

The Importance of the Death of Christ

By
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The “Cross of Christ is the moral and spiritual center of the universe. An eternity past knew no other future, and an eternity to come will know no other past.”¹ There are no better words to describe the significance of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and the shedding of His Blood. The infinite import of the ordained crime of the Crucifixion compared with the work of the infinite love of God at the other end of the spectrum—all in one picture “on a hill far away”—is unfathomable. How can it be? Who could think of such things except our God?!

There are specific words associated with the meaning, accomplishment, and importance of the death of Christ and the shedding of His Blood that have inexhaustible depth. They help crystallize for students of the Scriptures the overall magnitude of Calvary because the Cross has infinite meaning and importance. Some of these words in no particular order are (1) substitutionary or vicarious atonement, (2) redemption, (3) reconciliation, (4) propitiation, (5) justification, (6) judgment, (7) fellowship, (8) end of the law, (9) adoption, (10) ransom, (11) forgiveness, (12) sacrifice, (13) justice, (14) satisfaction, (15) guilt, (16) penalty, (17) remission, (18) separation, (19) sanctification, (20) purchase, (21) complete, (22) mediator, (23) loose, (24) cleansed, (25) eternal, (26) final, (27) victory, (28) unselfishness, (29) holiness, and (30) service.² To God’s glory many books have been written about each of these words.

Dr. Henry Thiessen and Dr. Roy Wallace have each dedicated a section in their theological works to a consideration of the specific importance of the death of our Lord. Both theologians point out that we must try to traverse the span of eternity to comprehend the Cross, the center of God’s glorious love and perfect judgment. The Scriptures paint a picture of a scarlet

thread running throughout eternity and culminating in the Cross of the innocent sacrificial Lamb of God who was without spot or blemish (Nu. 28:9, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pe. 1:19, Rev. 13:8), but God “made him to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). “He was *slain* in the Father's eternal counsels.”³ However, the Cross must be understood also in terms of the cost to God. His Son was our sinless substitute who was murdered on the Cross, which secured our redemption, reconciliation, and appeasement for sin(s) for eternity.⁴ The requirement for eternally “covering” sin necessitated an eternal being to secure our eternal atonement. No one other than the God-man could accomplish God’s goals and satisfy His hate for sin. Praise God for the Lord Jesus Christ and the willingness of the Trinity to let Him be the Lamb of God for OUR sins; or else, the believer’s eternal destruction, not annihilation, would have been certain since we are also eternal beings. The importance of the Cross can never be diminished.

The *specific* importance of the death of Christ can be further characterized by Dr. Thiessen and Wallace’s considerations. They are: **(1)** The death of Christ was foretold in the Old and New Testaments and is the “central theme of Scripture.”⁵ There are hundreds of passages in the Bible that either allude to or speak of the death of Christ. **(2)** It is of first or fundamental importance in the gospel of Christ and of Apostolic preaching (1 Cor. 15:3, “first of all”). **(3)** “It is not an afterthought or accident,”⁶ as if God were learning as time progressed. Christ did not come to set a moral or “influence” example, or to primarily teach doctrine, or to demonstrate “that wrong must be punished,”⁷ or to die for the truth that He held, but rather to die for us. (Mk. 10:45, Heb. 2:9, 14, 9:26, 1 Jn 3:5) **(4)** It is “the song of the redeemed”⁸ that will be sung in heaven (Rev. 5:8-10) and His death and the shedding of His Blood will be remembered as a memorial throughout eternity by the marks of crucifixion on His presence and by the heralding of His name, The Lamb of God (John 1:29, Rev. 22:3 and many verses in Rev. 21 and 22). **(5)**

His death destroyed the devil, who had the power of death (Heb. 2:14). **(6)** The importance of Christ's death is seen through the spiritual picture in the two sacraments of the church, baptism and communion. **(7)** It is the "guarantee of every blessing."⁹ His death reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God or His blessings if God would sacrifice His eternal Son for us. There is "nothing else [that] would be too great for God to give."¹⁰ What a glorious thought! **(8)** It is the root or foundation of all Christian living by our dying to "self" on the Cross with Christ and by being raised to new life (Gal. 2:20, Rom 6 and 8). **(9)** Christ's death is so important that it attracted the interest of the heavenly world when the Holy Spirit testified about His death and reported the glory that was to follow (Lk. 9:30-31, 1 Pe. 1:11-12). **(10)** Christianity differs from all other religions, which are primarily ethical systems, by the emphasis on the need for the death of our Redeemer. **(11)** The death of Christ and the shedding of His Blood was a "must." Christ clearly stated it was a "must." (Mat. 16:21, Mk. 8:31, Lk 9:22, etc.) It secures for us our salvation (John 3:14f , Acts 4:12, 17:3, Rom. 3:25, Lk. 24:7). What greater love is there than to lay down His life for us (me)? **(12)** The *primary* purpose of the incarnation was not that it is "an end in itself, but the means to an end, and that end is the redemption of [all] the lost through the Lord's death on the cross,"¹¹ but reserved for those who by faith accept the "gift." His grace and love are unfathomable. Who could think of such things except our God?!

Endnotes:

¹Dr. Roy Wallace, Th.D. Ph.D., Studies in Systematic Theology (LinWell Printers, Shreveport, LA) 2001, 105

²This list was compiled by reviewing three systematic theology books, which are: 1. Ryrie, Charles C.; Basic Theology; Victor Books, SP Publications, Wheaton, IL; 1988; p. 286-308; 2. Chafer, Lewis Sperry; Systematic Theology; Vol. 3; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI; 1976; p. 127-130; 3. Wallace, Roy, Th.D. Ph.D.; Studies in Systematic Theology; LinWell Printers, Shreveport, LA, 2001; p. 103-115

³Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Commentary (WordSearch, Verson 4.7, Broken Arrow, OK) Comment on Rev. 13:8

⁴Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Victor Books, SP Publications, Wheaton, IL) 1988, 329

⁵Dr. Roy Wallace, Th.D. Ph.D., Studies in Systematic Theology (LinWell Printers, Shreveport, LA) 2001, 103

⁶Henry C. Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Eedermans Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan) 1990, 230

⁷Dr. Roy Wallace, Op. Cit., 117

⁸Ibid. 105

⁹Ibid. p. 104

¹⁰Ibid. p.104

¹¹Henry C. Thiessen, Op. Cit., 230