

Did Christ Die In Vain?

More than 1900 Years ago Jesus Christ died. The fact of His death is one of the fundamental tenets of the Gospel of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4). But we ask, did Jesus accomplish what He sought, or did He die in vain?

Lest any should misunderstand, I hastily say that I do not believe the Son of God died in vain! I fully believe He fulfilled His purpose on earth, and that His death, burial, and resurrection constitute the foundation of our faith and hope (I Cor. 15:1-4).

However, there are many theories taught in the religious world which (**if** true) would mean that Jesus died in vain. In this issue we shall consider some of these ideas in the light of the Bible.

Christ died in Vain, If:

1. If the Law of Moses is still binding. Jesus stated that He came to “*fulfill the law*” (Matt. 5:17). The apostle Paul wrote that Christ came to “*redeem them that were under the law*” (Gal. 4:5), having already stated that the law was a “*schoolmaster to bring us (the Jews, bw) unto Christ*” (Gal. 3:25). He wrote that “*if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” (Gal. 2:21). Moreover, from the book of Hebrews we learn that Christ, by reason of His death, became “*the mediator of the New Testament*” (Heb. 9:15), which is “*a better covenant,*” a covenant “*established upon better promises*” (Heb. 8:6). Moreover, we observe that Christ Who descended from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14) is our “*high priest,*” having made the supreme sacrifice “*when He offered up Himself*” (Heb 7:26-27) to die in our behalf (Heb. 2:9). In contrast, the priesthood under the Law of Moses consisted of those who were of the tribe of Levi (Heb. 7:5). It is therefore obvious that the priesthood has changed. Hence, with the priesthood “*being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*” (Heb.7:12). Nothing can be more clear than the fact that Moses’ Law has ended, and is therefore no longer binding. However, notwithstanding this plain Biblical truth, many would have us to go back to the Law of Moses and bring over the Seventh day of the week Jewish sabbath, instrumental music in worship, the burning of incense, and many other things observed by the Jews before Christ. In so doing, they try to bind certain tenets of that law which was “*written and engraved on stones*” (2 Cor. 3:7), a law which has been “*blotted out*” and “*nailed to the cross*” (Col. 2:14). In trying to mix Judaism with Christianity (or the Law of Moses with the New Testament of Jesus Christ), they thereby sentence Jesus Christ to a useless death!

2. If the Church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18) is not essential to salvation. It is clearly evident that the New Testament church was “*purchased with*” Christ’s blood (Acts 20:28). In fact, Christ “*loved the church, and gave Himself for it*” (Eph. 5:25). Inasmuch as the **blood** of Christ purchased the church, and inasmuch as **reconciliation** is in the “*one body*” (Eph. 2:16), which is the church (Eph. 1:22,23), then we conclude that the church **is** essential to salvation. It is not really a question of “*must one be a member of the church in order to be saved.*” More specifically, it must be pointed out that “*the*

church” (the called out) in New Testament times **constituted** the “*saved*” (Acts 2:47). Furthermore, we observe that Jesus Christ, Who is the Savior (Matt. 1:21), is plainly referred to as “*the Savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23), which is “*the church*” (Eph. 1:22-23). However, notwithstanding these plain Bible truths, there are multitudes who deny that there exists any necessarily connection between the Lord’s church and our salvation! **If** they are right in this conclusion, **then** it must be acknowledged that Jesus died in vain! In view of the fact that Jesus’ **blood purchased** the church, then this conclusion necessarily follows! Of course, it should be pointed out that when we speak of the New Testament church, we speak of the one Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), the one He purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), the one which came into existence on the day of Pentecost following Christ’s ascension into heaven (Acts 2:22-47), the one which wears His name (Rom. 16:16), and the one whose organization, worship, and work is totally in keeping with the pattern revealed in the New Testament.

3. If Baptism is not necessary to salvation. Amazingly, there are multitudes of articulate, well-educated preachers who dogmatically affirm that “baptism does not save,” and that “baptism has nothing to do with salvation!” However, in view of the fact that the apostle Peter said that “*baptism doth also now save us*” (I Peter 3:21), and in view of the fact that Jesus predicated salvation upon faith **and** baptism (Mark 16:16), it is difficult to understand how an honest Bible student could say that “baptism has nothing to do with salvation!” We could also mention that baptism is what puts one “*into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27), wherein is “*salvation*” (2 Tim. 2:10). And we could further point out that baptism is a command (Acts 10:48), and that heaven is promised only to those who “*do His commandments*” (Rev. 22:14). But more particularly, as it relates to the subject herein under consideration, we ask “in what way is baptism connected with the death of Jesus Christ?” It was in the **death** of Christ that the **blood** of Christ was shed (John 19:33-34). It is in **baptism** that we contact the **death** of Christ, for the apostle Paul clearly said “*that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death*” (Rom. 6:3). Hence, inasmuch as the blood of Christ was shed “*for the remission of sins*” (Matt. 26:28), and inasmuch as it is in baptism that we contact the death of Christ (and therefore the blood of Christ), the relationship between baptism and the remission of sins should be obvious. In view of these facts, it is easy to see why Matt. 26:28 speaks of Christ’s **blood** as being “*for the remission of sins,*” and Acts 2:38 speaks of **baptism** as being “*for the remission of sins.*” The harmony between these verses is obvious, for it is in scriptural baptism that one contacts the blood of Christ. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these plain, easily documented biblical truths, there are many religious leaders who continually deny that baptism is necessary to salvation! In so doing, they sentence the Son of God to a useless death!

4. If a child of God cannot so sin as to be eternally lost. Specifically, we are referring to the Calvinistic “once-saved-always-saved” position. On the surface, in order to refute this passage, all one has to do is to read the many warnings which are given to children of God — warnings concerning the dire results if they should “*err from the truth*” (Jas. 5:19), or “*fall away*” (Heb. 6:6). The apostle Paul addressed some brethren in Galatia, and he taught that if (after they had obtained freedom in Christ) they were to go back into Judaism, then “*they are fallen from grace*” (Gal. 5:4). If it is impossible for one to fall from grace, then please tell me why an inspired apostle urged saints not to take the course of action which would result in

their falling from grace! However, as it pertains to the title of this article (“Did Christ Die In Vain?”), we hasten to point out that **it is** possible for a child of God **to sin**. Also, it must be remembered that “*the wages of **sin is death***” (Rom. 6:23). As it pertains to the child of God who sins, the apostle John said “*if we walk in the light he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the **blood** of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins*” (I John 1:9). Hence, the blood of Christ is available to alien sinners (those who have never obeyed the gospel), and it is also available to erring children of God (those who have sinned after having obeyed the gospel). For the latter, the **blood** of Christ cleanses those who “*walk in the light*”— not those who refuse to walk in the light! Hence, those who deny that the child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost, in essence, deny that they have any further need of the blood of Christ (the blood which was shed in the **death** of Christ!). Hence, they sentence Jesus Christ to a useless death!

Conclusion: We thank God for such a wonderful Savior! But let us **never** take a position which would make vain the death of our precious Redeemer!

*** —Bobby Witherington