

## **Heidelberg Catechism 38-39 – Before Christ’s Resurrection**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The church calls this weekend the “Passion” weekend, because 2000 years ago Jesus endured great suffering for you, before the cross and at the cross. After the “Passion” weekend came Christ’s glorious resurrection, a resurrection which we celebrate each Sunday. We gather to praise God for Jesus’ re-creative work. (The Old Sabbath day marked the completion of Jesus’ creativework.) But Jesus’ resurrection could only take place with “proper” suffering and death. The resurrection gets its value from the suffering and death of Jesus. So today God will show you again the cause and the curse of suffering of Jesus’ suffering and death, as summarized in the Catechism.

Our headings are: The **Cause of Christ’s Suffering for you**, and The **Extent of Christ’s Suffering for you**.

Our goals are: That seeing afresh 重新 Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection, **that your love for him will be strong, and you will hold on to him with fresh strength that he gives you.**

### **The Cause of Christ’s Suffering for you**

38 Q. WHY DID HE SUFFER “UNDER PONTIUS PILATE” AS JUDGE?

A. So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by a civil judge, and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.

1. Christ had to suffer the way he suffered because God’s justice demanded that he suffer that way.

2. Specifically, Jesus Christ had to be condemned by a civil judge. He was condemned under Pilate.

Luke 23:3 Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, 14 said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; 15 "no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. 16 "I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" **22** Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise 严惩 Him and let Him go." 23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested.

Pilate did not just let the Jews do what they wanted. Jesus did not die by a mob attack. No. Pilate legally condemned Jesus to die on the cross...as the Jewish leaders requested. He heard the evidence, he considered the circumstances, and he condemned Jesus.

John 19:16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. 17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. 19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Yes, Jesus came as a baby, but he was born to die. As the cross came nearer, the wise men, the angels, the shepherds...all disappeared and vindictive 恶意的 Jewish leaders, indifferent Roman leaders, and a manipulated 受左右的 Jewish people took over to make sure he was condemned.

3. Pilate confirmed Jesus was innocent. He did try to use a few drops of water to wash away the stain of his crime, but that was only to fool himself and manipulate the Jewish leaders.

Matthew 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult 骚乱 was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."

**Pilate’s wife knew he was innocent. Even the priests knew he was innocent** but lied to kill Jesus.

4. Christ had to be condemned while perfectly innocent for sin so that he might be a substitute for you

who are totally sinful and should have been condemned. His perfect innocence was necessary for perfect atonement.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by 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 has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

God the Father had to smite Jesus for you.

2Corinthians 5:21 - For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God the Father made Jesus as a sinful man because of you.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

God the Father made Jesus buy you back from your hopeless condition.

Surely this must make you see the pure perfection of the Lord... his sinlessness that God counts as yours. Sure this must make you see the great extent of your sins. This is your justification.

### **The Extent of Christ's Suffering for you**

39 Q. IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT HE WAS "CRUCIFIED" INSTEAD OF DYING SOME OTHER WAY?

A. Yes. This death convinces me that he shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.

#### **1. Jesus has to be cursed with death on the cross because he had to be cursed in the worst possible way.**

He had to be cursed in the worst possible way to cover the worst sins man could have.

Galatians 3: 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The truth is, if the Jews had their way, they would have stoned Jesus to death. That was their favorite way to execute a criminal. But death by stoning would not have satisfied the Father. The one who was stoned had his chest crushed and stone piled on him. It was a relatively quick death. He had to die in a most gruesome public way – and that was death on the cross.

Further, Jesus could not have been secretly executed. He had to be a public sacrifice for sins. God's justice demanded public execution. And then he had to suffer the humiliation of being crucified with criminals, though he was innocent. The crucifiers acted as if Jesus were the king of criminals by placing him in the middle of criminals.

Further, he could not come off of the cross as he was taunted to do. No he had to stay there and endure the suffering. He had to endure the curse until he died. No death, no forgiveness. No death, no resurrection. No resurrection, not restoration with God.

#### **2. And Jesus had to suffer – physically and spiritually.**

Physically: He was stripped 脱掉 naked, impaled 穿刺 in his side, and his hands and feet were nailed to a cross. They scourged him – made furrows 沟 on his back. They crowned him with a crown of thorns. They filled his mouth with vinegar. They slapped 掌击 his face. They spat 吐唾沫 on him.

**Spiritually:** Jesus was accursed by God. He was arrested and endured a mock trial. They mocked him as a pretending king, dressing him as a mock king. He watched as his friends abandoned and denied him. The Jewish religious leaders, who should have supported a godly man, abandoned him. His people who had a few days earlier chanted “hosanna” were chanting “crucify him.” He came to his own, but his own did not receive him. And what an aggravation of Christ’s suffering - to die for those who did not care that he was dying for them... These wicked people called for God’s judgment upon their own children for whom Christ was dying...

3. It is true that others have been crucified. If you look at our bulletin you will regularly see more horror stories about the suffering church. Some have been shot, hung, beheaded, and cut in two for Christ’s sake. But none of them suffered as Christ... **for he suffered innocently – which is a most horrendous** 可怕的 torture 折磨. And none has ever **suffered with the abandonment 抛弃 of God**...as Jesus Christ. This is why he cried: “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” Furthermore, he suffered but the world, even his own people, did not care.

4. This reference of the shameful of being crucified comes from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 21: 22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

Death on a tree (and Jesus died on a green tree), was the highest degree of curse and shame. Lk 23:31

5. **Where does that leave you now?** Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote to Titus about how men were to view their lives now that they were saved by Christ’s life and death!

Titus 2: 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,<sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

The cross was a remarkable thing. But it means nothing if it is just a sad story about an innocent man who was killed. It must mean more to you. The work on the cross by Jesus is the work that brings life giving change. It is the means by which he atoned for your sins and set you free. Now look for heaven and be zealous for good works.

## **Conclusion**

Our Lord Jesus Christ had to be condemned by a civil judge just as you needed to be condemned. He took your place before Pilate who condemned him and that is why he did not open his mouth. He was guilty with your sins. At that time he not only had the condemnation of a civil judge, he also had the curse of God on him. God punished sin in Christ – sins of the Jews and Gentiles...sins of the past, present, and future...sins of all who believe in him. And he had to die of the shameful accursed cross.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You were in Christ when he was condemned – when he was condemned before Pilate - and when he was cursed by God and sentenced to die on that shameful tree. So when he rose, you rose. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. You have reason to sing. Christ the Lord is risen today. You were unworthy, but you were redeemed. Hold on to him for dear life – life now and life in eternity. Live to please him. Live like you know what he endured for you. Work like you know he saved your life from sin, death, and hell. This is how you show love...to the one who loved you first.

Finally, if God doesn’t accept Christ’s work for you, you will have to die for your own sins. May you ask God today to take Christ’s life and death as your life and death so you could go free and you could begin to enjoy his promises. His demands on you will then be light...as a Father to his children.