

The Wednesday Word, July 7, 2021: Jesus Christ: Martyr or Sacrifice?

The definition of a martyr is that of someone who suffers death for advocating, or refusing to renounce, a religious or political belief or cause. A sacrifice on the other hand is a religious rite in which someone or something is offered to a divinity to establish, maintain, or restore a right relationship between humans and that deity.

Jesus was not a martyr. He was a sacrifice.

The Lord Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12). In doing so He demonstrated His teaching of John 15:13, *“Greater love has no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends.”*

Jesus died as a sacrifice to bring us back into relationship with God and He did so voluntarily. During His life, He moved events in accordance with His eternal purposes. He was, always in full control! Likewise, with His death, He was in charge. Listen to the Master as He tells the disciples of events which must surely come to pass. He says, *“Therefore, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”* (John 10:17-20).

What a declaration from the God/man. Speaking as a man, He implied that, rather than being killed as a martyr, He would voluntarily lay down His own life. No wonder His hearers accused Him of being demon possessed and insane. But He was the God/ man, fully human and fully God. When He spoke in terms of being subject to the Father that doesn't mean He was less than God. It simply meant that He was speaking as a man.

By the way, please don't ever say Jesus was a good man but not God. If He was not God, He was the vilest of vile blasphemers ... no ifs, ands or buts.

Jesus willingly gave Himself as a propitiation ... *(a sacrifice which turns away the wrath of God)*. He had foretold He would do this very thing when He said, *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28).

What a wonderful purpose! He was no martyr helplessly being tossed along by uncontrollable events.

Through His death believers are cleansed from all sin! What immense power!

Dr. Joseph Cook, speaking at the first Parliament of World Religions at Chicago in 1893, pictured Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth rubbing her hands and lamenting, “Will these hands ne'er be clean?” She had blood on her hands from her part in murder, and Cook questioned, “What religion can wash Lady Macbeth's hands?” He continued, by stating that, other than Christianity there is no religion in the world, that has the power to remove that bloody spot from Lady Macbeth's hand. But Christ can remove that stain. Then Cook quoted the scripture, *“...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (I John 1:7).

The truth is, the only way you can ever be clean before God is to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

That's the message for today. It's not a new message, it's not a modern message, it's the old, old story of Jesus and his love - but it's as new a message today as it has ever been!

Only the blood of Jesus Christ poured out at Calvary can cleanse from the guilt and power of sin. It completely removes all sins past, present and future. Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice to successfully reconcile us to the Father. He never was a Martyr!

And that's the Gospel Truth!