

## Jesus' Suffering & Death

As the creed moves from Jesus' birth to the final events before his death and resurrection we are told that the savior of the world "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Why mention Pilate in such a short statement of faith?

- 1) The mention of Pilate in the creed firmly anchors the creed to history. It affirms that we are now dealing with an actual event that really happened in history.
- 2) Pilate represents the world's rejection of Jesus, the real King. This is our basic human story. We reject God and his leadership in our lives.

Why would God have to suffer anyways? What does suffering have to do with God?

**Genesis 6:5-6** – "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled."

God was pained by human sin because something painful would have to be done to make things right again. This is important, because it explains the **root** of suffering. Suffering is a result of a broken creation. It's a result of sin. God never intended it. And we should be clear, **he feels the weight of it more than anyone**.

Isaiah 53 talks about an innocent man; a suffering servant would bring healing to others. It talks about Jesus:

### **Isaiah 53:3-6, 12**

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all...  
For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus suffered on our account so we might have peace and be healed.

The presence of suffering does not mean that God is absent. Nor does it mean that God is simply powerless to overcome our pain and brokenness.

## **Discuss**

Share a time in your life where suffering brought you closer to God.

## **Jesus: Crucified, Died, Buried**

The Creed moves on to describe Jesus' crucifixion. Roman crucifixion was the most brutal of executions. It was reserved for the lowest criminals. The execution was intended to be slow; to prolong the victim's suffering. It was public, intended to humiliate.

The Creed is careful to articulate that Jesus actually died. He wasn't just wounded or sleeping. He was dead!

We are then told that Jesus' dead body was buried.

**Matthew 27:57-60:** "As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away."

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried.

But the simple fact that Jesus died in this manner is not what's important to us. The significance for us is not just **that** Jesus died, but **why** he died.

1 Corinthians 15:3 – "Christ died **for our sins** according to the Scriptures."

What does it mean that Jesus died for our sins? Jesus is God come to save us from death. Because we have rejected God's leadership, because we have sinned against him, our destiny is to die, because there is no life apart from the one who gives life. So when we reject God, we're on our own, separated from his life.

But Jesus comes to take our place in death, and pay the penalty for rejecting God. He dies so we don't have to. He makes things right. Those who put their faith in Jesus are now restored to full life in God!

## **Jesus Descended to the Dead**

This is the most controversial and disputed clauses in the Apostles' Creed. What do we mean when we say Jesus "descended to the dead?" Most versions of the Creed that

we see today have a different wording here. They say that Jesus “descended into hell.” Is believing that Jesus went into hell after his death a central teaching of the Christian faith?

The phrase “he descended into hell” was not found in any of the earliest versions of the Apostles’ Creed. When it appeared it was understood to mean that Jesus “descended into the grave.”

There are Scriptures that speak against the idea that Jesus descended into hell after his death on the cross. Like Luke 23:43 where he tells the criminal hanging beside him on the cross, “**Today** you will be **with me** in paradise.”

For more information see Wayne Grudem’s article at: [www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/34/34-1/34-1-pp103-113\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/34/34-1/34-1-pp103-113_JETS.pdf)

### **Communion**

Close your time together by sharing communion. Remember Jesus’ sacrifice. Encounter his presence as you do.