

Responsibility for the Cross

#0482

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 22, 1974

Some questions have only one answer. But some questions have a number of answers. The question I want to study with you tonight has several answers, as we shall see.

The question is: Who is responsible for the death of Jesus Christ? To answer this question, I shall draw both on prophecy and history.

First of all, we know, as a matter of history, that it was a Roman governor, Pilate, who signed His death warrant. Roman soldiers nailed Him to the cross. A Roman seal was put on His tomb. A Roman guard kept watch around His grave. But it is not alone history that shows us Rome as the murderer of Jesus. In Daniel's great prophecy, we find the course of empires portrayed. Centuries in advance, we see those four great kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, symbolized by the image of Daniel 2. The four beasts of Daniel 7. And then Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are revealed in the eighth chapter under the symbols of the ram, the goat, and then the little horn that grew out of one of the horns of the goat. In all three of these chapters, the fulfillment is met in Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Rome is the iron kingdom of Daniel 2. Rome is the great beast with the horns in Daniel 7. Rome is the little horn that waxes exceeding great in Daniel 8. And concerning this power, we read:

“He magnified himself even to the prince of the host”
Daniel 8:11.

And again, as the angel explains it in the 25th verse, the last part:

“He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes the host” Daniel 8:25.

This is Messiah—Jesus. In fact, as Daniel was shown in this vision this power of Rome standing up against the Prince of princes, as he witnessed the crucifixion, he was so overcome with emotion that he fainted, and the angel had to come back in the ninth chapter and go further into the explanation of the 2,300 days. My point is: Rome stands, both in history and in prophecy, as the murderer of Jesus Christ.

But we go further. The prophecies foretold that Christ would be rejected by His own people—His own nation. The 53rd of Isaiah makes this clear. But in Zechariah's, turning to the 12th chapter of his book, we see in vivid outline the crucifixion. Here we see the house of David, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, looking upon Him whom they have pierced. Yes, Jesus came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And so, in the 13th chapter of Zechariah and the 6th verse, when

one says to Him, "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" He answers, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

Some of the very people who, on the first day of the week, waved the palm branches and welcomed Him as the King coming into Jerusalem, by Friday morning were ready to join in the clamor, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" The religious leaders forced (political pressure, mob clamor) the Roman governor to sign His death warrant.

So, Rome shares with Christ's own people the responsibility for the death of Jesus. But there is someone who is behind all this, unseen, but just as real as Pilate or Caiaphas. And Satan, too, in his part in this, is the subject of prophecy. The very first prophecy in the Bible, dealing with the Messiah, is found in Genesis, the third chapter, and the 15th verse. The first two chapters of the Bible preserve a perfect world, a beautiful garden, and a happy pair—Adam and Eve, holding the earth under dominion. But in the third chapter, the serpent enters the picture. Speaking from the tree, he beguiles, deceives, and leads them to transgression. And when God comes to deal with the serpent, he says:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and
between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head,
and thou shalt bruise His heel" Genesis 3:15.

Here is prefigured the age-long controversy between Satan and the church, and between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. That seed is the Messiah—Christ. Through four millenniums, the people of God look forward to the coming of a deliverer—One who would be born into the human family as the Promised Seed. But concerning Him Who would eventually bruise the head of the serpent, it was written that His heel should be bruised by the enemy. It was the Devil that inspired the mob, the leaders of church and state, to not only kill Jesus but to make that death as shameful and as cruel as possible. It was the Devil who inspired all that cruelty. And when the universe, looking on, saw Satan treat Jesus in that way, they recognized as never before that he was indeed a murderer and that his greatest murder was the murder of the Son of God.

And now, let's go further. When we come to closely examine the record of the death of Jesus, we find that He did not die of crucifixion; He died of a broken heart—broken by the weight of the sins of the world. Death by crucifixion was a long, lingering process, sometimes occupying days, always many hours. But Jesus expired suddenly. After that great cry at the ninth hour, His heart was broken under the heavy load—that infinite burden of sin. This did not begin at Calvary. Gethsemane was the prelude. And Luke, a physician, records the fact that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Yes, friends, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet on Calvary were preceded by those drops of blood which were literally forced from His pores there under the olive trees, because of the mental anguish that He was going through. In fact, the weight would have killed Him right there in Gethsemane, except that God sent an angel to revive the fainting Son and strengthen Him that He might tread the blood-stained path to Calvary.

And so, as we seek to understand something of the mystery, we see that Christ did not die of crucifixion, although His murderers were as guilty as though He had. It was their purpose, their intent, their plan to kill Him. But He died, His heart was broken, by the weight of the sins of the world. But there's something closer than that. When I come to Calvary, when I look up into that face, bruised and bleeding for me, if my mind is open, if I listen, I hear the message that it's my sin personally that has caused His death. This was prefigured in the ancient sanctuary service. The man who wished to be forgiven his sin came to the altar, and there he placed his hand upon the bullock or the goat or the lamb that was his substitute. He confessed his sin, placing it upon the head of the substitute. And then, with his own hand, he took the knife and slew the sacrifice. This was to teach the vital truth that the man who is forgiven is the man who recognizes that it is his sin personally that is responsible for the death of Jesus.

Now turn to the 10th chapter of John. We have something else to look at. Here is an amazing statement from the amazing Christ:

“Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” John 10:17–18.

What? Didn't the Romans kill Him? Didn't the Jews cry, “Crucify!” Didn't Satan murder Him? Again and again, in His earthly ministry, as clever politicians and cruel religious leaders clamored for His life, the record says they could not touch Him because His hour was not yet come. The fact is, dear friends, at Calvary we are confronted not merely with a murder but with an offering. The murder is the work of men and devils; the offering is the gift of Christ Himself.

Oh, let us contemplate the amazing spectacle—the Creator of the universe voluntarily, willingly, giving His life as a sacrifice for sins. He did not resist; He came to the place of sacrifice to give His life a ransom for many.

And so it is written in Galatians 1:4 that He gave Himself for our sins. And each one of us can say, as the apostle says in Galatians 2:20, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.”

But we're not through yet:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

Calvary shows us not only the gift of the Son, laying down His own life, it shows us the gift of love from the Father's heart. And so in that text in John we read:

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again” John 10:17.

In other words, Jesus is saying that My Father so loves you that He even loves Me more because I give My life to redeem you. Oh, what love, my friends.

The superficial mind cannot understand the involvement of the Father. But if you have ever stood by the bedside of pain with one you love very dearly, you can understand at least the beginning of what we're talking about.

God thought to share this mystery, this secret, with Abraham when He called him in the stillness of the night and said, "Abraham, Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Oh, how could he do it? But he obeyed. Oh, what those three days meant, of pain and sorrow, to that father heart. To have given his own life would not have been so great a sacrifice. And on the morning of the third day, as leaving the service at the foot of the mountain, he started up the ascent with Isaac. How the young man's words cut into the father's very soul, "Father, you've brought the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

And in the struggle of his soul, his faith in God could only answer, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

And then when the secret could no longer be kept from Isaac when the altar was built and the wood arranged, when the father explained to the son what God had said, thank God Isaac was a willing offering. He even assisted his father in binding him up on the altar. When the last goodbyes were said, with flowing tears, the father raised the knife to obey the divine command, and the voice of God said, "Abraham, Abraham, don't do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

And looking in the thicket nearby, he saw a ram caught by his horns. He ran and got him, put him on the altar, the Bible says, "in the place of his son Isaac." The words of faith and hope and trust had been fulfilled: "God will provide Himself a lamb."

But, my friends, in all this, God was seeking not merely to test Abraham and develop his obedience. Infinitely more than that was involved. God was seeking to share with Abraham the meaning of the plan of salvation. Thank God He succeeded. And so, two millennia later, Christ could say to the Jews, "Your father Abraham saw My day, and he rejoiced, he was glad. Yes, in that experience on Moriah, Abraham came to understand, more than any human being had ever understood, the sacrifice of the Godhead. But oh, my friends, when there, almost a stone's throw from where Isaac had been on the altar, Jesus was stretched upon the cross, the antitypical altar, there was no voice that cried from Heaven to spare Him. There was no substitute to take His place. There at Calvary, the Son, the only Son, was sacrificed in joint agreement between the Father and the Son. The counsel of peace toward human beings was between them both, and they both carried out the contract. Which One suffered most at Calvary? I cannot measure infinity. I know that the Son gave all He had. And I know that, hidden in that darkness, the Father heard that cry of pain and anguish from His own darling Son. He could not answer because the Son was drinking the cup that we deserve to drink. He was dying the death that we deserve to die. And that's the death of darkness, not light, of separation, of God abandonment.

And so, my dear friends, I have no question that the Father suffered equally with the Son. And so, tonight, as we stand at Calvary, we say, Who is responsible for the murder? Ah friends, the Roman governor and the Roman government back of him are responsible. Christ's own nation, speaking through its religious leaders, is responsible. The sins of the world, pressing down upon His heart, are responsible. I'm responsible. My sins killed Him. But He's a willing offering. Lovingly, He gave Himself. And He's the gift to the Father's heart. "God so loved that He gave..."

What does He want with it all? He wants me; He wants you; He wants my love, my understanding, my appreciation, my fellowship. He wants me to be His friend throughout eternity.

Out west, some months ago, a girl was kidnapped, and her father poured out over two million dollars in ransom. But it takes more than ransom to bring reunion. In that strange sequel, that young woman decided to join her kidnappers, repudiating her parents' love. What a strange and tragic thing.

Ah friends, more than two million in ransom has been poured out for you. But an infinite ransom cannot join you in reunion with Christ and His Father. They poured out everything. Will you join with them, or will you join with the cruel kidnappers that would seek to brainwash you and get you to unite with them in their rebellion against God and His law? Be assured of this: you will fully unite with one or the other. You will join in that glad reunion which fills all Heaven with songs of rejoicing, or you will join with the mob that says, His blood be on us and on our children. There is no middle ground. I'm so thankful that somebody loved me enough to pay such an infinite ransom.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Oh, let's give Him what He's paid the ransom for. What do you say?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

If there's somebody here who has never given your heart to Christ, and you will tonight, come up. I want to take your hand and kneel with you here, introduce you to Jesus. If there's somebody here who has once known your Lord, but you've let the world and sin come between you and Christ, come back. If there's somebody here who has been joining with the kidnappers who have wrenched your soul away from Jesus. Oh friends, the ransom has been paid. Come free, break loose! Make a run for the kingdom of God. Jesus is ready to welcome you. So, whether it's for

the first time, or whether it's because you need to get something out of the way that stood between you and the Lord, oh, dear ones, come. And if there's some soul here who has had a formal connection with God and His church, but tonight you see that what you need is to have your heart melted and broken, why not seek for that experience? Come and yield your life to the Spirit's working. Come and kneel at the cross.

I want to ask you a question. Is this real, what we've been looking at tonight? Ah, if it is, and you know it is, and I know it is, then there's just one question: on which side of the cross do we stand right now? Do we stand with the murderers of Jesus? Do we stand with the men and devils that nailed Him to the cross? Or have we accepted His pardon and come over on the side of those who share with Him in love and in sacrifice? There's no middle ground. We are either a part of the rebellion or we're one of His friends, fully committed to share with Him.

Oh, that the cold, formal heart might be broken, might be melted. I cannot do that for you; you cannot do it for yourself. But you can seek it. If you know that Christ is your Savior, if you know that He has pardoned your sins and accepted you as His friend, then right where you make mighty intercession as you stand there, that God will help the hesitating, or the perverse, or the rebellious.

There's somebody in this chapel tonight, who was brought here by God's Spirit to hear this message and do something about it. There is somebody here tonight who can never be the same again. You'll either go out these doors closer to Jesus or farther from Him. Oh, I pray that it may be all with Him. Souls are precious. All that we have seen at Calvary would be poured out just for one, just for you.

Let's not in no past decision, let's not in no formal profession. If you have an experience, thank God; if you don't, seek for it. Seek for it with all your soul. Because Jesus says, "Seek and ye shall find."

Oh, that the Spirit of conviction and response may come upon the hesitating heart. And there's somebody here tonight who didn't think that you would yield. Oh, may it be so that you will yield! Seek God. He'll hear you.

If there's someone else who's hesitating, come. Make a break for Jesus. One soul is worth more than all the gold in this world.

Don't you know Jesus is happy tonight? How glad He is to see men and women and children pressing their way to the cross. How glad He is to see people giving themselves to the One who gave all for them. How He rejoices to see what He gave the ransom to bring the reunion. I'm sure there's many a praying one out in this audience tonight who rejoices as your prayers have been answered.

Thank God, friends, prayers are being answered.

That which we seek tonight can be done only by Christ Himself. Coming forward, kneeling at the altar, praying, none of those things in itself can accomplish the work that needs to be done. Let me illustrate it.

Suppose there's a patient that comes to the hospital. What they need is to have the gallbladder out. I had to have my gallbladder removed two years ago over there. You can readily see that going to the hospital didn't take care of me. Even going into surgery didn't take care of the problem. Somebody had to get in there with the knife and operate on me. Too many people have the idea that going through some forms of religion is meaningful. It doesn't mean a thing unless we get to surgery, and the surgeon operates. And the problem with some who are here tonight is this: they've been to surgery a good many times but never got the operation.

I don't mean to make it difficult or mystical; it's neither one, my friends. But it's painful. Jesus said that if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off, cast it from you, for it's better to enter into life maimed than having two hands or two feet and be cast into hell. He's talking about the full surrender of the will. You cannot find salvation in the bargain basement.

Somebody said, "I thought salvation was free." It is, to those who give all.

You can't *buy* it. But there's no room in your heart *for* it unless you make a full surrender. Otherwise, it's like ordering a grand piano, and when the truck gets here, your front room is so full of furniture that there's no room for it. The price is to empty the room—make room for the blessing you seek. So play fair with God tonight. He gave everything for you. He wants you to give everything for Him. Anything less than a full offering on His part couldn't have saved us. Anything less than a full response on our part will never give us the promised blessing.

There are many of you here tonight, and God has talked to your heart about some definite specific thing. Let me illustrate it.

Suppose somebody came here tonight with a whiskey bottle in his pocket, and he's heard this message tonight. Can he buy salvation by giving up that whiskey bottle? Oh no. God isn't interested in trading salvation for a whiskey bottle. But, on the other hand, if the man really wants to give his heart to God, what's he going to do with that whiskey bottle? He's going to give it up.

Your problem is not a whiskey bottle, it's something else. And I could name off a long list of things, and there'd be something I missed that the Holy Spirit hasn't missed with you, my friend. Whatever God puts His finger on in your life, thank Him that you have the privilege of giving it up to Him. Somebody is here tonight for the first time. Make a full surrender. Somebody is here for the fifth time or the tenth time. Make a full surrender. But remember, it isn't just surrender that saves you. The surgeon isn't going to operate unless you sign the release. Christ is not going to

grab you and take away the whiskey bottle by force. He's not going to watch you and grab it while you're not looking. No, nothing like that.

Whatever our sin or folly or selfishness that Jesus removes from your life will be by your consent, your request, your plea. How can a man plead for God to take whiskey out of his life when it's been his solace and fun? Remember, I'm not talking just about whiskey, I'm talking about a thousand other sins. How can a man plead, "Lord, take this out of my life," when that's the thing that he wants? I'll tell you, friends, it's looking at the cross like we've looked at it tonight. Things look different in a different light, and the light from Calvary spoils the fun of this world and shows up the folly of this world. And so, I pray God that in your heart just now is the determination to seek the Lord, that He will really change your soul. The Bible calls that "being converted"—"being born again." It's a change from darkness to light, from loving sin to loving Christ. I can't do it for you; you can't do it for yourself. But you can seek God.

If I were you, you know what I'd do? I'd make up my mind right now that I'm not going to leave this chapel until I know that God has converted my soul and forgiven my sins and changed my heart. Make up your mind that you're going to stay here in surgery until the operation is performed. Make up your mind that you're going to seek God with all your heart.

We know the road, bless God. And we know the Lord, the Surgeon. We know He can do a good job. We have no question about that. But the best surgeon in the world can't operate on you unless you seek His services. Do you want help? Do you want to be changed? Some people would rather be dead than change. That's what's going to happen to them, sorry to say. Oh friends, if you want help, you must seek for it. Seek the Lord with all your heart. Say, "Lord, I want help."

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W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org