

The Death of Jesus:

from "defeat" to triumph.

What happened when Jesus died.

How we remember it.

What it did for us and all creation.

The death of Jesus.

How should we remember Jesus?

We could think of all his miracles - he cured the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, and stilled the storm. Or, we could think of his great teaching - 2,000 years on, his teaching still continues to inspire us to humility and love; his parables remain classics of story telling. We could think of his endurance in the face of suffering - he never fought back, and he prayed for his executioners.

How did Jesus ask us to remember him?

But without ignoring all these marvels, Jesus specifically asked us to remember his death: “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*” (1 Cor 11:25).

This is quite remarkable. What other great person is remembered specifically because he died?

Outline of the Series.

In this series, we will do as Jesus told us: remember him in his death. The studies fall into three groups: (i) Weeks 1, 5, 6 and 7 complete our studies of Matthew, looking at how Jesus’ death actually happened; (ii) Weeks 1- 4 look at passages relating to how we remember Jesus’ death in Holy Communion; and (iii) Weeks 8-10 look at what Jesus’ death did for us and all creation.

The immense richness of the impact of Jesus’ death.

The Bible frequently explains how Jesus’ death is the central event in God’s plan of salvation.

- His death was not *just* an ancient event which happened ‘way back then’; rather it changed the course of history, opening the doors to heaven and granting us access to God (Heb 10:19-20).
- His death was not *just* an event by which we were forgiven without our involvement (‘behind our back’, so to speak); rather “I have been crucified with Christ” and the risen Jesus now “lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

- His death did not *just* secure our forgiveness and access to God; rather it also opened the way for the Holy Spirit to enter us and commence making us holy (Acts 2:33; Phil 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:2).
- His death did not *just* quench God’s wrath at our sin, because Jesus took our punishment; rather it also demonstrated God’s love for us (Rom 5:8).
- His death did not *just* cause things to happen to us, and for us; rather it also provides us with an example which we are to follow (1 Peter 2:21).
- His death did not *just* change us and our relationship to God; rather it also defeated all the evil spiritual powers that stood opposed to us and God: “Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them on the cross” (Col 2:15).
- His death did not *just* defeat these powers; rather it also restored all creation to a right relationship to God - ‘reconciling all things to himself, making peace {or pacifying all things} through Jesus’ blood’ (see Col 1:20).

Forgiveness of our sins is the focus of Jesus’ work on the cross. This is indeed what Jesus emphasised when he instituted the Lord’s Supper. Forgiveness is also fundamental to the other ways Jesus’ death effects us and all creation. But this forgiveness leads on to immense benefits.

I pray that this series of studies will extend our appreciation of what Jesus did for us on the cross, and consequently that our experience of ‘feeding on Jesus’ in Holy Communion may be richer. Jesus’ work was unique, and so Christianity is unique. The only way to God is through the cross of Jesus.

I pray also that these studies will encourage us all to “draw near to God with ... full assurance” (Heb 10:22) since Jesus has opened the way, and that our lives may increasingly be marked by following Jesus’ example.

Max Gilbert 2000

Week 1

THEME: What happened in the Upper Room?

Day 1 Matthew 26:1-16. Jesus Anointed at Bethany.

Why did the woman anoint Jesus? (v12)

Day 2 Matthew 26:17-30. The Last Supper.

During which Jewish Festival did the Last Supper take place? (v17, 2)
(Refer also to Leviticus 23:4-8).

Day 3 Matthew 26:31-46. Jesus prays at Gethsemane.

Jesus knew he was about to be crucified (v2). How did he feel and think about this?
(v37-39)

Day 4 Matthew 26:47-68. Jesus is arrested.

What was the evidence that Jesus was 'worthy of death' (v66)? (Refer v59-65)

Day 5 Matthew 26:69-75. Peter disowns Jesus.

Why did Peter weep bitterly (v75)?

STUDY PASSAGE Matthew 26:17-30

To Discuss:

1. Think of some famous people. How much do you know about how or why they died? How does this compare to Jesus' death?

2. Note how Matt 26 emphasises that the first 'Lord's Supper' was a Jewish Passover Meal (v17, 18, 2, 5). What did the Passover (i) commemorate (Exodus 12:17,26-27)?; (ii) require in the lives of the participants (Exod. 13:9)? What was the significance of the blood (Exod. 12:23)? What parallels do you see with the Lord's Supper?

3. What do the bread and wine symbolise? (v26, 28)? Why did Jesus die (v24, 28)?

4. Discuss whether it is at all likely that the 12 disciples thought that the bread and wine were *literally* Jesus' body and blood. (Consider Jesus' symbolic language in v42).

5. Even though the bread and wine primarily symbolise Jesus' death, does v29 suggest that the meal also symbolises something else? What does v29 imply about Jesus' future and ours? Could you think of the Holy Communion in this way?

PRAY. Remember Jesus' death, and give thanks that God has 'passed over' our sin because of Jesus' death.

Week 2

THEME: Feed on me.

Day 1 John 6:1-15. The feeding of the crowd.

How did Jesus feed the large crowd? (v8-11) When they saw this miracle, what did the people think about Jesus? (v14-15)

Day 2 John 6:16-24. Jesus Walks on the Water.

How did the disciples react when they saw Jesus walking on the water? (v19) What did Jesus say? (v20)

Day 3 John 6:25-43. The Bread of God

What or who is the true bread of God? (v33,35)

Day 4 John 6:44-65. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life”

What will Jesus do for those who ‘eat his flesh and drink his blood’? (v54)

Day 5 John 6:66-71. Peter said, “You have the words of eternal life”.

Many turned away from Jesus (v66). Why did the Twelve stay with him? (v68-69).

STUDY PASSAGE John 6:44-65

To Discuss:

1. Think of someone who has had a positive effect on your life over a long period of time. Explain whether or not it would be appropriate to say that you had (or are) “feeding on” this person.

2. Jesus invites us to ‘eat his flesh and drink his blood’ (v53). Many Jews took Jesus literally (v52), but Jesus explained that he meant it spiritually (v63). What did Jesus really mean by ‘eating his flesh and drinking his blood’ (Refer eg, v29, 35, 40, 45, 47)?

3. In the Holy Communion, when the minister distributes the bread he says, “Feed on him (ie Jesus) in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.” These words seem to derive more from John 6 than from Matthew 26. Discuss whether you think that Jesus had the future establishment of the Holy Communion in mind in John 6.

4. How does the Holy Communion help us to ‘feed on Jesus’? Can we ‘feed on Jesus’ just as well in other situations? Describe your experiences of ‘feeding on Jesus’?

PRAY Thank God for the spiritual food and drink that he gives us through Jesus.

Week 3

THEME: Do this in remembrance of me.

Day 1 1 Cor 11:23-26. Do this as often as you drink it

How does Jesus tell us to remember him?

Day 2 1 Cor 11:24. Jesus died *for you*.

We don't just remember that Jesus died. But specifically, we remember that he died *for us*. Why did Jesus have to die *for you*? (Matt 26:28; 1 Peter 3:18)

Day 3 1 Cor 11:26. Proclaiming Jesus' death.

How does remembering Jesus' death also proclaim it?

Day 4 1 Cor 11:27-32. Partaking worthily.

If our sins drove Jesus to the cross, how should we prepare ourselves to remember his death?

Day 5 1 Cor 11:17-22, 33. No divisions. Look after one another.

In remembering Jesus' death, we remember that Jesus humbled himself and suffered for us (Phil 2:6-9). How then should we relate to people who are different from ourselves (v18), or who 'have nothing' (v22)?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Cor 11:17-34 and The Communion Service.

To Discuss:

1. Discuss how you feel about sharing in Holy Communion.

2. Choose one of the Orders of Service that we use for Holy Communion. Go through it and find sections which cover the following aspects of remembering Jesus' death:
 - Why Jesus had to die for us
 - Our repentance
 - Our thankfulness to God for his mercy to us in Jesus
 - Our commitment to live as God wants us to live
 - Our prayer to be united with Jesus in his death and resurrection life
 - A statement of how God wants us to live
 - The proclamation of Jesus' death, and of his return
 - Our anticipation of sharing in the heavenly banquet
 - An expression of our unity in Jesus.

3. The Communion Service 'acts out' some aspects of the Gospel. Discuss the meaning of:
 - The breaking of the bread
 - The call to come to the table
 - The act of coming to the table
 - The eating and the drinking

4. Does the Communion service help you in your Christian life? In what ways? Discuss any questions that you have about Holy Communion.

PRAY That what the service of Holy Communion speaks of might be a reality in our lives.

Week 4

THEME: Our Unity in Christ

Day 1 1 Cor 10:14-16. Participation in Christ.

When we share in the bread and wine worthily, what are we doing?

Day 2 1 Cor 10:17. Unity in Christ.

When we all share in the one loaf, what does this symbolise about our relationship to each other?

Day 3 1 Cor 10:18-21. *Either Christ or Idols, not both.*

If we participate in Christ, as symbolised by our participation in the Holy Communion, can we take part in a religious practice for any other so-called God?

Day 4 1 Cor 10:22. Provoking God's jealousy.

If we try to mix our allegiance to God with allegiance to something else, how can we expect God to react?

Day 5 John 17:20-26. Jesus' prayer for our unity.

What sort of unity does Jesus pray that we might have? (v21) What will this unity show to the world? (v21, 23)

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

To Discuss:

1. Have you ever really felt a close bond with another group of people? Discuss what you felt like and what made the group have a sense of unity.

2. “Being a group” involves both (i) factors which distinguish you from other people, and (ii) factors which you share in common with other group members. What are these factors for you as a Christian? What part (if any) does your participation in Holy Communion play? (v17)

3. Discuss whether ‘participation in the body of Christ’ (v16) means:

- (A) we physically eat the real body of Christ.
- (B) we share in the benefits of Christ’s death (ie forgiveness).
- (C) our personality is (partially) merged with Christ’s
- (D) our personality is (partially) changed to be like Christ’s, or
- (E) we become members of the church.

4. Do you find that being a Christian is *really* different from being in any other group? In what ways? What difference does remembering the death of Christ make to the way you relate to other people, to God, and to other religions?

PRAY for unity with other Christians, as Jesus also prayed for us.

Week 5

THEME: “Crucify Him”.

Day 1 Matt 27:1-2. The decision to put Jesus to death.

Who made the initial decision to have Jesus executed? The Jewish leadership had no authority to execute anyone (John 18:31) - so what did they do?

Day 2 Matt 27:3-5. Judas’ last words.

Although Judas betrayed Jesus, what was his final assessment of Jesus?

Day 3 Matt 27:6-10. The distorted values of the Jewish leaders.

Compare the chief priests’ concern for ceremonial correctness with their callous injustice against Jesus.

Day 4 Matt 27:11-14. Jesus before Pilate.

The Jewish leaders were concerned with Jesus’ claims to be the Son of God. How and why was the charge changed when Jesus appeared before the *Roman governor*, Pilate. (See also Luke 23:2)

Day 5 Matt 27:27-31 The Soldiers Mock Jesus.

How do the soldiers mock Jesus? At a purely human level, if Jesus was condemned because he claimed to be a political king (ie in opposition to Roman rule) to what extent do you think the soldiers’ action was understandable, if not acceptable?

STUDY PASSAGE Matthew 27:11-26

To Discuss:

1. Do you know of an innocent person who was found guilty? Why did it happen?
2. To what extent do any of the following factors give an adequate explanation for why Jesus was crucified? The allegation that Jesus would destroy the temple (Matt 26:61); Jesus' claim to be Son of God (Matt 26:63); Jesus' alleged claim to be a (political) king (Matt 27:11; Luke 23:2; but note John 18:36); the charge that Jesus refused to pay taxes (Luke 23:2); the envy of the Jews (Matt 27:18); uncontrolled mob frenzy (Matt 27:24); Pilate's weakness and desire for peace ahead of justice (Matt 27:24); Jesus' unwillingness to defend himself (Matt 27:14); his betrayal by Judas (Matt 26:14-16, 47-50). Why did Jesus die (Matt 26:24; 28)?
3. What do you think of Pilate? the Jewish leaders? the crowd? Who is the worst? Discuss whether you think people today treat Jesus in similar ways.
4. What do you think and feel as you reflect on the intense evil which Jesus experienced *for you* at the hands of so many different people?

PRAY Thank Jesus that he was prepared to face all this evil for your sake, even though his soul was 'overwhelmed with sorrow' (Matt 26:38)

Week 6

THEME: Jesus death: (i) its immediate impact.

Day 1 Matt 27:32-38. Jesus crucified.

What details are we given about the physical facts of Jesus' crucifixion? Does Matthew seem more interested in (i) the physical facts, or (ii) their meaning?

Day 2 Matt 27:32-46. Jesus' death fulfilled Psalm 22.

Compare: v35 with Ps 22:18;
 v39 with Ps 22:7;
 v43 with Ps 22:8;
 v39,41,44 with Ps 22:16-17;
 v46 with Ps 22:1.

Day 3 Matt 27:37. The Charge against Jesus.

What was the charge against Jesus? Was he guilty?

Day 4 Matt 27:45. The darkness over the land.

What time of day did this occur? Since Passover is at full moon (we still celebrate Easter on Fri-Sun after a full moon), why could this not have been an eclipse? Do you think that "all the land" means Israel, or does it mean the whole world?

Day 5 Matt 27:62-66. The Guard at the tomb.

Who posted the guard? *How* and *why* did they guard the tomb?

STUDY PASSAGE Matthew 27:32-56.

To Discuss:

1. Discuss a situation which you have been involved in, which turned good just when everything seemed hopeless.

2. Jesus' death had at least 4 immediate effects. Discuss the significance of the first two of these events:
 - (i) **The darkness over the land (v45).** What did it mean? Refer Amos 8:9-10, Joel 2:31 (the Judgement Day), and Exodus 10:21-23 (the darkness before the first Passover.) Discuss whether it also marks God's judgement on Jesus (v46) (see Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21) Does the darkness suggest that the 'end times' began with Jesus' death?

 - (ii) **The Tearing of the Temple Curtain (v51a).** Discuss whether this is best understood as indicating:
 - (a) God's judgement on the temple (Matt 24:2; 21:43);
 - (b) opening of access to God for everyone (Heb 4:16;6:19-20;10:19-22));
 - (c) the end of the temple ritual and law, and the start of the *new* covenant (Luke 22:20, Jesus being the new meeting place of God and man (John 1:14), and the once-for-all sacrifice for sin Heb 10:10).

 - (iii) **The resurrection of the holy ones in Jerusalem (v51b-53).** This starts the age of resurrection.

 - (iv) **The centurion grasps the truth about Jesus (v54),** foreshadowing the spread of the gospel beyond the Jews.

- (3) What difference do these events make to (i)your daily life, and (ii)your eternal destiny?

PRAY praising God that he is both just and merciful.

Week 7

THEME: “He has risen, just as he said.”

Day 1 Matt 28:1-4. What the guards saw.

What happened in the early hours of the day after the Sabbath?

Day 2 Matt 28:5-10. What the women were told.

What did the angel tell the women? What did Jesus say to the women?

Day 3 Matt 28:11-15. The story that the elders made up.

In Matt 27:42 the elders said, “Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” However, when this in effect happened, did the elders believe? What did they do instead?

Day 4 Matt 28:16-20. What Jesus said to the disciples.

What were Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples before he ascended to heaven? What was his promise?

Day 5 Psalm 22:22-31. Victory from defeat.

The Psalmist, like Jesus, had cried, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” How does his mood change in the final verses of the Psalm?

STUDY PASSAGE: Matthew 28:1-20 and passages related to the resurrection.

To Discuss:

1. In your experience, how do people who are not Christians think and feel about their inevitable future death?

2. Do you think it is at all likely that the account of the resurrection is a deliberate fabrication? What features of the account in Matt 28 are good evidence that Jesus' resurrection was an historical event?

3. How is Jesus' resurrection described in (i) 1 Cor 15:20-23, and (ii) Col 1:18? What does this mean? If Jesus is the *firstfruits* and the *firstborn*, what are we? What difference does being a Christian make to the way you think and feel about your inevitable death and the way you live in the meantime?

4. What do the following verses say about the amazingly rich significance for you of Jesus' resurrection/ascension: John 14:19; 16:5-7; Acts 2:36 (What does 'Lord and Christ' mean?); Acts 17:31; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 14:8-9; Phil 2:8-9; 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:42-49.

PRAY Praise God for our assurance of resurrection life with Jesus.

Week 8

THEME: Jesus' death as Victory

By his death, Jesus overthrew the powers which stood opposed to us and God.

Day 1 John 12:31-33. The Ruler of this World is cast out.

What did Jesus' death do concerning the Devil's power over the world in which we live?

Day 2 Hebrews 2:14-15. Destruction of him who holds the power of death.

What did Jesus' death do concerning the reality of death and our fear of death?

Day 3 1 Peter 3:18, 22. He died .. was made alive .. and went to heaven .. with all powers in submission to him.

What difference did Jesus' death and resurrection make to the overall power structure of the universe?

Day 4 Gal 2:20. I have been crucified with Christ.

As Christians we have participated in Christ's crucifixion. What difference has this made to our nature?

Day 5 Col 3:1-4. You have been raised with Christ.

Even though we still await Jesus' return, think about what it means that we have *already* been raised with Christ in a real, if partial, way.

STUDY PASSAGE: Colossians 2:6-15.

To Discuss:

1. What comes to your mind when you think about the death of Jesus?

2. We have shared in the death*, burial and resurrection of Jesus (v11-12). What does this mean? (Consider v6-7, 10, 11, 13). In what ways do you experience the reality of sharing in Jesus' death and resurrection?

* 'Circumcision of Christ' seems to mean 'removal of his flesh' ie his 'death'.

3. The "bond which stood against us" (v14 RSV, or see NIV Study Bible note) seems to mean the record of our indebtedness to God as a result of our sin. What happened to this record when Jesus was crucified? What does this mean to you personally?

4. When Jesus was crucified, what happened to the (evil, spiritual) powers and authorities (v15). How does Jesus now relate to these powers and authorities (v10)? What difference does this make to the world and to us?

PRAY that it might be apparent in our lives, both that Christ lives in us, and that the evil powers do not hold sway over us.

Week 9

THEME: Jesus' Death as an example to us.

Obviously Christ's death was unique. Only his death could bear the punishment for our sins, defeat the powers of the Devil, bring us from death to life, and lead us to God. Nonetheless, the Bible teaches us that in certain respects we are to follow the example of his death.

Day 1 Phil 2:5-8. Our attitude is to be like Christ's.

What was Christ's attitude, which we are to copy?

Day 2 Mark 10:43-45. The Son of Man came to serve.

What is the mark of true greatness for a Christian? How did Jesus display this?

Day 3 1 Peter 2:13-17. Show proper respect to everyone.

How do we follow the example of Jesus' death, in relating to government and those in authority?

Day 4 1 Peter 2:18-20. Relating to employers.

How do we follow the example of Jesus' death, in relating to employers?

Day 5 1 Peter 3:8-9.

How does Peter summarise the way we should follow the example of Jesus' death?

STUDY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:21-25.

To Discuss:

1. Describe a time when you suffered unjustly. How did you feel? What did you do about it?

2. To what were we called? (v21) From your experience, discuss whether you think many Christians would be surprised to read v21?

3. Discuss the way Jesus reacted when he was mocked and suffered for us, comparing v22-23 with the gospel accounts of Jesus betrayal, trial and crucifixion (Matt 26:47-27:56). Did you act in similar way in the situation you described in Q1? Could you have acted more like Jesus did?

4. In today's world, this aspect of Christianity is often ridiculed and rejected. Discuss whether people should 'stick up for themselves' more than this passage seems to imply. Or, in what ways should we take 1 Peter 3:9 more seriously?

PRAY for help in imitating the humility of Christ.

Week 10

THEME: Jesus' death: our forgiveness and cleansing.

Day 1 Rom 3:25-26. Jesus death: He took our punishment.

Until Jesus came, God had left sins unpunished (v25). How did Jesus' death change this?

Day 2 Gal 3:10-13; 2 Cor 5:21. Jesus death: He died the death we deserved.

Why do you think some people describe Jesus' death as 'the great exchange'?

Day 3 Leviticus 16. The OT sacrifices.

Lev 16 describes the annual day of Atonement, which is discussed in Hebrew 9. Note how the sacrificed animal made atonement needed because of sin (ie appeased the wrath of God and allowed reconciliation) (v16), while the sins of the people were symbolically transferred to the scapegoat and taken away (v20-22).

Day 4 Hebrews 9:11-15. Cleansing by Jesus' blood.

What is the difference between the OT cleansing by the blood of animals, and the cleansing we have by the blood of Jesus?

Day 5 Hebrews 9:16-28. Forgiveness by Jesus' blood.

What did Jesus' death do concerning our guilt for sin, and the judgement which we all face following death? (v22, 27-28)

STUDY PASSAGE: Hebrews 9:11-28.

To Discuss:

1. Think of a situation where a friend has done something which has deeply hurt or offended you. What did this do to your relationship? What had to happen before your good relationship could be restored?

2. The Bible teaches us that our disobedience to God makes us (i) *unclean* (v13-14), and hence unfit to enter into relationship with God, and (ii) *guilty* (v22), and so liable to God's punishment (v27). These ideas are unpopular in the modern world. Why do you believe these ideas? (or why don't you believe them?) In what ways do you experience them as being true in your life?

3. The OT sacrifices dealt imperfectly with human disobedience. How does this passage describe Jesus' death and its effects on us? In what ways is Jesus' death and priesthood (i) like, but (ii) much greater than the OT sacrificial system?

4. Having now meditated on Jesus' death for 10 weeks, what things have stood out for you? Has your love for Jesus grown in any way? What differences has it made to the way you live? Has it made any difference to the way you come to Holy Communion?

PRAY that your love and thankfulness for Jesus will continue to grow.

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

- 1.** Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of your answer and any difficulties you have.
- 2.** The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
- 3.** The study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
- 4.** Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
- 5.** Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a discussion group, please see one of the ministers.

ST ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
9 Littleton Street, Riverwood
Phone 9153 7624

ST SAVIOUR'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
1359 Canterbury Rd, Punchbowl

ST MATTHEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
34 Shorter Ave, Beverly Hills