

The Apostles' Creed Week 3 – The Crucifixion

3. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

I am aware this week that “we tread on Holy Ground”. The suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian Faith. The early teaching and preaching by the Apostles as recorded in Acts is always based on “the Cross and the Resurrection”. These facts are essential to our belief as Christians.

a) Suffered under Pontius Pilate: The inclusion of the historical figure of Pilate gives a dating reference to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea from A.D.26 to A.D.37. During this time he would have had full control of the “army of occupation” and full powers of life and death. All capital sentences passed by the Sanhedrin had to be submitted to him for ratification. He had the authority to reverse any such sentences. In the New Testament he comes across as a weak character ready to serve expediency rather than principle. (Luke chapter 23, verses 13 – 25 and John chapter 18, verse 31 – chapter 19, verse 22.

That our Lord Jesus “suffered” reminds us that He was scourged (whipped) at his trial even though Pilate is on record as saying “*I find no crime in Him*” (John 18 verse 38 – 19, verse 1). Remember, He suffered for our sins – your sins and mine!

b) was crucified : That our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified is the consistent record throughout the New Testament. Peter gives us an excellent commentary – read 1 Peter 2, verses 21 – 25. This in turn refers us to the key passage in Isaiah 53. Our thoughts on the crucifixion should be on its meaning rather than just a cold analysis. Read carefully the whole chapter of Isaiah 53. Remember that it was written some 700 years before the death of Christ.

John in his Gospel makes a direct link between our Lord Jesus Christ and the Passover Lamb. In chapter 1, verses 29 and 36, John the Baptist points out Jesus as “*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” In some way, that burden of sin, carried by our Lord Jesus Christ “*up to and onto the gallows*” (from a translation of 1 Peter 2, verse 24) meant that at that point He was separated from His Heavenly Father (the Holy One who could not look on sin).

Because He carried our sins we are free! Redeemed! (= bought back).

Again, the link between the Passover Lamb and the death of Jesus is emphasised in John 19, verses 14; 31 and 42. The day, even the very time of the crucifixion, was the time that the Passover Lambs were being slain in the Temple. Jesus, the Lamb of God gave Himself up as a redemption sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Apostle Paul knew this and could write “*Christ, our Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed*”

1 Corinthians 5, verse 7. This Paul says, should mean a new way of living our lives for God. “*You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*” (1 Corinthians 6, verse 19)

c) died and was buried: There have been a number of books written and theories circulated, that Jesus did not really die! The biblical records have no doubts! John in his Gospel emphasises the fact that the body of Jesus was pierced with a spear by one of the soldiers. The outflow of blood and water would take place in the period immediately after death. The death of the Saviour means a life-giving flow; blood for the cleansing from sin and water for the representation of the new life in the Spirit. (compare with 1 John 5, verses 6 – 8). These features of the death of Jesus also served to fulfil Scripture – Psalm 34, verse 20 and Zechariah 12, verse 10. The record of the burial emphasises the finality of death! See John 19, verses 38 – 42. There seems to be no thought at this time on the part of the disciples of a resurrection, that was still to come after the Sabbath rest!

*There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.*

Cecil Frances Alexander 1848