said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). No one should partake of the Passover who has not been baptized, because you see, if you have fulfilled anything in your life to where you can approach the Passover as you should, you ought to have been baptized as well. There is absolutely no reason not to, because you are repentant. Believe it or not, you can be worthy in the sight of God, but that worthiness is from Jesus Christ.

Why did Christ have to suffer? It was part of God's plan.

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever discerned the difference between the wine, blood, and the bread, body, when you partook of the Passover?
2. How do you think Jesus felt when his friends abandoned Him?
3. Can you imagine the pain that He mentally and physically went through the night that He was betrayed?
4. Does the value of your salvation become deeper and more meaningful when you think about how much Jesus suffered for you?
5. Do you ever imagine how scared Jesus was?
6. Do you ever imagine the pain that God the Father must have gone through to watch His son who was sinless be tortured for sinners?
7. Why do you think Jesus healed some and not others?
8. Have you ever been guilty of thinking that a prayer that went unanswered was because of a lack of faith?
9. What types of works reveal true faith?
10. How do you examine yourself?