



HG 274
Calvary—Mount of Sacrifice
Matthew 27:45-53

Home Group Study Notes
17th March—Christine Williams



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)

Ice Breaker

Do you wear a cross or a crucifix?
Why?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)

Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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HG 274 Calvary: Mount of sacrifice

Calvary is at the centre of the whole bible

The Bible has stories about kings, slaves, fishermen, and shepherds. There are people who survived incredible odds and people who were martyred. There are happy, sad or simply strange stories. But there is really only one story. It is the story of how when we went away from God, God came to rescue us through his son Jesus. It is the story of salvation. The Old Testament stories look forward to Jesus coming. When he was in conversation on the day of resurrection, Jesus told the 2 on the road to Emmaus that he *had* to die. ‘Beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them the things about himself from the whole Bible.’ The letters in the New Testament look back to help us to understand the enormity of what happened when Jesus came and the gospels tell us the facts of his life, death and resurrection. The focus of the Bible is on Jesus and specifically on his death. It happened on a hill just outside Jerusalem called Calvary. It was at Calvary that the world order changed for ever.

Jesus the target for evil

Right from the very start of his ministry, Jesus attracted evil plots against himself. From Herod in Matthew 2, killing all the boys in the hope of getting rid of the baby King of the Jews, the people of Nazareth wanting to throw Jesus off a cliff right at the start of his ministry, in Luke 4:29, through the Pharisees plotting with the Herodians how they could kill him because he was healing people on the Sabbath, in Mark 3:6, and many other examples of Jewish leaders hating what he was doing, Jesus’ life was at risk from the time of his birth. It was as though he was a magnet for people’s evil intentions; the love of God shown to us in Jesus, attracted the attacks of the evil powers in the world. Jesus was the centre of a war going on between good and evil because he had come to save the

world. God's beautiful perfect world was broken but Jesus had come to rescue it and each one of us with it.

The last battle

He knew that his time with his disciples was limited and he warned them that he would die as they walked on the road to Jerusalem. The arrest and trial was farcical. Trials were not supposed to happen at night. There was no evidence of a capital offence under Roman law. Pilate admitted he couldn't find fault with Jesus but he was weak and scared he would have a riot and mob rule if he went against the Jewish authorities. The powers had gathered and Jesus had to die because it would be 'convenient' for him to be out of the way. It was a horrible death, probably the worst ever form of torture and execution. It was excruciatingly painful, humiliating and public. He was approaching his end when he said, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' As Jesus was receiving the evil and sin of the world onto himself, he felt isolated from his father for the first time ever in his whole existence.

Victory

We, of course know the end of the story. We know that Jesus rose from the dead. We know that he was seen by many different people, alive but changed. His resurrection was evidence that he had won a victory over the powers of evil and death. Death had been defeated.

The love of God

Jesus said, God so loved *the world*, that he sent his only son....., John 3:16, what happened on the cross was about God stepping in to save the whole world which was totally in the grip of humanity's selfishness and greed and yes, evil powers. That includes each one of us and our own personal guilt in our disobedience to our father God. Jesus was stronger than all that evil could do to him. It was not just a personal victory for him that he was raised, but a victory for us who believe in him. Jesus is stronger than *our* sin and *our* separation from God. He has made a way for us to be put right with God. he has reversed the separation from God caused by the disobedience of Adam, of which we are all guilty. In 1 Cor 15:21-22, Paul describes Jesus as a second Adam but this time, facing the challenges of temptation, as Adam had, Jesus was totally without sin. He reversed the effects of the fall for those who believe and trust in him. It was love that brought Jesus into our world to live and die for us. God loved the world so much.

The atonement

Let's have a look at that in more detail. Isaiah 53:5-6 tells us that the suffering servant the prophet is talking about 'was pierced for our transgression, crushed for our sins'. In other words, he was accepting the blame and the consequence for all our selfishness and self-centredness that comes from us ignoring God and not following his ways. 'We were like sheep that had gone astray, each in our own way and the Lord God had laid on the suffering servant the iniquity of us all'. 'God laying the sin on him' was a bit like the image of the priest on the day of Atonement. The high priest would have 2 perfect male kid goats. On one he would pray and tell all the sins that had been committed and all the broken commandments. That goat would be released into the wild. He was the scapegoat. The other goat would be sacrificed on the altar as a sin offering. Jesus was both the scapegoat and the sacrificial goat. The feast of Atonement was a prequel which was a shadow of what would happen at Calvary. The day of atonement was incomplete because they had to keep repeating it every year. Jesus died once for all. His work was completed and after his ascension he sat down at the right hand of the father, job done. John sums it all up: This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' 1 John 4:10 it's all about grace. Grace is the word we use to describe God's love for us in sending Jesus to save us from sin and bring us into his Kingdom as children of God. God's grace is the initiating factor. We could not save ourselves.

Releasing the captives

What Jesus did at Calvary was also a bit like the Passover. The Passover lamb died so that his blood could be a sign of the faith of the people living in the house where it was painted onto the doorposts. The lamb had to die so that the people of God could be released from slavery in Egypt. Jesus was the key to releasing us from the slavery of sin and the entrapment of the world's powers. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was the fulfilment of both **the Atonement and the Passover** to free the whole world. because God loved the world so much.

What shall we do?

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and told the people that the Jesus who they had crucified was their promised Messiah and that he had risen from the dead, the people were horrified because they had caused the death of the Messiah. 'Brothers, what shall we do?' They knew that they had to somehow change. God had spoken to their hearts. They knew they needed forgiveness. Peter's answer, which still applies today, was,

‘Repent’ (turn away from sin and turn to God), ‘and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ Acts 2:37-39

The challenge

It is a challenge to us today. Where do we stand in all this? The time has come to take action if you have never done so before. There is no time better than now to pray to God. In your prayer admit your need of forgiveness and your desire to be his child, allow him to come in to your life. He will guide you and make you into the person you were meant to be. He will fill you with his spirit.

This is a song I remember from my childhood

Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan!
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!
Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty
At Calvary.

(A note about ‘The Powers’

Paul talks about The Powers in Ephesians 6 when he tells us to wear the whole armour of God. There are different sorts of Powers but we are familiar with corporate powers. Crowds sometimes do things which the individuals concerned would never do alone. (When Pilate appealed to them to decide between Jesus and Barabbas for example. He was afraid of a mob riot if he did not do as they said.) Organisations can be The Powers when their behaviour is overtaken by evil, think of governments or multinationals supporting vicious regimes. I think that the Post Office leadership were The Powers in the recent computer scandal. Individually they would have thought it wicked that anyone should go to prison for a fraud they had not committed but as a body they sought to cover the problem up. Evil is in the world but with the whole armour of God we can stand firm in our faith, keep our integrity and stand up for justice.)



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. When did you first decide to follow Jesus?

2. How would you give your testimony of what Jesus has done for you in 2 minutes or in 2 sentences? (This is a good exercise to do as often we don't have the time for a sermon!)

3. Think of an occasion where there might be a clash between being in the Kingdom of God and being a British Citizen. If you faced a conflict of interests what would you do?

4. We live in a world where it is hard to be a Christian.
What would you like the church to do to help you live a kingdom life?

5. The sermon mentioned 3 images of what Jesus achieved at his crucifixion. (Atonement for sin, release from captivity, defeating the powers of evil.) Which one speaks most to you?

6. What experience have you had of coming up against 'The powers'?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

Emmanuel Church, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9LD

P 01277 632120 **E** Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org **W** Emmanuel-church.info
FB Emmanuel Church Billericay **T** EmmanuelCM12 **YT** Emmanuel Church Billericay

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