

THE  
DEATH OF CHRIST

A SERMON BY

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*SECOND EDITION*

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THE WARREN PRESS  
160 WARREN STREET, BOSTON  
1914



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Text: "I delivered unto you first of all (*en protois*, among the foremost points) that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 3).

*Brethren, Sisters and Friends:* The sum of religion, as seen by modern and popular sentiment, is abstract sincerity, goodness of character, piety of sentiment, etc.; belief of doctrine is at a discount. I have heard ministers of different churches boast that they had not preached a "doctrinal sermon" for years. Let me, however, show you

**I. The Importance of Doctrine.** The word "doctrine," at which many take fright, is really a harmless word; it means simply teaching, instruction, what is taught. When ministers, then, boast that they have not preached a doctrinal sermon for years they are boasting in plain English that they have not taught any-



thing, have imparted no instruction to the people, for years! Turn from them to the example of our Lord and see the difference between them. His first sermon was a doctrinal one. "He opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt. 5: 2). "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings"—had concluded his sermon—"the people were astonished at his *doctrine*; for he taught them as one having authority" (Matt. 7: 28, 29). Denominating the things taught in this discourse as the "doctrine of Christ," John sets forth its fundamental character in the words: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, *hath not God*. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9, 10, 11). The essential nature of the "doctrine of Christ" is here made obvious: abiding in the Father and the Son is conditioned upon us abiding in the doctrine; if we abide not in it or "transgress" it in any way, we "*have not God*"! And Paul sounds the same note of warning in writing to Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, *and unto the doctrine*; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both *save thyself and them that hear*

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*thee*" (1 Tim. 4: 16). Since Christ preached doctrine; since abiding in the Father and the Son depends upon our acceptance and adherence to the doctrine he preached; and since Paul says that my salvation and the salvation of those who hear me depends upon taking heed and continuing in doctrine, I have no apology to offer for preaching this doctrinal sermon on the death of Christ.

## II. The Importance of Christ's Death.

No one can fail to see the importance of Christ's death who stops to consider what was accomplished by it. According to Daniel, the cutting off of the Messiah was to "finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, seal up the vision and prophecy, and anoint the most Holy" (Dan. 9: 24, 25). "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9: 26). "He died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5: 6); they can be saved from wrath only "through him" (ver. 9). "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," declares Paul, through whom we "have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5: 10, 11). Without the death of Christ no "end of sins" could have been made; no "reconciliation of iniquity;" no reconciliation with God; no atonement; and consequently no salvation would be possible.

### III. Christ's Death is Part of the Gospel.

It is asserted with emphasis and repeatedly in the holy scriptures that no one will be saved except believers of the gospel (Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:10-12). Let me quote from Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; *by which also ye are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." Here he makes it plain that the salvation of the Corinthians hinged upon them believing the gospel which he had preached, and by them keeping it in "memory." Then he proceeds to tell what he had preached, what they had "received," "believed," and were keeping "in memory"—matters involving their salvation: "I delivered unto you *first of all\** that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." He declares that the death of Christ was one of the "first" things in his gospel

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\*"First of all" (*en protois*) is literally "Among the chief things;" things that are foremost; the foremost points (Heb. 6:2). See the translation of MacKnight, Kneeland Bonquest, Young, Emphatic Diaglott, etc. The statement has no relation to time, but to importance. The things of the kingdom were preached before the death of Christ in point of time (Matt. 4:23; Luke 8:1; 9:2, 6; 18:31-35); afterwards the "things concerning Jesus



message. To the Romans he says that one condition upon which the investiture of righteousness depends is a belief of the death and resurrection of Christ: "To whom it (righteousness) shall be imputed, *if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification*" (Rom. 4: 24, 25). The word "therefore" with which Rom. 5: 1 begins shows that when the apostle there says, "Therefore being justified by faith," he was talking about the faith which he had just defined in the previous chapter. If Christ was not "delivered" to death for our offenses, he could not be "raised again for our justification." Keeping in mind that the "faith" the apostle is speaking of is faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, we can see how much he predicates upon that belief: "Being *justified by faith* (in the death and resurrection of Christ), we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this *grace* wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of

Christ," his death, burial, resurrection, etc., were added to the gospel of the kingdom, as part of the gospel, because they are the means through which the kingdom may be obtained (Acts 8: 12; 19: 8; 20-25; 28: 23, 30, 31). The death of Christ, Paul is careful to show, has been lifted up to equality with the chief things of the kingdom, upon a belief of which our salvation depends.

the glory of God" (Rom. 5: 1, 2). "Justification," "peace with God," access to "grace," and "the hope of the glory of God"—*all these blessings of salvation are made contingent upon our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.* If we do not believe in the death of Christ we cannot be "justified by faith;" if not justified, we cannot have access to God's "grace;" if not in God's favor, we are cut off from "the hope of the glory of God," and are consequently hopeless. We are not stronger in these statements than Paul; he is their author. In assuring the Thessalonians that their dead would be raised to life as the Lord had been brought from the tomb, he says: "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (go before) them that are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (conveyed or snatched away) together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4: 15-18). All the "comfort" of these words; all the promises they contain; all the hope they give the living and the dead,



are conditioned on an "if," and that if is a matter of belief; and that belief is about the death and resurrection of Christ conjointly: "*If we believe that Jesus died and rose again*" (ver. 14).

Our salvation, then, clearly depends upon us believing the death of Christ. It may be that some are wondering why we are putting so much stress upon this simple and "first" element of the gospel. They may be saying to themselves: "Why all this ado about the death of Christ?"

**IV. Who Doubts It?** Everybody professing Christianity believes in the death of Christ." It is just because I am suspicious that many do not believe it that I am pressing the subject so vehemently upon your attention. I have grave apprehensions that many repudiate this fundamental truth of the gospel, even among those professing to be Christians, and I will give you some of the reasons on which I base my apprehensions. When a little boy in school I studied Steel's Physiology. The first sentence in the book is, "Our bodies are the houses we live in." Here is a clear distinction between us and our bodies; they are "houses," and we are the tenants who live in them. Suppose a neighbor's house takes fire and is totally burned, but the tenant of the house, the neighbor

gets out unhurt, possessing life and consciousness. If anyone should report that he was burned up would they not circulate a falsehood? Certainly; all can distinguish between the house which was burned, and the man himself who made his exit out of the house, with life and consciousness retained. Now if the body of Christ was the "house" in which he lived, and if, when it died, Christ got out of it, with life entire and conscious faculties unimpaired, *have you not denied the death of Christ?*

Startling as the statement may seem, shocking as it may be to some of you, I must say emphatically that all who believe in the immortality of the soul deny the death of Christ. If you want this affirmation corroborated you have it in their garbling of God's word to sustain the dogma. As a result of wresting the scriptures, which is a sin that God says is worthy of destruction (2 Pet. 3: 16), they plead that Christ and the thief went to paradise the day they died (Luke 23: 43). If Christ went there that day, *did he go dead or alive?* You say, "His body died." What of it? That was only the "house" he lived in. Suppose that did die, but Christ, the tenant of the house, got out with life and mental attributes untouched by death, and went away in company with the thief to paradise alive and conscious—*did Christ die?*

Again, by handling the word deceitfully

(2 Cor. 4: 2), ignorantly and unintentionally it may be, they claim, and seriously too, that Christ preached to the souls of the antediluvians during the three days that his body was dead (1 Pet. 3: 18-20). Ask them, Were the antediluvians good or bad? they answer, Bad. Ask them, Where do bad people go when they die? they reply, To hell, a place of eternal torment. Ask them what kind of a place that is and they will respond like the old darkey when he said in a sermon on this subject, that he could not adequately describe it; he could only attempt to give them a few glimpses and hintlets. To give them a vague conception of how hot a place it is he said: "Take all the coal in the world, pour on it all the oil in the world; ignite it, and when it is burning at its utmost fury, take an immortal soul out of hell and throw it into that appalling tempest, *and it would freeze to death!*" Pretty warm place, certainly. But now seriously, my friends, a question. When dealing with Luke 23: 43, our friends send Christ with the thief to paradise to bask in bliss; forgetting that when they deal with 1 Pet. 3: 18-20 they send Christ to quite a different region. But waiving this contradiction, a serious question now confronts us. If, when Christ's body died on the cross, he got out of it alive and went into a missionary enterprise among the doomed in hell (where it



was impossible to make a single convert!); if he preached in that hot place for three days and nights; of course he preached and sweat, and sweat and preached—*but was he dead?*

V. **“Christ Died According to the Scriptures.”** When Paul declares that we are saved by the gospel “received,” “believed” and kept in “memory,” and that prominent as a “first” element of it is that “Christ died for our sins,” he is careful to state that we must believe in his death “according to” a standard—“the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15: 1–3). Our salvation depends upon us believing the gospel; belief of the gospel depends upon belief of the death of Christ; and belief of the death of Christ depends upon us believing that he died “according to the scriptures.” The question of paramount importance then is, What is death in the scriptures? They define it, not as a going to heaven, paradise, or hell, but as returning to dust (Gen. 3: 19); not as dying and still living, but as dying and *not* living (Isa. 38: 1); not as a going to heaven to praise God better than here, but as going to the grave (ver. 10). “For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (ver. 18). They declare that while the living can praise God, the dead cannot (Isa. 38: 19); that they do not

remember God, or give him thanks (Psa. 6: 5); that their thoughts have perished (Psa. 146: 4); that they do not know anything; their love, hatred, work, devise, knowledge and wisdom—all our mental attributes have perished (Eccl. 9: 5, 6, 10); and that consequently if man ever lives “again” he will have to be “raised out of his sleep” (Job 14: 14, 12). “There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant” (Job 14: 7–9). The tree apparently dead, is not really dead. In contrast with this, of man it is said, “But man dieth, and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the spirit and where is he?” He is deader than a tree; life-principle is wholly extinct; for “man lieth down and raiseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep” (ver. 12). As death is the extinction of life, this question becomes a pertinent one: “If a man die (like this), shall he live again?” (ver 14). “Again,” you know, repeats. If man is immortal he cannot die; his body may die, but he lives on in death; he lives on after the resurrection; and he lives on through eternity—his life is possessed without interruption forever and forever. He

can never "live again," because he never quits living! But if man is mortal and ceases to live at death, then when he is raised from the dead he can "live again."

Now when Paul says, "Christ died according to the scriptures," he means that he died according to these testimonies. Do you believe them? Or do you contemptuously reject them and say with the pride of a wounded spirit, "Why, you make out Christ's death and the death of the entire family of man to be like the death of beasts!" Precisely that is what the scriptures say, and Christ died "according to" them! Hear them: "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beast. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath (*ruach*, spirit); so that a man (when he is dead) hath no pre-eminence above a beast. \* \* \* All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3: 18-20). "The scriptures" here quoted, "according to" which Paul avers Christ died, declare that God has "manifested the sons of men." What does that manifestation reveal them to be—gods, angels, immortal souls—what? "*That they are beasts!*" What "one" thing in particular befalls



them alike? "As the one dieth, so dieth the other!" They die alike; and after they are dead they "all go to the same place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again." Both die alike, both dwell in the same place, and both are in the same condition in death, "so that a (dead) man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." If you do not believe Christ died "according to" these scriptures, you do not believe the gospel Paul preached, and cannot hope for the salvation which God offers you through the death of his Son.

**VI. Christ's Death Under New Testament Representations.** In my peroration I wish to show that the death of Christ means the same thing in the New Testament as it does in the "scriptures" of the Old Testament. In its phraseology his life "vanished away" like vapor (James 4: 14); he is said to have "lost" his life (Matt. 10: 39); to have "given" it for his disciples (ver. 11); to "lay it down" for his sheep (ver. 15); and then at his resurrection to "take it again" (ver. 17, 18)—all meaningless and impossible statements if Christ did not sacrifice his life on the cross. Who owns what has "vanished away"? Who possesses what he has "lost"? Who holds in his hand what he has "laid down"? How can one "take again" what he has never let loose? And how

can Jesus have been alive when he was dead, when he declares himself: "*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore*"? (Rev. 1: 18).

Reader, consider this sermon, Bible in hand. After a studious reading, pass it on to your friends who have immortal souls, and it will cast out the unclean spirit. Five cents for two copies; twenty-five cents per dozen. Order from the author, Robt. G. Huggins, 10623 Lee avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, or *The World's Crisis*, 160 Warren St., Boston, Mass.